



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2018-2019

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2018-2019 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2018-2019](#))

Members:

MR A WALL (Chair)
MS T CHEYNE (Deputy Chair)
MS C LE COUTEUR
MS E LEE
MS S ORR

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 27 JUNE 2018

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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

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APPEARANCES

Community Services Directorate.....815, 879, 886

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.29 am.

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

Mitcherson, Mrs Bernadette, Director-General

Collis, Dr Mark, Deputy Director-General

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Senior Director, Corporate Services

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Director, Inclusion and Participation

Barbato, Ms Claire, Director, Office for Disability

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

Pappas, Ms Helen, Executive Director, Children, Youth and Families

Saballa, Ms Melanie, Director, Children and Families

Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Executive Director, Strategic Policy

THE CHAIR: Good morning, and welcome to day 9 of estimates. Today we are looking at budget statement G and starting with Minister Stephen-Smith and the disability output class.

The proceedings today are being broadcast and webstreamed. I am sure everyone is familiar with the privilege statement.

Minister, do you have an opening statement.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I do not have an opening statement. But, given the portfolios we are covering today, I want to acknowledge that we are meeting on the land of the Ngunnawal people and pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging.

THE CHAIR: Page 15 of budget paper 2 has a commitment of \$1.8 million to support people with needs not met by the NDIS. Where in the budget is that funding located?

MS LEE: It is the money announced in the pre-budget commitment on supporting people falling through the gaps in the NDIS transition.

Mr Hubbard: This is the NDIS transition integrated services. That also appears in the budget statements at BP4 on page 21. It rolls out over 2018-19 and 2019-20.

THE CHAIR: What are the criteria for accessing that funding? How will it be distributed?

Ms Barbato: Of that \$1.8 million there are two components. \$400,000 over two years will be for individual advocacy. That is to support people accessing and finding their way through the NDIS, and that is in recognition that some people have found that

process challenging. Some \$1.1 million we can think of as contingency or emergency funding. That money will be made available to people who may be falling through gaps or finding themselves in a crisis situation. That money will go towards disability supports and not perhaps the whole range of things. This is a one-year program and part of the money goes to two staff in the office for disability. We will move to get those skills into the office very quickly.

We are continuing to develop the criteria in detail, but it is important that vulnerable people are not falling through any gaps while the NDIA continue to build their maintaining critical supports capacity. Over this time we will have a really good look at what cases or what requests are coming through for funding and continue to work with the NDIA on where there might be some gaps or challenges.

THE CHAIR. So \$400,000 for advocacy and \$1.1 million for emergency funding and crisis support. Where is the other \$300,000 going?

Ms Barbato: The remainder is for staff. We will have two staff dedicated in the office for disability to do this work.

Ms Stephen-Smith: In terms of the staff, that is also about improving the interaction between NDIS and mainstream service systems. In terms of preventing people falling through the gaps, some of the gaps that have been identified are between the mainstream system and the NDIS, and that interface. So staff will be specifically working on that.

THE CHAIR: How many people do you suspect will be able to access the \$400,000 for advocacy services before the funding is exhausted?

Ms Barbato: I do not have those numbers. We have some really skilled advocacy organisations in the community and they have been feeling pressure and seeing increasing demand. I could try to get some figures for you, but it is just to support what we know is increased and unmet demand in the community to navigate through that NDIS.

THE CHAIR: One gap that has appeared is for individuals who previously received support funded by Disability ACT who should have transitioned to the NDIS but who have not qualified. What measurement has been done of those people?

Ms Evans: When we transitioned from Disability ACT to the NDIS we did a whole lot of work around community supports. At this stage our understanding is that all the clients—as we refer to people living in our supported accommodation and receiving support—transitioned through that process. What we are seeing emerging is changes in the kinds of supports rather than no support at all. So the particular kind of support people were receiving has changed.

This kind of advocacy and support would go toward recognising what is available for these people that is more mainstream. There is some change in the kinds of supports rather than it being the case that people who were with Disability ACT now having nothing as a result of the change to the NDIS.

THE CHAIR: And on the other side there are the community organisations and the service providers, a number of whom have been quite public. Epilepsy ACT, for example, have appeared before estimates this year. What mapping or measurement is being done of community organisations or service providers who were previously funded under Disability ACT? Epilepsy ACT is a classic example: a large number of the people they assisted do not qualify for the NDIS; it is seen more as a health issue rather than a disability issue. How many organisations fall into that space?

Ms Barbato: As we talk about a story of transition to the NDIS that applies for people in the community but also for organisations, and with Epilepsy ACT we see some of the challenges around the transition. The ACT government has moved from block funding organisations to the money going into the NDIS scheme and that coming back to the community through the information linkages and capacity-building program.

THE CHAIR: I know how the money-go-round has been working; that has been well litigated previously. I am trying to get a sense of the measure of how big the gap is. How many organisations fall within that prism of previously being funded by Disability ACT and now either not qualifying for the capacity-building and linkages funding or not yet qualifying for health funding?

Ms Evans: That story can definitely be seen through the information linkages and capacity-building funding rounds. At estimates last year we talked about the fact that I think at that stage four organisations had not been funded. We worked with them again and looked at what they were providing. The issue has been exactly as you have described: where the function crosses into more health-related needs. They are the issues that are emerging.

At this stage I could say with my hand on my heart that Epilepsy ACT is the one we are aware of where there are some issues. But there have been up to four at any one time who have said, “We applied for funding thinking we would be eligible and, for whatever reason, we weren’t fully eligible.”

Ms Stephen-Smith: We are still conscious that Pegasus and TADACT—two of the other organisations that have received transition funding—are still in a difficult transition to NDIS. We speak regularly to them. Pegasus has done a really great job in transitioning some of its service models and some of the services it provides and moving into adult day services, for example, unmounted activities. They have done a really great job in managing their financial situation and the transition to NDIS.

We have been advocating for both Riding for the Disabled and TADACT at a national level, and there has been recognition—I think we have spoken about this before—for quite some time that these two models do not fit well with the individualised funding of NDIS. We have been advocating that the work that was committed to be done around particularly the Riding for the Disabled model at a national level be done so that we can find a better funding model for it. That work is underway. The federal DSS is undertaking that work, but we have pushed pretty hard for that. In the meantime we are continuing to stay in touch with Pegasus.

THE CHAIR: What is preventing the ACT government from funding those two

organisations, particularly given that they are unique and they value-add to the communities? This is well-documented and well-known. They have a long-established history in the territory, particularly TADACT and more so Pegasus. What is the barrier to the territory government making the decision to fund what is, ultimately, a fairly modest amount of money each year in the scheme of the budget?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think Pegasus funding is quite a significant amount in the context of the community sector. That funding previously provided to them has been transitioned to the NDIS. We would effectively be double-funding because we have given that money to the NDIS in the expectation that these services would be part of the system. We would then be funding again to fill the gap.

THE CHAIR: I think to say that you are double-funding Pegasus is probably a little bit of a low blow to the organisation that is not receiving the money.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not saying we double-fund; we would essentially be spending twice as much money for the service.

THE CHAIR: You are not, because you are not getting this service at the moment.

Ms Stephen-Smith: It does exist, and it is ongoing, and they are transitioning. The key thing is that the Office for Disability is continuing to work very closely with Pegasus to keep an eye on what they are doing. We want to resolve this at a national level. This is not just an issue for the ACT. Riding for the Disabled, nationally is facing this issue. Ideally we will be able to resolve the funding model for Riding for the Disabled at a national level. We will continue to monitor that situation. At the moment, from our conversations with Pegasus, we are confident that they are in a financially stable position. We will continue to monitor that. We will continue to have the conversation with them.

THE CHAIR: And that is the same conversation with TADACT?

Ms Stephen-Smith: TADACT is in a slightly different position. There are conversations we have with them that obviously are, at some level, commercial-in-confidence as it were. I am not sure we can talk in detail about where they are at the moment in that sense. But I can assure you that the Office for Disability stays in close contact with those organisations. We are monitoring it very closely.

MS LEE: What about Epilepsy ACT? They came in and gave evidence to this committee on Friday basically saying that they are in a dire situation and they will have to close their doors in December.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think as Ms Evans and Ms Barbato have said, Epilepsy ACT is in a slightly different position. Essentially, it has been considered in the health realm. They have been speaking with health officials. Again, we are keeping a close eye on that.

MS LEE: We also heard from them on Friday that they have been speaking to both the CSD and health and have received no response. They have had nothing.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not sure that is quite accurate.

Ms Barbato: CSD has had an ongoing relationship with Epilepsy ACT over many years, and that included a funding relationship. We have not had recent engagement with them, though we do always welcome community organisations to come and talk with the Office for Disability. We work through this transition. We have regular conversations with organisations. We have not had recent engagement with Epilepsy ACT. We did watch their evidence last Friday with interest. We have gone back and looked through their submissions to government, broadly around their funding situation.

What I do know is that we have given them some funding support. As we know, the service system starts to transition. Some of that includes \$142,000 transitional funding from the National Disability Insurance Agency, as well as some sector development funding, which is commonwealth money that we had available to us to provide to organisations as they work through things like how their business model looks in this new environment.

We have had a funding relationship. We have worked with them. They have had funding. But we have not had those very recent conversations that might have been a take-out from the discussions on Friday.

MS LEE: I suppose that is my point though. You have had that relationship with them. What I am more interested in now is what will happen moving forward. Minister, is it your position that it is now a health thing and it is now with the health minister? Is that your position from CSD?

Ms Stephen-Smith: My position is that we are happy to continue to have those conversations. My understanding is that health officials have met with them as well. I am not sure whether health confirmed that in their evidence before the committee. I was not able to watch that.

As a government, we will continue to have that conversation with Epilepsy ACT. The Office for Disability will work with health on that. I think we need to continue to have that conversation. Epilepsy ACT had previously indicated to the Office for Disability that they had a plan to transition to a financially sustainable model. They then obviously put in a budget submission. That will be a continuing conversation with them. But, as we have confirmed, health officials have met with them.

MS LEE: What about some of the other groups or organisations that are falling through the cracks? There has been some speculation that autism and ASD are not being covered by NDIS. That is inconsistent with some of the information that I am receiving from the federal counterpart. What is the ACT's understanding of where autism and ASD falls into?

Ms Barbato: Do you mean the people or the peak bodies?

MS LEE: Both—if you can answer both, yes.

Ms Barbato: There has been, as we have noticed, some recent media. In terms of eligibility for participants in the scheme, that is in the legislation, the NDIS act and their rules. That is important. Those rules cannot be changed unilaterally. That is one point to make. The other point to make is that they have recently established an autism advisory group. That will be a really important forum that the NDI has.

MS LEE: Is this federally?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Federally, yes.

Ms Barbato: Federal. That has been a recent announcement by Dan Tehan, the federal minister. Locally, we continue to work with participants and hear from them about their experience. I think the recent media around eligibility and autism created some angst in the community, especially for families with young children. We know eligibility is in rules and legislation. The commonwealth is looking at it. We would expect to be part of any conversation that was going to change that, and we have not been to date.

MS LEE: Given the anxiety surrounding eligibility, and especially the media speculation, I would have thought this was an even more important time to ensure that the peak body is there to support these people. What is happening with the funding for the peak body in the ACT?

Ms Barbato: I do not have information in front of me about the funding for the peak bodies. I can take that on notice and provide you with what funding they receive. Again, we do think that that advocacy by community organisations is a really important part of this landscape. If people are having trouble accessing the scheme under their own steam—and that does happen—it is important that they have support from organisations that are skilled and understand the system.

MS LEE: If you could take that on notice, that would be great.

Ms Barbato: Yes, we will take on notice the funding.

MS LE COUTEUR: I want to go back to the beginning of the question, where Mr Wall started. You were talking about the supplementation which will be for advocacy. I am also on the committee that has been looking at the NDIS implementation. It is very clear from that that NDIS does not see itself as funding advocacy; you basically have to get there by yourself. This, for some people obviously, will not be possible.

It is very clear that the people who may be eligible but who are not in a position to have someone who can navigate the system for them will be potentially significantly disadvantaged. I am very pleased that some money has been put into this area. The NDIS and the NDIA are not doing the getting-people-into-the-scheme part. This seems something that the ACT and the other jurisdictions have to take on. They have to say, “Yes, this is our role.” Is that how you see it?

Ms Evans: There are a number of layers to the response, Ms Le Couteur. I think the ACT has done a really good job of positioning us so that we can support families in to

the NDIS. At some point, I think there will perhaps be some questions around the child and family centres or the child development service. Certainly, where families are first interfacing and realising that their young child may have an issue, there are services in place that they are able to attend where they will get some support, some advice and some assessment done—if that is required—and be able to move their child along through that system.

While that is not necessarily being acknowledged as advocacy, it does form a kind of support network for families. Certainly in that way, that is very much the case. This kind of advocacy probably relates more to families who may even be acknowledged as participants but, because of their particular vulnerability, are still struggling with the system. Maybe they have received some funding support but they need somebody to help them find their way to engage with services.

I think there are a few layers to the way families need support. We have a good amount of support but there will always be individual cases where, for whatever reason, that family is still having difficulty.

I think what needs to be acknowledged is that the NDIS is developing the very recent pathways information. That has been made available. It has talked about those particular vulnerable populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, other families with particular vulnerabilities or individual participants.

The NDIA itself has acknowledged that they have not necessarily done the best job with that. There is the need for face-to-face conversations with families, rather than a phone call or an email. It is really important. That part of the broader scheme is now being addressed through the new participant pathways. In terms of the commonwealth response, we are expecting for that to strengthen the way that people are engaged. We are continuing to also strengthen through this additional funding.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think the other thing I would add, Ms Le Couteur, is that, while it is not necessarily part of NDIS's responsibilities, the federal government, through the Department of Social Services, does fund the national disability advocacy program. They fund advocacy at a national level. You might be aware that, in a couple of other states where the state governments have put in additional funding for advocacy, the federal government has matched that additional funding. That is something that we are looking at as well, with our having put in additional funding, whether the federals might be interested in chipping in some more money for advocacy in the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: That would be great if they did.

Ms Stephen-Smith: You never know. You never know your luck in a big city.

MS LE COUTEUR: Or even Canberra.

Ms Stephen-Smith: A growing city.

MS LE COUTEUR: I remember the evidence. ADACAS said that they were not even meeting half the demand that came to them. All the people and organisations

who did advocacy were basically saying the same thing. They were nowhere close to meeting the demand. I am hoping that this money will be enough to do that. I would like to see that as one of our aims: to make sure that the people in Canberra who could be eligible have enough advocacy to be determined properly.

In that context—I guess it is probably this afternoon—I note the multicultural community is significantly underrepresented in the NDIS scheme, as are Indigenous Australians. I assume that a major reason for this is lack of advocacy which the communities can understand and the NDIA can understand. That appears to be a huge unmet gap, which I assume the ACT government are the most likely people to meet.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think there are a range of reasons why you would see underrepresentation of both of those groups of people in NDIS. There are some cultural issues around identification of disability and family supports versus seeking for more support and that kind of thing. But certainly it is something that we are very conscious of.

Ms Evans spoke about the pathways process. Both Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders and culturally and linguistically diverse people have been identified as groups that will potentially need specific pathway support in that process.

MS LEE: On that, what are some of the specific initiatives that the government is undertaking to ensure that advocacy for those two particular groups is being met?

Ms Stephen-Smith: There was quite a lot of work done during the trial in terms of ensuring that people had good pathways.

Ms Evans: Certainly, with the new pathways approach, it is more about face-to-face interaction with individuals who have identified as having a particular vulnerability. I know, for instance, that in the ACT scheme we have nearly 10 per cent of people identifying as culturally and linguistically diverse, whereas around 28 or 29 per cent of people in the ACT say they are coming from a background or have arrived in Australia as a first generation. So there is a bit of a mismatch there. That is also partly explained by some of the cultural differences and the way that people are maybe identifying as they enter the scheme.

It is really important that the participant pathways allow people to identify that they have either a part vulnerability or a background that they wish to disclose, and that they receive individualised and tailored supports rather than, “You’re just one of the many.” That is what the participant pathways are about.

The NDIA have now translated an awful lot of their materials into many different languages. It is much easier to get translated materials, which is, to some degree, a level of support. Within the ACT, in terms of our government responses—again I have to go to things like the child development service and the child and family centres—they also engage really strongly with those families. They run a number of playgroups and other kinds of interactions where families who are struggling with a language barrier, for instance, can receive support and have a translator involved.

MS LEE: How many languages are the materials translated into?

Ms Evans: It is 28 or something. Can I please take that on notice?

MS LEE: Yes, of course.

Ms Evans: I know there is an answer to that. I will probably come back to you this morning with that.

MS LEE: You might need to take this on notice as well: do you know whether there are any people from either an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background or a CALD background working in the area of advocacy for the NDIS transition?

Ms Evans: In terms of within the national disability insurance scheme or within community organisations in the ACT?

MS LEE: Yes.

Ms Evans: In terms of advocacy, that is difficult. We have Gugan Gulwan and Winnunga, and they would take those roles in terms of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Certainly, yes, there are. In terms of multicultural supports, we have a number of community organisations who very much would be providing that level of support. I could not speak for our actual advocacy services as to what the mix of their staff is.

MS LEE: Language is one thing, but, as we know, there is a huge cultural stigma attached sometimes when it comes to discussing disability. Some people may feel more comfortable disclosing it to somebody who either speaks their language or knows their culture, or whatever it might be. If that is missing, it is hard to identify and give them the support they need—if you cannot actually identify them.

Ms Evans: It does come to that point around what we are doing with the mainstream. It is that whole thing of the big cultural change that is the NDIS. Our mainstream services, such as the Multicultural Employment Service, could be a place where people might disclose, “My child actually has some difficulties.” It is about how we support those organisations to know, “That’s a family I should be referring somewhere for some support.”

It is really important to acknowledge that the information linkages and capacity building work, which is relatively new in the ACT, has a way to go. Also the broader work that we are all doing—and, certainly, even in the inquiry into the NDIS—is all really useful because it makes organisations that are broader than disability organisations think about, “How do we support people with a disability?” That is what makes a difference, because there are many more people with disability in the ACT than those who are actually in a scheme; people who identify with other kinds of disability that do not meet those criteria.

Ms Stephen-Smith: You and I both went to the official opening of Feros Care. Obviously, we have heard a bit about Feros in the NDIS inquiry. One of the things that was certainly noticeable there was the diversity of the staff that they have brought on board. As you know, the local area coordinator is a first point of contact for many

people with NDIS, so that is an important thing. That was something that I was pleased to see in visiting Feros, whatever other commentary might be made about it.

MS LEE: Sure. Sometimes it is difficult because you do not know what you do not know. If you do not know that there is an LAC then you do not know to go there for help. Some of the feedback that I have also heard is the challenges facing people who have faced a trauma and have suddenly had the need to go onto the NDIS. With that transition and information being made available at hospitals, has that been looked at or reviewed? Where is that up to?

Ms Evans: In terms of Health's engagement, they are a long way down the path. They will engage with the office for disability. For instance, if a person has a traumatic experience and, as a result, has a disability, if there was any question they would certainly be contacting the office for disability as we work through that as government colleagues.

The first port of call with any person is that referral to the NDIS. It is about having the support of a social worker for a family as they come to terms with what has happened and what might be needed. That is a really big event in anybody's life, and I think that the hospitals are well equipped to support people in that way. We are all just getting our heads around what that means in terms of referral. What is the pathway for that person from hospitalisation, if that is what has happened to them, to a life at home that has a number of supports?

Certainly, the Health Directorate has a whole range of in-home care supports and transition to home supports for any person, whether it is a short term incapacity or longer term. But it is the longer term ones where people then transfer into the scheme.

MS ORR: Can I ask a question that broadly cuts across a few things that have come up throughout this whole discussion? What is the ACT government doing to engage with the NDIA and the federal government regarding some of the concerns that have been brought up? We have had the question posed about advocacy groups and how we are doing it. Can I get some of the detail about what we are doing to support these groups, particularly in working with the broader scheme?

Ms Evans: We are engaged with the NDIA across a range of different forums, for instance, we have an inter-directorate committee with Health, justice and various others where we all meet together. We can then look at not individual people but the circumstances surrounding the issues that are arising.

What that group then does is acknowledge where we can interact to support that person or to resolve those issues. But we also then look at what we are representing up, whether that is to the NDIA, whether that is to the Disability Reform Council, for ministers to say, "We have come across this particular issue. We now need to work out a solution." Sometimes what comes back to us is, "Yes, everybody nationally is having that problem. This is the way that nationally we are going to go towards a resolution."

The minister has represented the ACT a number of times to the federal minister to say, "This is coming up for us. Now we need some responses around how to go forward."

Is that the kind of response you are seeking? Sorry, I am not sure if I answered the question.

MS ORR: Yes, that was what I was interested in. Obviously, moving to the schema scheme will be the thing that is running most of these services. I think the minister previously indicated that we cannot necessarily do what the scheme is meant to be doing because the scheme should be doing that. What I wanted to get was a real sense of what is happening. If the scheme is not doing something when there is a view it should be, what role are we playing to get that incorporated into the scheme?

Ms Stephen-Smith: As Ms Evans was saying, there is a body—the Disability Reform Council—at a ministerial level where we raise issues that are systemic. Occasionally, we advocate for specific ACT issues around that table as well just to put them on the record. Then beneath that there is a senior officers working group that works on the sort of high level major interjurisdictional issues. Then there are subgroups of what is called SOWG, the senior officers working group, that look at the specific issues around the health interface, the justice interface or whatever it might be.

Then there are also the sort of bilateral and trilateral levels. There are meetings as well as building on the stuff that comes out of the inter-directorate committee. Those issues are advocated for either directly with the Department of Social Services or directly with the NDIA, or in a sort of tripartite meeting. I cannot remember how often that happens. But there are regular forums—

Ms Evans: It is as required, really. It comes up as required.

Ms Barbato: Yes, the trilateral meetings are as required. We do meet monthly with our local NDIA officer. That is a really important relationship for us. We are actually in contact with them much more frequently because we have the ability to escalate individual matters where that comes through to us. People are still quite regularly in touch with the Office for Disability.

I find that we work on an individual level and a family level, and then we do quite systemic policy work around this reform and how the NDIS interacts with our service system here in the ACT. That involves talking with colleagues in states and territories, and the commonwealth, because they are also going through those transitions.

In the ACT, we are leading the national work on the interface between the NDIS and the mental health service system. That is work that will eventually progress through to the Disability Reform Council for ministers to consider. The work is happening on all of those levels for us.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I highlight one of the things we have successfully advocated for. At the end of the trial and in the beginning of the transition period, the regional manager responsible for the ACT moved from the ACT. The ACT region was being managed out of Wollongong, from memory. When we hit problems with planning in the transition phase during the whole my first plan thing and some of the individual issues that we were coming up against and we were finding it difficult to resolve, we advocated for a manager to be back in the ACT, specifically for the ACT. We have been advocating with the NDIA to retain that. I think we have a commitment from the

NDIA now to retain an ACT regional manager specifically for this jurisdiction. That has been really helpful.

MS ORR: Do the disability inclusion grants that were in the budget go part of the way? Can you tell me where they fit into the whole—

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think one of the things we need to recognise about NDIS is that only about 10 per cent of people with a disability are going to be eligible for NDIS. It is designed to support people who have needs associated with their daily living being able to manage their daily living. But there are a whole lot of other barriers in the community around access and inclusion for people with disabilities.

The disability inclusion grants are really aimed at making the rest of the community more accessible and inclusive for people with disability. So, how can community groups and small business address some of the barriers to people with disability participating, being included in and being engaged in their activities?

The disability inclusion grants are open at the moment. I encourage people to apply. They were extraordinarily popular last year. We had 50,000 available last year and \$550,000 worth of applicants. There was a pretty a good incentive to increase the amount available in future years.

MS ORR: What were some of the things done through the first round?

Ms Barbato: There were a whole range of things—

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think Claire has a list.

Ms Barbato: I have some information here for you on that. The grants are available for community groups, organisations and small businesses. They can apply for financial support so they can become more inclusive and accessible for people with disability. This is part of our larger project as the Office for Disability, the directorate, about an inclusive society where people can participate.

The NDIS is one part of that but, much more broadly, it is about an inclusive community for people with disability, their families and friends. In 2017 recipients included Capital Football to raise awareness of disability for footballers and their coaches. The Academy of Interactive Entertainment got some money for building modifications at their site so they can welcome people with disability through physical access. Girl Guides also received some funding to develop resources to welcome new people into their organisation. The Warehouse Circus received funding for training and equipment.

Belconnen Arts Centre also received some money for modifications. A filmmaker received funding for short films on the experiences of people with disability. GG's Flowers, who I think are well known in this building, received some money for equipment to increase the employment opportunities for people with disabilities. And Engage Sport received some money to create inclusive sporting opportunities. You can see there is a whole range of organisations and business types there. As I said, this is a really important part of the work the Office for Disability does around creating an

inclusive community.

MS ORR: In expanding the program, what do you hope to see coming from that expansion?

Ms Barbato: As the minister was saying, last time these grants were open we had applications to the value of over half a million dollars. I think it shows that people and organisations and businesses have ideas about the things they would like to do to make Canberra an inclusive community, one where people with disabilities are able to participate. That is a really important part. These grants can support organisations to take their ideas, make them real, make their organisations welcoming. These are well established organisations in our community like Girl Guides and Capital Football.

MS LEE: Is there a cap on the individual grant? Is there a maximum for an individual club?

Ms Barbato: I am going to say \$20,000. I am turning to the gallery—

MS ORR: We have the NDIS and the transition. We have canvassed that quite a bit. We have these inclusion grants. I think the point I want to pick up on there and get a bit more information on is this: you were saying that you are looking at how you are supporting the disability community across a wide range of areas. I think the last thing that came up in the budget papers that I wanted to figure out where it fitted was the justice strategy that you are developing. Where does that fit in the bigger picture?

Ms Evans: Again, it is obviously quite a specific project in that it is people who have disabilities who are interfacing with the justice system. In some senses it is quite broad because while it is around people who are affected in that way, it is about our broader understanding as a community around how to support people with disability who may be really disadvantaged by the kind of language we use, for example, in our justice system. They may find themselves in situations where they are not well supported.

In some ways that particular project has a very broad community focus while it is to support a very specific group of people. We are working really closely with our colleagues obviously in the JACS Directorate, because it is not just an area for disability. It is about the system more broadly.

MS ORR: Can you take a step back and help me out here? I am a planner, not a lawyer. Can you quickly explain to me the background to the strategy?

Ms Barbato: Tell me if this is too much context. I think what we have is all of our work around the NDIS. We can appreciate that it is really complex, important and a big reform. But within this still we have the national disability strategy, which the ACT government, along with all governments, remains committed to.

That is a 10-year document from 2010-2020. Work is getting underway now for what will be the next phase of the national disability strategy. It has all kinds of domains that are really important to inclusion and participation in the community that we also work to support.

The disability inclusion grants are part of that. But justice is an important domain within that strategy for people being able to access justice and people with disability being able to exercise their rights within the legal system. This work for the ACT that really gets going with this budget investment allows us in Community Services and in JACS to have dedicated staff. It is part of our commitment more broadly under that national disability strategy.

We are getting work underway now. I think there are going to be quite a few prongs to that work because there is a lot of good research about people's experiences. We were lucky I think recently to have Professor Eileen Baldry in Canberra. She came to an event in Law Week that Community Services, JACS and the Law Society all company-hosted. She spoke at that event, along with our Victims of Crime Commissioner and Jeanette Purkis, who is an advocate. She spoke very honestly about her own experience.

MS ORR: I have one more question. You have mentioned that you are working closely with JACS. What work are you doing to make sure that the people with lived experience of disability are having a voice within this process?

Ms Barbato: That is really important. We are working with partner organisations. The first thing we are doing is having a series of conversations, if you like, consultations. Just last Thursday, in fact, People With Disabilities hosted a morning tea. That was an opportunity to hear from the staff who are working on this project to give them a little background.

What we really wanted to hear during that session was people's experiences with the legal system. That can be very broad when we talk about civil law, criminal law. A lot of what comes up for people is consumer law issues. What has also been interesting is: how do you know when you have a legal problem? Perhaps you have some issues in your life and they develop into a legal problem.

We have a series. There will be four community conversations getting underway. The one with People With Disabilities was the first. Women With Disabilities, WWDACT, will also host one of those conversations. Then the Disability Reference Group will facilitate two. That is just the beginning of the engagement of people with disabilities. We would say absolutely that they have to be very much a part of this process.

MS LE COUTEUR: This sounds absolutely wonderful. My question is: it is funded for \$152,000 this year and no money in the outyears. Why?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Actually the \$152,000 is CSD funding. That is for one position in CSD. There is one position in JACS as well. The ongoing funding is for Community Law's socio-legal practice. That was something that was identified as a priority because its funding was running out. This work for this year with the CSD and JACS staff is around really developing—there was obviously some funding in last year's budget as well—a lot of background policy work that has gone on. A lot of conversations have already been had, particularly with stakeholders within the legal sector, and a lot of scoping of the work that needs to be done.

As Ms Barbato has said, actually one of the real challenges in this work is: what do we mean by justice? Are we talking about everything from an argument with your neighbour or a real estate issue right through to your incarceration in a prison? It is a very wide scope of things. Part of the work that happened last year was really scoping that out, trying to get a bit of a handle on the policy, and this year it is about having that deeper conversation with the community, particularly with people with lived experience, to try to shape what our strategy is going to look like and identify the things that we want to fund as priorities down the track.

MS LE COUTEUR: But the funding would imply that you will do the policy work and then you do not have any further involvement; it goes to JACS. They have got \$238,000 this year and then it goes down to an average of \$60,000 in the outyears. Basically there is going to be a lot of policy work but not much implementation resources, is how I read the dollars.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No. You do the policy work before you commit to the funding of whatever is going to come out of it, because you need to identify the priorities for what is going to be funded. But I certainly would not take it that we are not going to have any funding. I take it as the first stage of our journey of developing a disability justice strategy and implementing the things that are identified as priorities in those conversations with the community.

I would not say that they will necessarily all then end up with JACS. This is a really close partnership between the office for disability and JACS and I think the funding will end up where the funding is most appropriately sitting in terms of who has got the existing relationships, particularly if you are funding non-government providers; hence the funding for Canberra Community Law sits with JACS because they have the relationship with the community law sector. I certainly would not say there is not going to be any more funding for it. I hope that is not the case.

Ms Barbato: I think what we are looking to do with this work as well—and there are also things underway within the justice system that are important improvements and reforms—and what the strategy work will do by bringing together people from the community and our government partners is make sure disability and people's experiences are part of those processes. I think we will not do everything solely through a strategy. We will also bring in existing work and make sure that people's disability is reflected or see whether we have got some opportunities in that.

We have a reference group that includes a lot of our colleagues from across government as well as a number of providers and people with lived experience. That will be, I think, an important part of that reference group. It had its first meeting, I think last week, to identify where the work is, make sure we are aware and what we can bring in and what will support a strategy that is already underway.

MS LEE: I have a couple of supplementaries. The first is: we have been talking about the justice strategy. Minister, have you had any discussions with the Deafness Resource Centre or any members of the deaf community about deaf jurors? As you know, we had recent changes to the law so that deaf people are able to now do jury service. We have had some concern raised with us that there is a huge lack of Auslan

interpreters at that high level available, effectively to allow deaf jurors to actually serve.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I did meet with the Deafness Resource Centre last year but we did not talk about this issue. I certainly had discussed it with the Attorney-General prior to the changes coming in. I was really pleased to see that.

I am also conscious more broadly of the demand for Auslan interpreters at that high level. I think it is one of those market issues where it is a bit chunked. You have demand for a certain amount of Auslan interpreting that will support a certain number of interpreters and you are going to get excess demand until you get enough demand for another person or couple of people to come into the system.

Certainly those are issues that we are quite conscious of in terms of the demand for Auslan interpreting but it had not been raised with me specifically in that context before.

MS LEE: You can take that now as being raised and continue—

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will now take that and—

MS LEE: Going back a couple of questions ago now, we were talking about some of the people who were falling through the cracks. Ms Barbato mentioned mental health as well and the ACT leading the way. In a report that was released only yesterday there was some concern about the transition to NDIS causing, I think what they termed, a massive disruption to the mental health sector in the ACT.

Have you had discussions with the Minister for Mental Health in terms of how we, as the ACT, are going to address this issue and the role that the office for mental health may play in ensuring that these people with a psychosocial disability do not fall through the cracks?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, this is something that Minister Rattenbury and I do talk about. It is important to say—and I think Ms Barbato mentioned it earlier—that the office for disability is, at a national level, taking the lead on the work around the intersection between NDIS and the mental health system. We will obviously work closely with the office for mental health and wellbeing in taking that work forward.

We also need to recognise that there will be a lot of people with mental health conditions who will not be eligible for NDIS. The mainstream mental health system continues to be a very important source of support both for acute mental health but also in the community sector and that is exactly the work that the ACT is leading in terms of the interface between the mainstream mental health sector and NDIS.

MS LEE: On Monday when we had the Education Directorate here we talked as well about some of the gaps in the NDIS. The Education Directorate assured us that the Education Directorate itself is disability blind, if you like, and that if there is anyone falling through cracks it does not matter whether they are students or whether they are funded, the directorate will step in. Would that be the same for mental health if they are falling through the cracks with the existing mental health services?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Obviously the other recent announcement this last week, I think, was that the \$80 million that was committed from the federal government in last year's federal budget to address some of those gaps that have been identified in mental health has been matched by states and territories. We have certainly signed up to the intergovernmental agreement on that. That pool of funding is designed to address some of those gaps.

Ms Evans: I was just going to say that I think, in the main, responsibility for that funding would sit with the Health Directorate in terms of mental health and obviously the office for mental health as we go forward, but our commitment is around ensuring that any person who is eligible for the NDIS gets the support they require. The office for disability would be available for those people to contact and we can help negotiate if it is an issue around where the funding sits or whether it is an ACT government responsibility or whether in fact under the scheme the person could be receiving those supports.

MS LEE: In terms of the other category of some people who may be at risk of falling through the cracks, in the ACT is it prevalent that we have got some young people with a disability who, due to a lack of supported or appropriate accommodation, are having to be housed in nursing homes or elderly retirement villages?

Ms Evans: Certainly there has been a large body of work being done around younger people with disability who have found themselves housed in nursing homes. Do we have a small number of people still residing because there has not been found an appropriate level of nursing and medical support for a person in a different sort of accommodation? That is again a national issue that is being addressed through the national disability insurance scheme around finding what is the appropriate support, because sometimes these are people who have very significant medical needs as well as needing the community engagement and recreational supports.

Just because they have those levels of need does not mean that they should necessarily be in a nursing home. I do not know that we have quite got to the point where we have all the appropriate housing and accommodation that we would hope to have. It will be a continuing issue, I think, over the next while.

MS LEE: Particularly with an ageing population too, I would have thought.

Ms Evans: Yes that is right.

MS LEE: Are you able to confirm—and perhaps you need to take this on notice—how many people in the ACT are—

Ms Evans: Would we have that available?

MS LEE: Have you got that data?

Ms Evans: Yes, we will get that information. I will take that on notice.

Ms Stephen-Smith: There is an element of NDIS specialist disability accommodation

that is specifically targeted at trying to come up with innovative housing models to address some of the needs of people with complex needs, and that has been challenging to roll out in the ACT in terms of trying to find providers and developers who want to develop those innovative models with some of the funding arrangements from the NDIS. In responding to Ms Lee's question in a little more detail, one of the things that the office for disability and Housing ACT have been working together on is to try to see how we can better access specialist disability accommodation support funding in the ACT, how we can facilitate and encourage some of those innovative models of accommodation that we are going to need to see to address some of these challenges.

MS LEE: I know it is not for every person with a disability but are you talking about something along the lines of Project Independence as an example?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not sure that Project—

Ms Evans: I think Project Independence is unique in the sense that it is more for independent people.

MS LEE: I suppose that is the whole point.

Ms Evans: I think it is more that the specialised space where medical and chronic illness as well as disability interphase is probably the space we are talking about, yes.

MS LEE: That is a gap that you have identified that needs to be—

Ms Evans: We have only a small amount of that kind of support.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

MS LEE: You are having ongoing discussions with the federal sphere?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. I have actually spoken to the NDIA CEO, Rob De Luca, about how they can provide us with some further support in terms of holding investor forums and things in the ACT to try to encourage a better understanding of how SDA works and try to facilitate that investment, but we do need investors to come on board with that.

THE CHAIR: I remind committee members that we have gone slightly over in the disability space, but questions can also be directed to output classes 2.1 and 2.2, which are early intervention services and child development services.

MS CHEYNE: I have a question there; it is pretty short. I want to go to the accountability indicators for 2.1, which appear on page 16 of the budget statements. I note—I appreciate this goes to child and family centres in the next bit as well, but bear with me because it is these budget statements—that for client satisfaction with services, the target was 90 per cent and the estimated outcome is also 90 per cent. How is the satisfaction measured?

Ms Saballa: I oversee the three child and family centres and also the child

development service. You have asked a question relating to our client satisfaction services. Can I just check your question?

MS CHEYNE: There is the early intervention services that you have, programs and parenting assistance sessions, and then, underneath that, that client satisfaction with services is 90 per cent. How is that measured?

Ms Saballa: In measuring client satisfaction, we do it in a number of ways. First of all, in the child and family centres, we are always looking at seeking real-time feedback. The client satisfaction survey is one of the ways that we seek feedback from the children and families who access these services. In a number of our programs, we are talking with children and families and community. It is the way that we ensure that the programs, services and events that we are providing respond to community needs. I just wanted to underpin our approach of working with community.

In terms of these actual surveys, we have a survey form where we approach families that have had a case closed. They would have been working with the child and family centres on an ongoing basis, and most likely in a case management capacity. When we are offering a case management service, that is usually for our families with high and complex needs. So our case management approach is meeting with families; ascertaining their strengths, their aspirations and their needs as a family; and then tailoring a response. That can be for a relatively short period of time while that family is stabilised or it may be a longer term relationship with that family. When that case is closed, our survey is done where we contact that family, or a number of families, and go through a series of questions with them. Based on that data, we are able to ascertain their level of satisfaction with the service that they received.

MS CHEYNE: And it has been 90 per cent.

Ms Saballa: Yes.

MS CHEYNE: That is very high. I am sure I can look this up for myself in past budget papers, but have we always tried to maintain that target of 90 per cent and achieved it?

Ms Saballa: We have kept that target, and we work towards that. The other ways that we seek feedback from families is the way that we are engaging in the development of our programs as well. We see that as a really important feedback mechanism.

When the committee considers the child and family centres, we have universally accessible, place-based, culturally safe and inclusive environments for families with young children. The service offer that we provide is not one size fits all; there are a lot of components to what we provide. It may be participating in a targeted group; it might be individual case management for a family where a family has high and complex needs. As we have progressed more work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, we have really strengthened our approach to larger events that engage with community, and that has been a really successful pathway in terms of a pathway from community into our centres.

In seeking feedback from families, particularly in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander space, we have been able to talk with community, talk with children, and talk with families, and it could be extended families. It could be hosting a barbecue; it could be, at the beginning of a term, bringing people together, talking about our programs, introducing the facilitators, and seeking feedback and ideas from community about the types of programs that are really going to strengthen their families.

MS ORR: Supplementary to that, while you are talking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and satisfaction with the child and family centres, I note that in the budget there have previously been Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focused events that have been hosted. Are there cultural activities like that that are facilitated across all three centres? I know that they are going on in Gungahlin, which is within my electorate. Also, the budget included a one-year extension of funding for the growing healthy families program. I know that covered quite a bit within that group. Can you give an update on what is going on with that funding?

Ms Saballa: Yes, I am happy to. I am pleased to be able to talk about our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. As you just indicated, we have had dedicated funding for our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families for quite a period of time. That has been funding from the commonwealth government and there has also been a number of years of funding from the ACT government.

From my perspective, that funding has done two really important things. The first thing is that it has been a really valuable investment in strengthening families. We have been able to build programs and also build our skills, capacity and expertise as a deliverer of early intervention services for families with that funding. We have seen the emergence of new groups that respond to community needs, and I am happy to talk through some of those details.

You can see that over time we have developed our skill and knowledge base about what works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. I would like to share some of those learnings with you, what we know works. This is based on the funding that has been invested over a period of time. We know that when you work successfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, if you want a program to succeed, the project leaders need to engage and inform at all levels to enable staff's individual leadership and action.

It is not a small group of staff who are delivering services; it is really leading from the top. Management leads this work in the area, so there is that leading from the top. How you do this well is you work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, so you are defining the types of programs and then you are designing them together.

We talk and engage well with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. We are able to listen well to the advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We are also able to "walk gently", as we call it: we see this as a long game; it is not a one size fits all. It is not "This is our service offer, and we hope that you will come to it." We know that is not an effective way to engage. We know that you need to be willing to learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander communities and seek feedback. We do that in a range of ways, and that is usually very positive.

But we will get advice. With this program, the children participating in this program, the dynamics of that group has changed. Let us have a look at that program again, and the children, and let us see if we can redefine the scope and what is delivered in that program. We know that we need to deliver culturally strong, safe and relevant programs that respond to local needs. The way that we do this well is with strong partnerships, and that is within government but also with community partners and non-government organisations. The other thing that we have done is invest in staff expertise and capabilities so that they are really confident in their practice.

When you ask about growing healthy families, we have had a really successful program operating from the child and family centres with dedicated staff. The work we have done over the past year is actually to embed growing healthy families as a core program of the child and family centres. It is not a small number of staff delivering that program; it is actually a core program within the centres that all staff are engaged in.

The other thing that we know is that we need to be flexible in our approach to the types of programs that we are delivering, and look at seamless and intentional pathways. For Aboriginal children and their families, it is about building intentional pathways to other parts of our service offer.

A question that is being asked of me is: without that dedicated funding, does that mean there is no growing healthy families anymore? Growing healthy families is definitely continuing. The work that we did with the year of funding has really been to embed and consolidate growing healthy families.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am going to go back to Mr Wall's first question. Budget paper 3 at page 98 basically says the money is not continuing. Next year there is \$1.5 million, then it goes down to \$200,000 and then it goes to zero. What is going to happen after next year basically?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The last line of that description indicates that the requirement for funding in 2019-20 and future years will be informed by the outcomes of negotiations. Obviously, we are still in the transition to full scheme for NDIS. Full scheme is scheduled to start from 1 July 2019 for the ACT.

We would hope some of the gaps and needs we are seeking to fill with the \$1.1 million included in this budget measure will be addressed as we continue to work with the NDIA to work out different areas and levels of responsibility and who is paying for what. Some of those gaps exist because there is uncertainty around who is going to pay for what. In the meantime we do not want people with high and complex needs not getting the support they need.

Some of this is around supporting people who would not be eligible for NDIS because of their residency status, for example. Those are probably issues where, as we have done in other areas, the ACT would step in and support Canberrans who are not necessarily eligible for commonwealth services. But, again, we will continue to work

through those issues with the commonwealth. Trying to predict what might be required from 1 July 2019 is not something we can do at this point.

MS LE COUTEUR: But given that the commonwealth have been reasonably clear that they are not funding advocacy, you would anticipate that there will be a continuing budget item here for advocacy for Canberrans?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The fact that we are funding advocacy for two years is recognising that the transition and the difficulties that have been experienced during the transition to NDIS are probably going to continue for participants in terms of their access to the system. This \$200,000 a year is on top of base existing funding for advocacy that largely comes out of that commonwealth NDAP program I was talking about earlier. This is additional funding to what we expected would be required for advocacy because of some of those transition issues that have been identified for people.

As Ms Evans was talking about, if the NDIS gets the pathways right, if people's journey through NDIS is smoother and if planners are better trained and better able to work with families and individuals to get the right plan in place, we would envisage that the need for individual advocacy will be significantly reduced. We acknowledge that the need for additional advocacy will be there for a couple of years. We will need to assess in 2019-20 when we reach full transition what is the need, if any, for us to continue to fund additional advocacy on top of the base that is already there.

MS LE COUTEUR: The other thing I understand this money funds is not so much the people who fall through the cracks but the people who are too complicated for the system—the provider of last resort. We have heard evidence from various providers that under NDIS funding it is simply not an option for them to support some of the people they supported in the past. Is it correct that the ACT will be funding some provider of last resort out of this money?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is right.

Ms Evans: We are transitioning into a shared service opportunity. In the past there was only Disability ACT and we now have a whole range of different providers. There has been real growth in the ACT. We are hoping the territory can negotiate with the NDIS if a person finds themselves in that really difficult position where there is no appropriate provider. We will work with the NDIS around what kinds of supports can be put in place.

That does not mean the ACT will take on all the funding responsibility, because if that person is appropriate for the NDIS that is where their funding will be coming from. But it might be that there needs to be some support around where the service is coming from.

In this transitional period all jurisdictions are grappling with that issue. The ACT started from a smaller base of NGOs and private providers and some money may be needed to support where we do not have the right service available or a person cannot seem to access it.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would that advocacy include financial support? It appears in some instances that organisations that have provided services in days past do not think they can provide them under the NDIS funding model.

Ms Evans: The minister may wish to comment around the advocacy she did around some of the services, particularly overnight respite accommodation, where the NGOs were saying the funding did not meet the cost of what was required to support families. There has been some very successful work done to ensure that the costings support the kinds of services required.

MS LEE: Minister, you said the funding peters off because of the expectation that people will move to the scheme but that you want to make sure the ACT government does not leave behind Canberrans with needs that are not met. There will be some Canberrans who previously received funding from Disability that will not be eligible for the NDIS. What happens to the support for those people after next year?

Ms Stephen-Smith: There are clearly people with disability who are not eligible for NDIS. I am not sure it is accurate to say there are people who were previously supported by Disability ACT who are not eligible.

MS ORR: Or services provided by—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Where you are talking about services that were provided in the community, we would expect those to be supported through ILC, for example. Some of those services we have already talked about come and go in this market-based model.

I am trying to get a handle on who you mean in terms of people with high, complex or significant needs who were previously supported by Disability ACT but who will not be supported by NDIS, because they should be.

THE CHAIR: As a starting point, anyone over the age of 65 is a clear exclusion from the NDIS. What has happened to those people? Not everyone over 65 who was being supported by a disability service provider in the ACT was in aged care or some form of formal aged support. Where have those people disappeared to? What assistance are they getting?

Ms Evans: Funding arrangements were made. They were outside the scope of this scheme, but they were made between the commonwealth and the territory. Those people would still be in supported disability accommodation if that is what they were in before. They have not been shuffled off to aged care.

THE CHAIR: I understand there is still a level of support for acute care and that the aged-care sector has stepped in where disability services have stepped away. But what about those on only a moderate level of support or assistance? Where are they now accessing those services? How are they accessing the assistance, the advocacy and the community support they previously had?

Ms Evans: So we are not talking about people with complex disability who are living in a supported accommodation; we are just talking about people who—

THE CHAIR: Overwhelmingly people at the acute end with a high level of need have been transitioned quite well, and that is testament to the work done both at a local level and by the NDIA. But the issues that keep coming up are for those people who are not in acute need of support and who have a lower level of need; someone who might have done a program once a fortnight or had a visit once a month, something along those lines.

Ms Evans: Are we talking more about early intervention with children?

THE CHAIR: Early intervention or low level support. Not everyone needs bed nights in respite and those sorts of things. A huge number of people in our community have lost the function of a limb or have a hearing difficulty or a visual impairment. They were accessing a little bit of support but they do not qualify for that under the NDIS.

MS LEE: Thank you, Mr Wall; that is what I meant. I did not say “highly complex”. I think we all accept that they have made the transition. It is about the people who are falling through the cracks.

Ms Evans: As a broader response, what perhaps we are talking about is people with disability who are not in the scheme but who may have shorter term or early intervention needs. That is where it gets a bit complicated. If we are talking about people with disability more broadly, the scheme is set up to support people with disability.

MS LEE: Exactly. We are talking about people who—

Ms Evans: In the main, if a person has a disability and they are eligible for the NDIS, they are getting support.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Evans: The ones who would not therefore be in the scheme would be people whose disability is a short-term thing; it is not an existing long-term thing. That may fall under Health. For the loss of a limb, for instance, you may need some initial supports. You might need a temporary limb or something, but then you would be supported through a whole range of different supports, from your GP right through to the service that changes your limb for you. There are a whole lot of supports and services that are part of our regular government supports through the health services and that sort of thing. There are a number of NGOs who continue to do that kind of work.

If we are talking about people who used to have a fortnightly program or something, that falls into two buckets. One is people with disability who maybe went along and had a recreational outing, and that would still be picked up under things like our regional agencies, community services and those sorts of people. The others would be the ones who come in under the child and family centres or the child development service. Those services then link with the NDIS through EACH and others.

Ms Stephen-Smith: One of the other things that the ACT government did during the

transition was to establish the CASP program, which sits within Health. It is around supporting people who would not be eligible for NDIS but who might need short-term assistance in terms of rehabilitation, or an ongoing low level of assistance as a result of a disabling health condition, particularly. For those kinds of things, such as assistance with cleaning the house, doing the shopping or whatever, people can get assistance through CASP. That is one area where the gap has been identified and addressed.

Mr Wall, going to your point about people over 65, a couple of the examples I have heard of are people who acquire a disability over the age of 65 who, if they were under 65 and they were eligible for NDIS, might be able to get a particular form of support and cannot necessarily get that same form of support through my aged care. I think that is a genuine issue. The commonwealth has taken responsibility for everybody over the age of 65 who would otherwise be NDIS eligible.

THE CHAIR: I recognise that, pre NDIS, the shoe was on the other foot, and I think people in the disability sector were looking at the aged-care sector and saying, “Jeez, that’s much better than what we’ve got.” The pendulum has swung.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think there is still some work to do around the support that people need as a result of a disability. I had some correspondence recently with a constituent who, over the age of 65, had become paraplegic. Probably, if they had been an NDIS participant, they would have been able to access some additional mobility support that may not be available through my aged care.

There is still some work to do to work out whether or not that kind of support is available, but when you look at the design of aged-care support, it is about the kinds of conditions and disabilities that are acquired as a result of ageing. Someone who is 66 years old is probably going to be quite an active member of the community. If they acquire a disability, they want to continue to be an active member of the community just as they were previously, and just as they were when they were 55, and that is not really what aged care is set up to do.

I think there is an issue there. It is something that I am still working through in my head. I think it is a legitimate issue to raise, but the commonwealth has said, “We take responsibility for people over the age of 65.”

MS LEE: That is the starting point.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

MS LEE: In terms of SHOUT, for example: I understand it has been funded, which I welcome, and it has come at a good time. One of the things that you mentioned at the launch of the online platform was the acknowledgement that SHOUT does things that are good for the community, obviously, and that it needed to be funded from a different bucket. That is clearly where you, as the minister responsible, and the directorate or the government, have taken the approach that SHOUT, which had previously been funded under disability, but was not getting any love from the NDIA—

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is not quite right. They have been funded in both ILC rounds.

MS LEE: But it was not sufficient to continue their operations. The ACT government eventually came in and said, “Okay, this is important.”

Ms Stephen-Smith: I do not think there was any break in funding, Ms Lee, and you know, and I know, that from February last year I made a commitment that we would continue to work with SHOUT—

MS LEE: It has taken 15 months, so—

Ms Stephen-Smith: and I have had an ongoing conversation with you about that, but you have continued to misrepresent. So let’s just not continue that.

MS LEE: Are you accusing me of misrepresenting you?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I have had an ongoing conversation with you, assuring you constantly that we were talking to SHOUT and—

MS LEE: Is that what you are doing, minister, right now? Are you accusing me of misrepresenting you?

Ms Stephen-Smith: You have said that we did not fund SHOUT. You have said that we cut funding for SHOUT. Neither of these things is true; so, yes.

MS LEE: If you are going to make that accusation, you might want to go back to SHOUT, then, because that is where we got it from. I was just doing what I needed to do as the shadow minister.

Ms Stephen-Smith: You came and saw me, and I had a conversation with you about exactly what we were doing—

MS LEE: Maybe you should have made it clearer to SHOUT.

Ms Stephen-Smith: and you continued to claim that we were cutting funding to SHOUT, which we never did.

THE CHAIR: Members, instead of arguing over who said what, can we stick—

MS LEE: If I can actually go to my question—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, go to your question.

THE CHAIR: to the budget and related policy?

MS LEE: My question is: if you have decided that SHOUT is worth funding, what about the other groups that we talked about earlier today? Where is the difference? Why, in the case of SHOUT, was it decided, “Okay, yes, it’s good,” but in the case of Epilepsy ACT, for example, it was not? What is the difference?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We talked previously about the support that was provided to Epilepsy ACT in terms of the \$44,000 that was provided for business development work and the reports that were provided back in relation to that, and the fact that Health is continuing to meet with Epilepsy ACT.

With SHOUT, I took a judgement. Two things happened. Essentially, information linkage and capacity building funding was expected. When the funding was transitioned, and decisions were made about what funding was going to be transitioned to NDIS, there was an expectation that that ILC bucket would fund the core services or ongoing administrative funding for the kinds of organisations that provided information linkage and capacity building. Clearly, SHOUT does provide information linkage and capacity building, and it has now been successful in two rounds of ILC. It clearly was eligible for that bucket of money.

What I think happened in part was that the goalposts around how that was going to be delivered changed a little bit, and they could not get from the ILC bucket funding for their really basic administrative support that would then enable them to get the project funding from ILC to do the fantastic projects like their online support service.

MS LEE: So the ACT funding is for that core—

Ms Stephen-Smith: The decision was: this is actually social infrastructure; it is not just about disability. A number of the SHOUT members are obviously in the health sector, which was why SHOUT had actually been going to Health to advocate for the funding when they thought they were not going to get ILC. They recognised that it was not just a disability service.

My judgement was that, actually, it is part of the social infrastructure. Supporting peer support and self-help groups, and providing that capacity building across those types of really small, volunteer-run organisations is part of our social infrastructure, and it belongs better in the community services portfolio, where it is part of our community development responsibilities, rather than being in the disability bucket or in the Health bucket. That was the judgement we took.

As you know, we then worked with SHOUT and provided them with some funding to have a look at their service delivery model and how they support their member organisations and affiliates. I think we have ended up with a really good outcome for SHOUT. The board has worked very hard; they have restructured in terms of staffing and they are delivering a really strong base of support for their member organisations now.

MS LEE: Are you saying that the other groups that we spoke about earlier today are not—that it is not the judgement call that you can make for those organisations? They are different to SHOUT in that regard?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Pegasus and TADACT clearly are disability organisations, and we are continuing to work with them on that basis. Epilepsy are probably with Health, but we are continuing to work with them. As I said Epilepsy ACT received a significant amount of transition funding in relation to the ILC transition and a

significant amount of business development support funding. Our understanding until fairly recently was that they had a plan going forward about their business model, in terms of providing epilepsy training, and that that was going to bring in some resources for them.

Obviously, they have concluded that that is not sufficient for them to provide their ongoing admin. I think that conversation is continuing with Health. What you can take out of all of this is that we are taking this very seriously. We understand that these organisations are very important to the ACT community and we will continue to work with them.

THE CHAIR: We will suspend for a morning tea break.

Hearing suspended from 11.01 to 11.18 am.

THE ACTING CHAIR (Ms Cheyne): Welcome back, everybody. We are up to Ms Lee's substantive question.

MS LEE: My question is about child development services, accountability indicators for output 3.2, table 25, which is on page 19 of budget statement G. You have there a target of 21,125, an estimated outcome of 20,000, and then a target of 21,125. The ACT government's submission to the Productivity Commission on the NDIS in relation to some therapy services stated:

The ACT had expected most of Therapy ACT services to be in scope for the NDIS. However, a gap in the NDIS scope meant the ACT Government had to establish a Child Development Service with Therapy ACT funds ...

It goes on to talk about some of the funds. How closely does the target you have there reflect the demand? Are we going to see any unmet demand here? The target in table 25 is 21,125 hours. I am linking it with the ACT government's submission about the gap in terms of some of the services that were provided by Therapy ACT that did not get covered by the NDIS. I am just wondering whether the 21,125 hours accurately reflects the demand or whether we are going to be facing some unmet demand in that space.

Ms Saballa: Thank you for your question. The child development service was established with the wind-down of Therapy ACT and through the transition to the NDIS. It was the government's decision at that time that we wanted to maintain a universal early intervention service which was about assessment, referral, information and linkages for children from birth to six years of age where there may be concerns about that child's development and possibly an indication of disability. That was the mainstream service offer that we retained as part of the transition.

The question you are asking is around our demands. We have spoken recently, and a number of the people on this committee have also been there, in the NDIS inquiry. The point I was able to share there is that we are really now working in a reconfigured service environment if you think about the establishment of our new service, which is now in its third year of operation. We now have the partner in the community, NDIS EACH. They have picked up that work in terms of early intervention and early

childhood supports for children who may have a developmental delay and/or disability, so entrance into the NDIS for a package. Then we have seen the growth of the sector as well in terms of private providers actually providing a range of therapeutic supports and services for families.

Within this, over time we have maintained that target. We continue as a universal service. We have drop-in clinics that families are able to access. They are available at the Holder site, but also at the three child and family centres. There could be speech drop-in and physio drop-in. We have maintained that universally accessible platform where families are able to come in, meet with one of our allied health professionals, seek information, and be able to have further assessment.

My observation at this time—even though everybody has heard that there has been maturing of that wider system, and we are working very closely with the early childhood early intervention partner—is that we feel comfortable that we are meeting demand at this time. But, that said, we are aware that there are some wait times for some of our more complex assessments that we conduct.

MS LEE: Before I go to the wait times, it seems that the figures do not quite reflect what was in the submission. The submission said that there has been a gap and there is a need to fund from Therapy ACT. The target was 21,125 but then the actual estimated outcome is 20,000. Then you have set the target. What is the reason for that dip between the target last year and the estimate? I know it is estimated, but it is an estimated outcome. Why has there been a lack of hours provided given that there seems to clearly be a risk that there was a funding gap?

Dr Collis: I acknowledge the privilege statement. Going to the reduction in estimated outcome, I was going to say in response to the previous question that from time to time there is pressure on certain parts of the system. You would appreciate that in early intervention the journey and pathways for children and families through that are really unique to each family, so their experience of that service system is equally unique.

Going to the reduction in estimated outcome, as Ms Saballa was talking about, we think, as best we can look at the analytics of that, it is related to the nature of a combination of complex assessments, developmental assessments for which the child development service has become pretty much a point of excellence in that multidisciplinary approach. That is particularly the case where we are looking at comorbid disability conditions where, for example, a child might be presenting with a global developmental disorder but there is a specific language or potentially an autism diagnosis in addition to those matters. The child development service has become quite an expert and centre of excellence for those multidisciplinary, complex approaches.

It also reflects pressure on the market for professionals who can do that. We have been experiencing, particularly in the area of psychologist recruitment, pressure in recent times. If you wish, we are able to talk about that at some length, about how we have gone about mitigating that issue and how we are progressing that issue. But there are workforce pressures that come to bear for particular specialisms.

MS LEE: Thank you very much. Ms Saballa, you referred to some wait times. Can you give us a bit more detail on the wait times that parents are required to go through? I acknowledge that it is probably different depending on the need, but can you give us a bit of a picture?

Ms Saballa: As Dr Collis was saying, the journey through assessment and diagnosis for developmental disability and delay is quite an individualised journey. Our experience is that while families are going through that assessment journey there is also great benefit in engaging in early childhood early intervention at the same time. That may be through quite a mainstream response like participation in a playgroup or a supported playgroup. Families are also able to access early childhood early intervention support through NDIS EACH. While they are waiting for assessment and diagnosis, they are also able to access supports at the same time. So it is a parallel process. And through accessing therapeutic supports, that can then inform that child's developmental trajectory as well. I think that is an important point: that it is individual; it is individual to each family, and of course to each child.

As Dr Collis was also saying in relation to wait times and the delivery of assessments, it is impacted by our ability to recruit particular professionals, allied health professionals and, at the moment, psychologists. We have been in a position where we have recruited a number of times in a very competitive market. Even though we recruited over three recent periods, unfortunately we were not able to attract staff who were qualified but also suitably experienced.

That impacts our service offer from the child development service. When you have families that are looking for assessment and diagnosis around an autism spectrum disorder, that can impact on wait times. We have been really proactive in this space. As soon as we were aware that our psychologist staff had gained positions in other directorates or moved into other sectors, we started those recruitment processes quite quickly. We also upgraded the position to a higher classification, using a strategy in the hope of attracting psychologists to our service. That was not successful.

We did a number of things at the same time. First, we looked at actually procuring into the community, looking at using our funding to procure the assessment and diagnosis services that we need for families. We are able to do that in two ways. The first is that a provider in the community can actually come in and be part of our multidisciplinary team as the primary diagnostician. The second is that we can actually purchase an assessment and a diagnosis in the community from providers.

We have progressed that really quickly with our service funding support area. It means that from early July, so that is very soon—we have contacted providers—we are looking at the capacity that they can assist us with to be able to alleviate wait times and have those assessments for families.

MS LEE: What are the wait times? Have you got an average?

Ms Saballa: It is an active waiting list. Because of the situation for the autism assessments and because we rely on psychologist positions as the primary professional there—

MS LEE: Have you got an average wait time per se?

Dr Collis: In understanding the trajectory, for some people the wait time for child development services is virtually negligible. You can imagine the journey where you have gone to a drop-in clinic, there have been concerns about development, there has been some work happen, and then there has been referral to a support service. The assessment has started almost immediately in that circumstance as they are collecting developmental information about the child and so forth. For children under six, that is the most common experience of the child development service.

At the complex end of this is where someone arrives as a seven-year-old wanting a multidisciplinary at that point. For that small group of individuals, the wait times have blown out. We have not got an average of that, because of that huge experience between nothing and what could be months that someone might need to wait in terms of a complex multidisciplinary response.

MS LEE: How many people would fall into that category?

Dr Collis: We would have to take that on notice.

MS LEE: If you are taking that on notice, would you be able to provide the times? Obviously, there would be no identifying, but in terms of the types of support and the wait times.

Dr Collis: Sure. With the proviso that in answering that question, frequently people achieve assessment in the community within that time that they are waiting. So in the active waiting list component—

MS LEE: I made that note.

Dr Collis: they might go on to find another assessment pathway at that point. That would be a complication in working out what those outcomes are. But we will take on notice the number of people who fall into that category of requesting an assessment.

MS LEE: And how long.

Dr Collis: We will try to find a metric which will describe the intent of that question.

MS LEE: I understand. How do parents access the services? What is the information pathway that parents have available to them in terms of being able to access the services? Sometimes you do not know what you do not know. What is available to ensure that they know something is there if they need it?

Ms Saballa: One of the benefits of having a well-known service like Therapy ACT located at the Holder site is that, with the transition through the NDIS and the establishment and stand-up of the child development service, we are a known organisation or a known service.

MS LEE: So do you get direct contact?

Ms Saballa: We get direct contact from families. That can happen in a number of ways. It might happen through a drop-in clinic. The drop-in clinics operate from the Holder site; that is where the child development service is. We have drop-in clinics at the three child and family centres as well. We have found that a really effective strategy. If you think of our child and family workers at the child and family centres that may be working with the family, they can say, “On Thursday at this centre, pop along to the speech drop-in clinic and let us have a chat to one of the speech therapists.” There is a really nice warm referral there. The other way is that early childhood education and care services may refer in, paediatricians may refer in, and doctors may refer in.

MS LEE: So GPs?

Ms Saballa: Yes. What I have observed with the maturing of the child development service offer over the past couple of years is our work that we do in an outreach capacity. We are very mindful that there are a number of families in the community who are coming into the child development service. They may not have the resources to do that, and there may be a bit of a barrier.

Earlier, we were talking about particular groups in the community where we need to do additional work in terms of advocating on their behalf. By having services in the child and family centres and also outreach work—we would work with Winnunga and also with Gugan, whether it is a mums and bubs group, whether it is a supported playgroup, or whether it is just being available—families get to know our staff. It is one of those walking gently approaches. If a family was not feeling comfortable in coming into one of the services, and that could be for a range of reasons, our staff are able to do assessments in an outreach capacity as well. That has been really effective.

Another thing that we have done in this transition phase, and this reconfiguration of early childhood learning intervention, is that—because we have families in the child and family centres and the child development service, and a new early childhood early intervention partner, NDIS EACH—we have been able to negotiate that they have a presence in the child and family centres. They have a part-time presence where one of the NDIS EACH staff separately are in the centres. That means that CFC workers, child and family workers, are able to say, “Actually, our NDIS EACH colleague is in the centre on Thursday. How about we make an appointment with her?” So we are able to connect families directly in.

The other thing is that staff in the child development service play a very active role in co-facilitating and participating in a number of groups that we offer in the child and family centres. So there is that multidisciplinary approach to supporting children and families.

MS LEE: Thank you. Finally, in terms of the cost of the services, is this fully funded by government or is there a fee for service? How does it work?

Ms Saballa: The child development service is an ACT government funded service. It is a collaboration between the Community Services Directorate and the Health Directorate, and a number of services are collocated at the Holder site. We also receive funding from the Education Directorate. That is the child development service.

Then we have NDIS EACH; that is the partner in the community. It is funded through a contractual arrangement from the NDIA.

MS LEE: So there is no cost to individual parents?

Ms Saballa: No.

MS LEE: Thank you very much.

MS ORR: I want to have a chat about care and protection and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care. Specifically, I refer to the review into over-representation. Taking a step back from the budget for a minute to ensure that I have my information correct, can you explain the process of setting up this review and also what the review will actually be looking at?

Dr Collis: This has been of significant interest to the ACT government for some time. I will respond to the first bit about the setting up of the review. But I need to acknowledge straight away before I talk too far into this that whilst I can talk about the setting up of the review, the review is, in fact, in itself quite autonomous of government as the final construct.

It was co-designed with the community. In fact, it was designed by the community for the community. The steering group that controls and runs the review is only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It has a specific clinical team that works through all of the experiences of children and informs the steering group.

From time to time, the chair briefs the director-general, not me, regarding the progress that they are making in regard to that. It was set up by the director-general. The setting up was fundamentally around the five driving child placement principles from SNAICC. For people who are not familiar with those principles, the placement of children is only one. There is a child placement principle within the five child placement principles, but it goes to early intervention, the extent that families participate, the connection to culture, placement and collaboration.

It is actually about self-determination in many ways. The five child placement principles have been probably the most significant advance in understanding as a nation how we might approach the vexed issue across the country of over-representation. It is, in fact, being driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholars and communities. It is being, therefore, widely accepted as the construct that we should be using when we are thinking about anything to do with the provision of services within the community.

Initially, the set-up was very much based around getting advice and setting up those five principles that had already been accepted by Aboriginal communities throughout Australia and in the ACT, and that are accepted by the ACT government as the prime principles that should occur.

We sought advice from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, from SNAICC themselves, from the national congress, from the community controlled health organisations of Gugan and Winnunga. We commissioned a consultant, Katrina

Fanning, who, of course, subsequently became the chair of the elected body, to run a series of processes around designing what the governance and methodology should be around the review.

That was undertaken, but it was not undertaken in a vacuum because there has been some significant work done, as people might be aware, in Victoria through Taskforce 1000. There was another overriding principle. There are a lot of ideas about how we might move forward in this to address over-representation. But we wanted to look at the experience of all the children who have experienced the child protection system. We wanted to find out what that experience was and what it would be to make their situation better or, indeed, to prevent children coming into out of home care altogether.

What Taskforce 1000 really informed was that we needed to drive from the basis of lived actual experience of the system, it had to be controlled by the Aboriginal community and, therefore, it had to be authentic. It had to be at arm's-length from the agencies that provided those services.

In that respect, I can speak of that but my role as the executive director of children, youth and families meant that at that critical phase when that workshop happened, I very much stepped back and so did our organisation step back. The governance of that internal to CSD in fact went into the quality compliance and regulation unit under the director-general.

Mrs Mitcherson: I will add a little more to that. It was very important for us as an organisation and as a directorate not to be involved in the co-design or the setting up of the governance. We wanted it to be managed by the community, to be organic from the community. While the team itself that sits around the steering committee reports through to Sally and to me, it is very much not part of Mark Collis's area. I do meet regularly with the chair.

Having said that, the team that we have recruited that is doing the clinical work for the steering committee reports directly to the steering committee. I do not see their reports beforehand. I get them afterwards or there is a discussion afterwards. It is very much community-led. I think it is very exciting in that sense that we can see a way forward.

The other thing about this process is that we did not want it to be a report that in 18 months, two years, just has a whole lot of recommendations. It is very iterative in the sense that if the steering committee, after viewing a tranche of files through the clinical reviewers, makes a recommendation for a change, we can deal with that change straightaway and consider it. We have not got to wait until the end of an 18-month or two-year period for something to happen. So it is real time in that sense, which from our point of view was really exciting.

We have an excellent clinical lead by the name of Narelle Rivers, an Aboriginal woman, who has recruited her own staff. We were not involved in the recruitment. She has recruited a fantastic team of clinical reviewers, who I would hope at the end of this process might actually see a career for themselves in CSD. They are in the sector anyway. We are very excited about it but, truly, we are hands off in the sense that they are doing the work and they are coming back to us. Sally, do you want to add anything more to that.

Ms Gibson: No I do not think so. As Mrs Mitcherson said, the team is extremely skilled both from their lived experience and also from their professional experience and development. They are very excited about the review and the opportunity to really make some change for the better for the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

MS ORR: What is the time line for finalising the review?

Ms Gibson: There will be an interim report from the steering committee to the director-general at the end of August this year. Then the final report will be August-September next year.

MS ORR: Having heard how this is very much a community-driven project with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, what measures are in the budget for CSD to support the work they are doing?

Mrs Mitcherson: We certainly have funding going forward for the clinical lead and support staff for the next 18-month time frame. We also have some operational money for things that might be needed to support the steering committee in terms of attendance at meetings and those kinds of things.

It is very well supported. I have to say that the whole directorate is very excited about this program. We are throwing everything at it to make sure that it works. It is important that the team feels supported as well, even though they are reporting directly to me, that they feel they are a part of a large directorate. We always aim for our directorate to be inclusive of everyone. So while they are separate and doing an exciting piece of work, they are very much treated as part of our directorate team as well.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think the other thing to note, as Mrs Mitcherson has said, is that this is not about standing still and waiting for 18 months while the report is developed. Last year the Community Services Directorate established a pilot of the family group conferencing program. There is funding in this budget to continue family group conferencing on the basis that the pilot demonstrated that family group conferencing was something that was going to work in the ACT context.

Just last week there was a very exciting announcement with Gugan Gulwan and OzChild around the establishment of functional family therapy, again as a pilot for the ACT. Someone might want to talk more about that.

MS ORR: I have questions on both those programs. Can you provide me with more detail on the program that is being piloted through the Gugan Gulwan and OzChild partnership? Then I would like to come back to family conferencing.

Mrs Mitcherson: I will start on the Gugan one and I will hand over to Helen on the family conferencing. We are very excited about the partnership with Gugan and OzChild. It is for 18 months. We will look after up to 40 families. We have left it for the 18 months. It is probably about a four months set-up period. Because it is outreach staff, the staff will be located at Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, which is also

great. It works closely with Gugan Gulwan. It builds a relationship between staff and teams. They will do their outreach from there.

We have already done that work around setting up the offices and infrastructure. This next four months is around doing recruitment, which OzChild will do in relation to staffing. We will work out with the team the referral pathways. The 14 months of the 18-month period will give us time—the average family is in that program for around eight months but it does depend on the size of the family.

We do have families with large sibling groups; so it would be a longer period. But it could be a shorter period for some families as well. But we think that will give us enough time to have really good data to inform discussions with the minister about budgets going forward to embed this program.

We are really excited about the partnership. It was a great launch last week. We are looking forward to that as being part of a suite of things we offer to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care generally. I will hand to Ms Pappas to talk about the family group conferencing.

Ms Pappas: The functional family therapy program specifically targets families with children zero to 17 years. It is specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It is those families who have brushed up against statutory service systems and that are really struggling to engage with universal and secondary service systems.

The idea is to work with those families as early as possible so the children are able to stay at home. It is family-based. It is in the home support. It is quite intensive support and is evidence-based. It is a US model that OzChild have been delivering in New South Wales and Victoria and partnering with Gugan to deliver in the ACT. It is the first time this model has been trialled specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. We are excited about that.

The families typically will have experienced some sort of abuse, family violence, mental illness, drug and alcohol problems; any of them or all of them. The program, as Mrs Mitcherson said, is as intense as the family requires it to be. The experience in New South Wales has been that no children who have been part of this program have come into care subsequently. So we are really excited about the opportunity of diverting families, ideally even before they have been reported to the statutory system, but certainly once they are reported, diverting them directly out to that program and having those kids remain within their family and their natural supports.

Dr Collis: Might I add to this? I would like to acknowledge our partners Gugan and OzChild in this. They put a proposal to government. They worked together to bring this innovation to the community. It is that kind of innovation and thinking that we are really excited about in this sector. Indeed, OzChild have brought to the party significant resources of their own for this trial to prove this.

This is exciting on so many levels. An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation wish to use this model. They have made a partnership with an organisation which has the capabilities and runs on the board. They are willing to invest in the trial to see it work. I think this is exciting on many

levels for this community.

MS ORR: The family group conferencing measure was mentioned. Is this a continuation of a pilot project? For Hansard, there was furious nodding.

Ms Pappas: The family group conferencing model is another well-known diversion program for families who come into contact with the child protection system. We are focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families again. This is a model just for that community. We commenced the pilot, I think, in November of last year. We have had some fantastic success. We have two full-time Aboriginal family group conference facilitators who have been trained. We are in partnership with a local Aboriginal company with some expertise. It delivers this program into New South Wales.

Curijo have provided us with training, have helped set up the model, have undertaken community information sessions so people could come along and hear about this. They are walking alongside our facilitators or they run the family group conferencing. It is a process that takes about five or six weeks to set up. Families have to consent to participate.

The idea, again, relates to those children and young people who are either known to the system—they have been reported—or who are in out of home care where there have been some attempts to return those children home. The family is brought together: the immediate family, extended family and community family. The family is provided with the opportunity to talk to the services who are involved with that family and to set some bottom lines.

Out of this process what we need to see is that children are safe or see whatever the bottom lines are for that family. Then all the services and everybody leave the room and the family are left to it. The idea is that the family come up with their plan. They document that plan, then they bring the services back in and say, “This is what we think we can do to keep our children safe.” That is endorsed and the family go off and do it. Then there is a review opportunity to see how that is tracking.

Of the 11 families that have been through that process—21 children—18 of them have remained home and have remained in the context of their family. In the case of the children who were placed with family that did come into care, it was the decision of the family that that needed to happen for safety reasons.

The early signs are that it is a particularly successful way to engage with families, to let families make their own decisions. Families are the experts of their own situation. They are the experts in their own children. What we are seeing is that families are coming up, stepping up, and taking charge and making plans that are both realistic and achievable for them.

MS ORR: I guess that is the early indication of how the pilot is going. But will there be formal feedback or a review process of the pilot to inform about future potential delivery?

Ms Pappas: Family members, children and young people where possible, the services

involved and child protection staff all provide feedback as to how they experience the process, what they liked, what they did not like. All of that feeds into an evaluation that we are in the process of writing up. We had given an undertaking through the pilot to get to 24 families. We are well on the way. We have got six in progress at the moment.

Once we have done those first 24, we will pull them together in an evaluation. Again, it is about making adjustments along the way. If something through either process does not work for families and they are telling us that, we will adjust the model to make sure that it does meet their needs.

MS LE COUTEUR: Going back to the beginning of Ms Orr's question about the quality assurance and improvement committee, how many people are on that committee?

Mrs Mitcherson: Are you talking about the CYPQAI committee?

Ms Pappas: Yes.

Mrs Mitcherson: I have not got the numbers there. I chair it. We have three external members, a member from Health plus ex officio staff of course from the directorate. We also have to provide secretariat who probably does some research work if we want to look at a particular issue or provides minutes and just liaises with external members, particularly in terms of that.

MS LE COUTEUR: You have talked about quite a degree of Aboriginal and Torres Strait involvement in the process but are there representatives on the committee?

Mrs Mitcherson: On the CYPQAI?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mrs Mitcherson: Yes, we do have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative on the committee. But the steering committee that looks after Our Booris, Our Way is wholly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. There is no directorate staff on that at all. It is their business and they then come and talk to us afterwards. But we are not on that committee.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is in relation to two matters. I understand that some carers who have an issue with care and protection placement decisions are told that the decisions are no longer subject to further internal review. A carer is then finally told, "You can speak to the Children and Young People Commissioner about the decisions." What sort of authority or power does the Children and Young People Commissioner have in those decisions? Are they able to reverse the decisions?

Dr Collis: The advice would be broader than just the option for the Human Rights Commission in which the offices of the children commissioner and the Public Advocate are located. The advice would be also that the Human Services Regulator, the quality complaints and regulation unit within CSD, could also be another alternative there.

But specifically with the Human Rights Commission, the Human Rights Commission have authority under the act to in fact look into services under the act. They can explore that. The Public Advocate has a whole range of powers under the act to represent individual children in matters, including representation and becoming a party to proceedings in the court. Those are the specific powers that sit within the Human Rights Commission.

The other alternative to understand is that the decisions we are talking about here are all subject to the decision of a court. All parties have an ability, when the decision is before a court, to become a party to that matter and to represent themselves in that way as well.

MRS KIKKERT: We are talking just about placement of children, we are not talking about court orders. If a carer is unhappy about the decision that CYPS have made in regard to a child being put in somebody else's home and a carer is then told to go to speak to the Children and Young People Commissioner, they have no authority to reverse the decision. Is that correct?

Dr Collis: They have no authority under the act to reverse that decision. But let me go back to the point that placement provisions and orders are made by the Children's Court as well.

MRS KIKKERT: Can you clarify: when a child is being put in somebody else's home, that is a court order? A judge makes that order, not CYPS?

Dr Collis: I will hand over to—

Ms Stephen-Smith: It could be either. Maybe if you want to go through the process—

Dr Collis: What I would like to do is hand over to Helen who will go through the actual process that is involved here.

Ms Pappas: Generally speaking, when children come into care the Children's Court makes an order. Ordinarily that is about the director-general being able to make some decisions about where children are placed. That is to allow the director-general to match and to ensure that the placement of that child, and the safety of that child, is in the best interests of that child. It is called a residence order in the act.

In circumstances where carers or parents or others who have an interest in that child are dissatisfied with the decision of the director-general, there is a pathway back to the Children's Court. It is the Children's Court, because it is a best-interest decision. It is around the safety and wellbeing of children. They are able to make an application to amend the order of the court or to have the order of the court revoked. That is the opportunity.

As a carer or as a parent, I could go to the court and say, "I am dissatisfied with the decision that the director-general has made. I wish to make an application to amend the order." Then the magistrate makes their decision based on the evidence that is

brought before them. It could be that the magistrate identifies somebody specific in the order. “I order that Jane Smith has the child placed in her care,” and that is the decision of the court—or various other iterations of that. The court could send us away and have mediation or see if we can resolve it outside the court process, but there is a pathway. That is in terms of residence, which is the term that the court uses around determining where children live.

There are contact provisions; the same situation where a parent or a carer or another interested party might be dissatisfied with the contact arrangements. There is the opportunity for the person to make an application to amend an order and to seek a contact provision that says, “Contact X number of times a day for this many hours a week.”

MRS KIKKERT: How long does this process usually take, on average?

Ms Pappas: The application process is pretty quick. There is no cost associated, as I—

MRS KIKKERT: The application is sent to the court, and then the magistrate decides. How long does it take for the magistrate to finally amend the order for the director-general to change the process?

Ms Pappas: I could not tell you. It really would depend on the scheduling of the court and when they can hear the matter.

MRS KIKKERT: How long has it been in the past?

Ms Pappas: It does not happen that often. It is quite unusual, actually; quite unusual for people to get to this place. Usually the systems are able to work these situations out. I could not tell. We will have to take that question on notice. I would hate to give you an answer “X months”. It is not years. It is not 12 months.

MRS KIKKERT: That would be great. Are carers told this is a pathway for them to go and do the application to go to court, and the magistrate can look into the case and amend it? A lot of what we hear from the community is that if you are unhappy with the decisions made in CYPS, you go and see the Human Rights Commissioner or the Public Advocate or the Children and Young People Commissioner. There is nothing in there about actually going straight to the Magistrates Court.

Ms Pappas: I absolutely agree that we can get better at making it clearer to people that that is a pathway. We do have these documents—I think they have been out now for a couple of years—that provide that detail. We are in the process of developing a carer handbook which will absolutely explicitly talk about the multiple pathways that carers might choose around having a decision reviewed, accessing advocacy, or taking a complaint. It will absolutely be explicit in the carer handbook. We will be putting that on the website as well so that people can access that, and everybody who is providing care, whether you are kin or foster care, will know exactly what is available.

MRS KIKKERT: This issue has been going on for many years. Why is it just now that you have decided to do a carer’s handbook?

Ms Pappas: We have had versions of it and the information has been available, but this will be the first time that we have taken the opportunity to consolidate all the information. It will be fairly comprehensive. I have not seen it yet, what that looks like, whether we do it in chapters to make it a bit more digestible. But it will certainly bring together all the information that people need to understand, when they put their hand up to become foster carers, what that looks like for them, all the challenges and all the rewards that go with that, but also all the avenues available to them.

That will be information that I think will be incredibly valuable. The point is that there are bits of that information out there but it has not been brought together as comprehensively as we think it needs to be.

MRS KIKKERT: It will be useful. Do you have a rough idea when that carers handbook will be available?

Ms Pappas: I think we are probably a couple of months away.

MRS KIKKERT: Just last year, minister, you said that care and protection decisions should be externally reviewable and that you are getting together a committee to look into decisions that could have external review. You mentioned that in the chamber. Could you update the committee about that and when can we expect to see changes?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I obviously have not got the thing that you are quoting from in front of me but it was obviously an outcome of the Glanfield inquiry that there would be consideration of where additional reviews would be available. I think what I probably said in the chamber was that work is being undertaken by the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. As I said before, that work is ongoing. It is fairly close to having a paper, but Mrs Mitcherson might want to expand on that.

Mrs Mitcherson: I understand from JACS, because there has been a bit of work between both agencies of course, that there is a draft paper very close to being released for a targeted consultation. I do not want to put a time on that because it is JACS directorate, but I understand it is very close. I would say imminent, really. It will be targeted consultation around interested parties to have a look at that paper.

MRS KIKKERT: And that would also include external review on decisions made by CYPS? Is that what the committee is looking into as well?

Dr Collis: The committee scope is pretty much the Grandfield recommendation, which is to look at what decisions should be merit based, internally and externally. That is the scope of the paper.

MR STEEL: Can you provide some extra detail about what the adoption and permanency budget measure will achieve?

Ms Pappas: That measure is a result of the adoption task force in 2016 where there was a recommendation for some specialised staff within the directorate to progress adoptions and permanent care orders in a more timely manner. This budget initiative allows us to do that and to work in partnership with ACT Together who are the

pipeline in terms of undertaking both enduring parental responsibility and adoption assessments. The budget will allow us to increase our staff and staff of the government solicitor's office, because they also have a role in progressing adoption matters to the Supreme Court.

MR STEEL: Can you explain how the enduring parental responsibility process works?

Ms Pappas: It is a different permanent order. The enduring parental responsibility process requires a carer to put their hand up and say, "I would like to take on the responsibility the director-general currently has," that is, take on the role of the parent legally. They go through an assessment process which involves going to the carer assessment linking panel, a quality assurance panel that CYPS and ACT Together run to ensure the assessments coming through have dealt with all the issues the court might want to consider before they make the order. These include issues such as whether contact arrangements with biological families are in place, are the carer and the biological family developing, or do they have, a relationship to normalise as much as possible the experience of children, and have any issues that may have come up through the assessment been resolved. It is a process of quality assurance and ensuring there are no difficulties as the matter progresses to court.

The paperwork then goes to an application review committee, an internal committee where the director-general makes a decision whether to make an application to court. These kids are still in the care of the director-general, so the director-general needs to make that application. There is a signoff for whether the application is as it should be to progress to court, then the matter goes to the Children's Court for an enduring parental responsibility order or to the Supreme Court if it is an adoption order.

MR STEEL: Where will the extra resources be going in that process?

Ms Pappas: To the assessment support team which carries out the function around supporting the assessments and progressing the affidavit work and all of the evidence to progress the matters to court.

MR STEEL: That includes the Justice and Community Safety Directorate as well?

Ms Pappas: There will be some resource into justice and community safety for the adoption matters.

MRS KIKKERT: Does the director-general have parental rights over the child if a new carer has enduring parental responsibility?

Ms Pappas: The person who is awarded an EPR acts as the parent, so the child is no longer in the care of the director-general.

MRS KIKKERT: Zero parental responsibility from the director-general?

Ms Pappas: That is right. The carer or the kin carer is the legal parent of that child, so there is no reach into that family home. The family still have access to support; with an EPR they have access to some subsidies through ACT Together for ongoing

support. There is no legal interference by the director-general.

MRS KIKKERT: Have there been any cases where the director-general has interfered after an EPR has been signed?

Ms Pappas: There is no legal mandate so the director-general is unable to.

MRS KIKKERT: Not legal mandate; have there been cases before?

Ms Pappas: Not to my knowledge. The other way those families can come back into the system is where there has been a new report. The child and youth protection service close those cases and they go to ACT Together. But if there is a circumstance in that family that requires the child protection system to come back in through the front door in terms of an allegation of abuse or neglect that is possible. It does not happen very often. But in terms of the director-general making decisions about what happens in that family, that does not happen.

MR STEEL: I understand some specialists are working in the process to deal with some of the complexities. Are they based in the team you mentioned?

Ms Pappas: They will be. It will bring together the family information service, and some adoption specialisation we have around intercountry adoption. That effort will be consolidated into one team.

MR STEEL: Is there potential for extra resources for the intercountry adoption service as well, or is it focused on permanency?

Ms Pappas: Yes, it will be on permanency and adoption.

MR STEEL: How does that measure help to meet the recommendations of the adoption task force?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The focus of the task force was really about the timeliness and consistency of the adoption process, and resourcing was an issue. So we are directly addressing that issue of putting enough resource into the system to get a more timely outcome.

MR STEEL: One of the other recommendations was around communication of and information about the process. How will that be improved through this measure?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That was one of the early recommendations that was acted on. Helen can talk about how that has improved

Ms Pappas: I printed one last night to remind myself, so they look like this.

MR STEEL: Can you table that?

Ms Pappas: I can table them it, or you could go online. They are all available publicly so I am happy to table them. There is a series of them and they touch on all of the different aspects and types of adoption. They basically step people through the

process and some anticipated time frames: you can expect to wait X number of weeks or X number of months for this bit to happen. They help people understand what they are getting into and what to expect and, “When should I be putting my hand up? If it’s taken three months and I haven’t heard, it’s about now that I should be asking questions around where things are up to.”

With the additional resources we hope to be able to reduce some of the time frames associated with this, so once we know what that looks like we will be updating this. It goes through intercountry adoption, local adoption, step-parent adoption. Various options are available.

THE ACTING CHAIR: Ms Pappas, could you formally table that please.

Ms Pappas: Sure. It is only one of many.

MR STEEL: This is a completely left-of-field question so feel free to take it on notice. The Australian government a few years ago committed to looking at bringing on extra countries for the intercountry adoption process. Where are they up to with the countries they committed to work with, including the United States?

Ms Pappas: I will have to take that on notice. I can talk to you about the countries we currently have files with, but I cannot tell you about the other.

Dr Collis: There has been an increase. For instance, India has come back into the Australian government scope.

Mrs Kikkert asked before about EPRs and the role of the director-general and I want to clarify that. The enduring parental responsibility, as Ms Pappas talked about, provides ongoing financial support to those groups through subsidies and potentially specialist payments and so forth. From time to time there may be a request to vary that situation, in which case the director-general would also have a role to play in terms of determining whether that funding request is within the policy guidelines.

MRS KIKKERT: But he would only come on board if the carer is actually asking for very different—

Dr Collis: Yes, if the carer requests. I just want to be clear that there is a case where that could happen but it would only come on board for the carer.

MRS KIKKERT: Thank you for clarifying that. Page 76 of the Glanfield inquiry states that decisions regarding a child’s placement are not subject to judicial review. In your opinion is this incorrect in light of what was discussed previously?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think this is confusing because it is a question of what is meant by “review”.

Dr Collis: What the courts are doing—and this is a really judicial question and is partly why the getting to a discussion paper is really complex—is getting language and concepts all lined up across jurisdictions and internally to the jurisdiction. What we were talking about before was that there are internal review mechanisms. When

someone is dissatisfied and makes application to the court, the court would not see themselves as reviewing the child protection decision; the court would be making a decision on that basis.

MRS KIKKERT: On the basis of the evidence provided to them by the carer?

Dr Collis: Yes, based on the evidence. Literally speaking, the Glanfield text is right: the court is not reviewing a decision of the director-general. From the court's point of view, they are making a decision and they will be incorporating the information that all parties, including the Director-General, put before them.

In essence, the reality of that—in a practical test of what a review is—is that it is a way of contesting a decision of the director-general. But it is true in the legislation and in terms of how the courts would see it. They would not see that they are reviewing a decision; they are looking at a brand new decision and they are going to make that decision.

MRS KIKKERT: Just amending their orders to CYPS.

Dr Collis: Yes. That is why the two statements sometimes get confused. We have to unpack that when we go to looking at the discussion papers. It is a really legal, fine point that it is not a review, but it is a decision-making process that allows someone to contest a decision.

MRS KIKKERT: Does the magistrate then decide, “Okay, so we heard the aunt is not a suitable person to have this young person”? Does the judge say that specifically on his amendment or will it be something more broad, more general? Is he quite specific with his recommendation or with his amendments? That is what I am trying to say.

Dr Collis: The magistrate can make as specific or as broad a recommendation as possible, particularly in terms of contact provisions. It is not unusual for them to be very specific: there will be this number of visits and they will occur in this way.

My broad view would be that a residency provision—I defer to Ms Pappas—can be fairly specific; that is, that the person resides with that person. In terms of who cannot and who will not be involved in that circumstance, I am not sure that is something that the magistrate goes to.

MRS KIKKERT: Does the magistrate decide without the carer or without the applicants in court? Is it a face-to-face communication with the judge and the carer? Can he decide in his office?

Ms Pappas: No, it is a proper court process. The parties are present, whether they are self-representing or have legal representation, and the order will be the decision—“I decide Jane Smith” and names Jane Smith in the order. As I said, it does not happen that often. It is not a pathway that people will pick or choose to use, but it can be that specific. That is based on all of the evidence: it is the evidence that the DG might put up; evidence that a carer might put up; and evidence that another party might put up. All of that is considered. A decision is then made, which can be very specific.

Dr Collis: In terms of decisions under the act—Ms Pappas talked about this before—there are best interest decisions which go to matters of day-to-day living and circumstances for children. Then there are administrative decisions, which go to authorisation of people and so forth.

By and large, the administrative decisions have a review into the ACT Administrative and Civil Tribunal. The best interest principles are decisions made through the children's court. It is worth noting that the ACT have had for some time a children's court magistrate dedicated. It is true in my experience, going back as long as I can think, that those magistrates make it a basis of their practice to become very skilled and very informed about children, family law and the nature of those decisions. We are very lucky to have that, rather than have magistrates who do not have experience in that area making those very momentous decisions for families.

MRS KIKKERT: Okay, thank you.

Mrs Mitcherson: Chair, before you ask the next question, could I clarify for Ms Le Couteur the members of the CYPQAI committee. There are four external members. There were five until Jo Wood joined us from the Coordinator-General for Family Safety. She was with CSD and with JACS and came to us.

MS LE COUTEUR: So she is the same human being; just changed her classification.

Mrs Mitcherson: There are seven all up. I just wanted to clarify that: four external, three internal and the secretariat.

Ms Stephen-Smith: And the three internal are Jo Wood, the Coordinator-General for Family Safety; the director-general of the CSD; and the executive director of CYPS.

MS CHEYNE: Yesterday I saw some grants were announced. I looked up the papers and saw 14 grant programs. I knew we had quite a few, but I did not know that we had 14, not including scholarships and things like that. I was wondering who they are targeted at? Yesterday I saw some examples of what you said about the types of recipients and what they were supporting. I am keen to hear about that in the next 114 seconds.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The grant outcomes announced yesterday were the community support and infrastructure grants and the participation (digital communities) grants. There is a wide array of community organisations that they support. There is everything from multicultural theatre groups, sports groups to community support organisations applying for these types of things. They are really about recognising that these small community organisations are a very important glue for our community. But they are often volunteer-run and volunteer-led, and cannot necessarily afford to upgrade their digital infrastructure or their physical infrastructure or do some of the training and stuff that they want to do.

Ms Evans: There are many different grant programs. Quite a number of them sit in inclusion and participation. We have the digital and the infrastructure grants that have been announced. Later in the year we will also have the multicultural participation

grants program. It covers our multicultural radio grants, our grants provided for people to engage with the Multicultural Festival, upgrading their costumes, performance, materials, that sort of thing.

We also have a number of grants in our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander portfolio areas around our Aboriginal leadership, scholarships and things like that. There are a couple more. We have seniors and veterans, and youth interact grants.

They are very broad. As the minister has already described, in the main they are smaller buckets of money acknowledging that non-profit and volunteer-led organisations often do not have another source of funding besides that which their members contribute. It often allows for upgrades to materials or new projects to be started, that sort of thing. They do not usually support things like staffing or ongoing costs, but just your one-off kind of costs.

MS CHEYNE: What is the most valuable scholarship you give out?

Ms Evans: Probably in terms of scholarships, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship and leadership are larger than the youth. We have a standard youth interact scholarship of \$1,500 that is open all the time. If you have young people looking to do something in their community, they should look at it. It is assessed every month. There are other grant programs, but the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ones are some of the bigger leadership and scholarship grants.

Ms Stephen-Smith: In Youth InterACT there is up to \$5,000 for young people attending a sporting, a personal or career development opportunity. Each of the rounds has different amounts depending on whether it is a group, a community service organisation or an individual applying. Certainly all of that is up on our website on our grants page. All that material is there.

Ms Sabellico: Both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and scholarship grants are capped at \$5,000. If people are applying, all the eligibility criteria are online. There are other elements to be met in terms of being eligible.

Hearing suspended from 12.31 to 1.59 pm.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the afternoon session. We are continuing on with the Community Services Directorate. We are now looking at output class 2.3, inclusion and participation, with Minister Stephen-Smith in her capacity as minister for children, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Multicultural Affairs. Ms Le Couteur, we will go to you.

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is about young people's engagement. Last time the Youth Coalition, which is obviously the key body representing this cohort of people, undertook their rate Canberra survey, only a third of young people felt valued by their community, which is very sad. What is in the budget to support participation and engagement in the community; not just engagement in school, that is obviously not you, but the broader community?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Someone will be able to talk about the Youth InterACT program

more broadly. One of the things we have committed to doing—not reflected in the budget specifically—is that you might be aware that the commonwealth government defunded national Youth Week. The ACT government has committed to continuing funding for the celebration of Youth Week.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is good. I had not realised they had defunded it.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. That is delivered as part of our Youth InterACT broader program. I mentioned earlier the Youth InterACT scholarships, which are consistently open every month, a \$1,500 scholarship, and there are Youth InterACT grants as well. Part of that is about ensuring that children and young people and the organisations that support them have the opportunity—and Youth Co is a really strong partner in Youth Week, for example—to undertake activities that engage young people in their community, and give them an opportunity to talk about the issues that are important to them.

Ms Evans: There is a range of different funding opportunities for young people through the Youth InterACT strategy. As the minister has already mentioned, we had \$25,000 in the Youth InterACT grants program. We received 30 grant applications, and we have funded 19 of those, so that was a good, strong round with decent competition amongst the applicants.

We also provide Youth InterACT scholarships. They can be between \$500 and \$1,500 for young people to engage with the community. They are open all year round. This is where a young person finds that they are going to be representing Youth Rotary or something overseas, and they might want some funding to support them, those kind of opportunities.

In 2017-18 there were 42 youth scholarships awarded through that process, and there were activities related to education, such as CIT courses and driving lessons for young people who need that kind of support to attend different things, sporting events, conferences; \$22,000 was the commitment there.

We also have funding that relates to the Young Canberra Citizen of the Year. We had 20 applications for that in four award categories in 2018, so that was really pleasing. The young lady who is Young Canberra Citizen of the Year is Ms Dhani Gilbert. Most of you have probably met her or seen her speak in recent times, and she is a very impressive young lady.

They are the main commitments that we have. In addition we support and fund a number of events, through Youth Week and through Youth Co's broader reach, and we have our youth advisory committee. We have a small staff in my division that supports the Youth Advisory Council in policy work.

MS LE COUTEUR: There are lots of strategic indicators in the budget about participation. We have age-friendly city and NDIS. There is nothing that I am aware of that is about young people's inclusion and engagement. Am I correct in that? Is it something that you are looking at, given that they are a significant cohort, and, as I said, Youth Co's survey suggests that they do not feel that they are valued by our community?

Ms Evans: In the longer run we have had these measures embedded. Maybe they do not come up as readily in the current budget papers. It comes in under “young people”. In the budget paper that speaks to the range of proposals, on pages 68 and 69, it tries to capture some of the work that is being done there in terms of the Youth InterACT strategy being that main platform. We also have the blueprint for youth justice, which is a really significant piece of work. There is now some dedicated outreach around mental health and young people. Young people themselves, including our youth advisory council, tell us that is really significant. It is something that they are very interested in knowing more about and having more influence in, around mental health.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am specifically interested in indicators.

Ms Evans: I do not think we currently have any indicators that are specifically around youth, notwithstanding the number of programs and—

MS LE COUTEUR: I am not saying there are no programs.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Ms Le Couteur, we would certainly be happy to take that on board. The development of indicators is an ongoing process regarding what you can measure and what it is really telling us. We have a round of reviewing indicators. Mr Hubbard might want to talk a bit about how that process works.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, we try to refresh the indicators as circumstances change. As the minister said, if anyone would like to see an indicator included in our performance indicators, we are more than happy to do it. We usually take suggestions from quite a few different people in different groups, and test them for a year just to make sure that the data that underlies the indicator gets reported quarterly and is sustainable and credible from the source. We can definitely have a look at that and put it into our list of performance indicators that we can include in the following year.

MS LE COUTEUR: That would be great, because young people clearly have some specific concerns, issues and views of Canberra. On that note, were young people consulted in the development of the young workers advice service? I assume the answer is yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: That sits in my other portfolio.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am sorry, minister.

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is okay. Part of that is in response to the evidence that the Youth Coalition gave to the inquiry into insecure work, as well as the evidence that unions gave to that inquiry in relation to the degree to which young people are potentially exploited and vulnerable in employment. Youth Co were not specifically consulted about whether or not we should have one, but we will certainly be consulting with them about how it should be established and how it will best reach out to young people.

MRS KIKKERT: The Youth Coalition of the ACT noted that a lack of secure accommodation and employment creates despair among young people, robbing them

of a sense of their future. What specific measures have you taken on board to be included in the budget in supporting youth with being unemployed, and youth homelessness? I understand this has been an issue with Youth Coalition for a number of years. What have you taken on board to support that?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We have previously provided you with a very comprehensive response in relation to youth employment in response to a question on notice. It was a two or three-page response in terms of what the ACT government does in supporting youth employment and training. I do not have that with me—

MRS KIKKERT: Anything from this budget, the 2018-19 budget?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We will have the youth advice service. That will support young people in terms of their employment relationships. This portfolio is not really the place to talk about what is in the budget for training at the CIT; obviously there is an ongoing commitment by the government to training. In relation to housing and homelessness, you are probably better off asking that question when Minister Berry is here.

MRS KIKKERT: Speaking about training, I understand that the multicultural community have a work experience and support program. It is a fantastic program. Do you see something like that being provided to youth, and also multicultural youth?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We have made a \$1.4 million election commitment to support increased job brokerage and English language training for new migrants, refugees and our new arrivals from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

MRS KIKKERT: Specifically for youth, though? I understand that—

Ms Stephen-Smith: So the multicultural—

MRS KIKKERT: The question is in regard to youth.

Ms Stephen-Smith: If I can finish my answer—

MRS KIKKERT: Yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The Multicultural Employment Service, which has been funded for a year to expand their services, is part of the same organisation as Multicultural Youth Services, and they support young people in terms of their access to employment, both in terms of job brokerage services and in terms of understanding Australian workplace culture and rights and responsibilities.

MRS KIKKERT: What about youth in general, instead of just the multicultural community?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think we have just—

Mrs Mitcherson: In terms of WESP, it is not restricted by age. Young people can apply for that as well, and we extended that by five, from 20 to 25, this year. It

continues to be highly subscribed and very popular.

MRS KIKKERT: Is Youth Coalition aware of that?

Mrs Mitcherson: I can't speak on behalf of the Youth Coalition, but I am sure—

Ms Evans: The increase has been made publicly available but we have not specifically mentioned it to them, I do not believe.

Mrs Mitcherson: Certainly, quite a number of WESP graduates end up getting jobs in the directorates as well. Also this directorate, along with all the other directorates, does subscribe to a fairly strong graduate program for young people generally, in terms of graduating and coming straight into the public service. So there is a very strong program around that.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is also in regard to employment. It has been recommended that young people exiting out of home care be given work experience to make their transition easier. Currently, what specific supports are provided to care leavers to increase the success of their move into full-time work?

Dr Collis: I will take that generally to start off with. The transition of young people from out of home care to adulthood commences, we hope, early—it depends on the individual circumstances—and with the transition care plan. We have a committee meeting set up with the out of home care providers, Education, and Community Services Directorate, to coordinate educational outcomes and to look into how we can work to improve those over time. The last time that was surveyed in the national survey, the ACT had the highest level of educational attainment from the out of home care population. We were pleased with that, but there is still work to be done in that area.

We very much would like young people in out of home care to, first of all, be provided with quality services through the universal system of education and training, through CIT and so forth. However, we acknowledge that for many young people leaving care is a really critical time. That is why, as part of step up for our kids, we initiated legislation and then funded that so that we could support young people, support their living arrangements, to 21 if that would support them living with a carer who could support them into education. Primarily, the reason is that we know that a disruption at this time disrupts that valuable education into a training regime.

Currently, we have that process in place. There are young people who are being supported in that way. And for some time now we have provided a service to young people up to 25 for general “after-market service”, for them to come back to talk to us and have the capability to hook into the appropriate mainstream providers.

I might hand over to Helen for any specifics around that.

Ms Pappas: All I would add is that in terms of transition in out of home care, the idea is that from the age of 15 young people would be engaged in conversations about what it would look like for them once they had finished high school and college, and what their plans were around living within their existing arrangements or moving off

to independent employment or further education. That conversation is a growing conversation from about the age of 15. It is very individualised, and it does move according to where that young person sees their future.

That support continues, as Dr Collis said, until people are 25 years old. They can come back and keep getting either some intensive support or some light touch support, depending on what their circumstances are. And young people have the opportunity to contribute to their planning and what that looks like, and to take more and more responsibility: as they become young adults, to take charge of what they are wanting their employment and education career to look like.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I can provide a bit more information in response to Ms Le Couteur's earlier question. There are also a number of indicators in relation to the wellbeing of children and young people in the publication *A picture of ACT's children and young people*. That is currently being updated. The latest report that was finalised was for 2016. One of the indicators being developed at that time was government consultation with children and young people, and trying to capture the data around how we are hearing children's and young people's voices. That work is underway.

Dr Collis: Can I add to that? As part of the step up for our kids framework, the voice of children is part of the evaluation framework, so engagement in that is also specifically with that small population of young people.

MS ORR: My question is on the multicultural sector. Minister, the National Multicultural Festival, as I am sure you are aware, is one of the landmarks of the Canberra calendar. I would be very surprised if you were not aware of that. Following the 2018 festival, you indicated that a review would take place. I just wanted to get a bit more info on that review, starting with what it is looking at.

Ms Stephen-Smith: That review is currently underway. There are a number of aspects to the things that it is looking at. We have had some work done on the financial basis of the event. There is currently a YourSay consultation open to get broad community views in addition to all the survey information that we get at the festival. Then, obviously, the reviewers are talking to people.

It will feed into both any changes that need to be made to the participation policy for 2019 and also the longer term future of the festival and how it can be shaped. Some of the feedback that we have had from community groups has been about whether the festival is getting—I think it is still an open question—too big and too commercial, and how we balance the community nature of the festival with its financial sustainability and some element of commercial stores, which are very popular with the public.

Ms Evans: We continue every year to look at the continuous improvement aspects of reviewing the festival. We use a range of different tools. There is some surveying that is done immediately after the festival at a very broad community sort of level. That is around people's satisfaction, safety, family friendliness and those kinds of aspects. The importance of that is that whilst it is still fresh in people's minds, it is really good to get a sense each year of what their impressions were of the festival. We capture that

every year. I was just trying to go through that; I am trying to manage the paper versions and the electronic versions. There are certainly some figures that I can talk to you about.

Further to that, as the minister said, we are reviewing on a number of levels. We always want to make sure that the very important part of the community, the actual stallholders, participants and performers, have their opportunity. There was a long review process afterwards, with some meetings and forums for people to give their feedback. There was written feedback that we have received. We pull all those things together as a continuous improvement exercise.

MS ORR: Do you want to take a moment to quickly find some of those figures?

Ms Evans: I am more than happy to. If I can find them, I will give them now. I will just take a second to dig through it.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Do you want to come back to that?

MS ORR: Yes. I have a follow-up. You mentioned some of the things you have done as far as ways that you can participate in a review with the feedback so easily are concerned. But who can participate is probably a valid part to that.

Ms Stephen-Smith: There is now a survey up on YourSay, so anyone can participate. I would encourage you to share it among your social media networks, et cetera because we want to really get feedback from everybody. There is a capacity within the survey, I think—certainly the version I saw before it went up—to identify whether you are responding as a stall holder, a performer, a festival goer, or in some other capacity. We can break that down among the responses that we get from people to see the perspective that they are coming from as well.

Ms Evans: I have found the document I was looking for. Thank you for waiting. The kinds of things were as follows. Likely return attendance: 82 per cent of the attendees said they would be likely to return, which was really positive; 44 per cent of people who were visitors said they would definitely return to see more of Canberra after their experience of just coming for the festival, so that was really positive. It is those kinds of figures that we have available to us through our initial surveying.

MS ORR: And the initial surveying is done at the Multicultural Festival?

Ms Evans: No, it is done as a phone survey afterwards, by an independent surveyor. It breaks it right down to the countries that people might have been from and the family profile of the people who were attending, that sort of thing, whether it was couples or families.

MS ORR: Is there anything you can let us know about the profile of people who are attending? Is it family groups? Is it young people just wanting to eat a lot of food?

Ms Evans: It is quite diverse. For instance, for couples without children, there were 19 per cent, so nearly 20 per cent of people were just couples. It does not say what age. The proportion identifying as family with mainly young children yet to attend school

was 12 per cent, and family with adult children still at home was 10 per cent. It is really quite varied, but 10 to 20 per cent of each designated group attending, so that is good.

MS ORR: You would have got a lot of different age groups, family structures and so forth. How do you position the festival so it accommodates such a broad base of interest?

Ms Evans: I think the simplest answer to that is that the festival is an opportunity for us to showcase the really diverse community that we have in the ACT and the remarkable and very cohesive multicultural community and the way that they interact with each other and with the broad community.

The way that we approach it is to look at how we can enhance that cohesion and what we can do about spreading that word that we are an inclusive community. The approach to the festival is very much one of making it family friendly and making it very much accessible for all ages. This year we increased the number of supports there for families with young children in terms of the children's sanctuary and having a quiet place for families, for older people and also for people with disability to be able to access. Every year we have really tried to focus in on that and the particular setting. Sometimes it is really hot; sometimes it is raining. It is part of our city, so it is very busy. We have had opportunities to improve on that throughout the years.

I think the general response to the question is that the focus is around the fact that this is such a big event, and a lot of people attend, so we want it to be the most accessible it can be for all those different groups.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Credit needs to go to the organising team for the work that has been done over the past couple of years around how we make it more family friendly. From the survey results, the comparison of this year's festival to last year's festival shows a significant increase in people seeing it as a family-friendly event. There was the work for the children's sanctuary, which was in its second year this year and was expanded to include some more activities engaging both the Civic library and the activities that were on at CMAG. They were really well received by families. From running into people who had gone there, I know that, as Ms Evans said, it is a continuous work in progress but a really exciting part of where the festival is heading.

MS ORR: If you can indulge me here I want to raise anecdotally my own experience of the past few multicultural festivals. One of the things I hear quite a bit from people is that it gets quite crowded when walking around. While we are talking about this, what measures are you taking, or can you take, in order to help people move around the festival a little more freely? Particularly from an access point of view if you have got a mobility issue it can be quite difficult.

Ms Evans: This year we did have some improvements that we were really pleased with in terms of accessibility. Where the stalls were, we actually allowed a free corridor behind them which we did not have previously. Before that there were often cords or things. We cordoned off the bits behind the stalls—you might have the back of the Canberra Centre and then a stall—which meant that if you were in front of the stalls looking for food you could travel freely. We did have, I think, an improvement

in terms of that, which was well received.

However, I have got to say that one of the things people said was, “Make it easier for us to move around.” On the footprint, we have tried a number of different ways to really facilitate that movement and there are certain parts of the festival that are easier than others. Certainly if you went up to where the Pacific Islander showcase was this year, that was, I think, a little freer to move around. It does not have the same street art and things in the middle of it.

I think every year we have really tried to look at that. The temptation would be to spread it out more but what we then find is that some communities will say to us, “We missed out on crowds passing by.” They would probably not be happy if we said, “Actually we are going to move you out a bit further,” because then you lose that through flow.

MS ORR: It is finding that balance between using the—

Ms Evans: It is a balancing act, yes.

MS ORR: Not just growing the footprint but using the footprint that is there as best as possible?

Ms Evans: Yes. I think that is why, as I said, it is a continuous improvement activity every year. You cannot just land it and say, “It is perfect,” because our population is changing, the groups who are applying to perform or to participate are changing each year. We do have to tweak it each time.

MRS KIKKERT: As a supp question, this year’s budget includes \$255,000 to strengthen the National Multicultural Festival. What concerns or issues resulted in this budget increase being necessary and what exactly is the money being spent on?

MS ORR: Mrs Kikkert, you have almost guessed one of my supplementaries. I had that there was an additional \$550,000 in funding. While we are on the topic of funding, can you clarify the amount?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is \$250,000 in 2018-19, and \$550,000 over the four years. The \$250,000 is essentially \$100,000 in base funding for the festival for each of the four years. That just recognises that the festival grew in 2013 with some extra funding. That funding lasted for a couple of years but the festival did not get smaller when that additional funding went away. It has been cross-subsidised within CSD. That is recognising the kind of reality of the cost of the festival.

The rest of the \$250,000 in 2018-19 is for staffing, just for the first half of this financial year while we are undertaking the review. It is an opportunity to say, “We are undertaking the review and we will have a look at whether we need some additional resourcing going forward on top of this.” But this is really ensuring that we have got the base line funding that we need to sustain the festival.

MS ORR: What is the time line for the review? When will you be looking at—

Ms Stephen-Smith: The your say is open for about three weeks. It is quite a quick turnaround but it is a pulse survey, not a detailed consultation. I think we are expecting the review to be completed around August and have some findings out of that. We obviously need to have the participation policy done in time for stallholders to be able to apply, in time for that detailed work to be done around the layout and everything. It is quite a long lead time. That stallholder application process is going to have to go ahead in August, September, otherwise we are going to miss the time frame. The parts of the review that feed into the participation policy will have to be done by then but then there may be further government consideration of anything else that comes out of the review that may be feeding into other processes.

MRS KIKKERT: Speaking about stalls, why is there an increase in stall hiring?

Ms Evans: As in the cost?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The cost?

MRS KIKKERT: Yes. It has increased over the past couple of years.

Ms Evans: We basically pass on a small amount of the cost to put up each stall, to connect the electricity, the cleaning that is required. We get quite a lot of, as you can imagine, grease spillage and that sort of thing. We have to have some specific cleaning done afterwards. While the budget covers quite a lot of the costs, that small amount helps us to make sure that stallholders actually appreciate the fact that some of that infrastructure is there for them. Often we find that that means that they understand the commitment that they have made. We have that small fee. It has gone up slightly along with costs that have increased over the years.

MRS KIKKERT: To a lot of community members it is not a small fee at all, it is a huge financial burden on them.

Ms Evans: It was \$150 in the last—

MS ORR: That was \$150 for the total?

Ms Evans: Yes, for their participation. I understand—and often community groups do come to us—that quite a lot of them will apply for some funding through the grants process which will be run later this year for each of the festivals. We try to assist where we can and we do try to make sure that each community group is aware that that small fee might come off that little bit of fundraising that they are doing as they go along.

Mrs Mitcherson: We certainly acknowledge that some community organisations are wealthier than others and we certainly take representations if someone is really struggling. We do not look to recover costs. In fact, CSD staffing in-kind is quite considerable. It is a three-day event but when you have got 340 stallholders and however many performers your phone never stops ringing in that little unit.

We have contracts we have to set up with the people who set up the stalls, electrical contracts, and it has all got to be mapped out exactly where a stall is going to go and

whether they want three-phase power. It is quite involved and quite a lot of work. It is not full-cut cost recovery. Certainly some community groups are new or emerging and we certainly work with them to help. Others are able to meet that cost as well. We are very aware of the differences in the community as well. As Jacinta said, the grants process allows for assistance in that area as well but it is certainly not a cost-recovery process at all.

MS ORR: Picking up on that, you mentioned, Mrs Mitcherson, that for a three-day event it is a lot of work. How much prep work do you actually have to do for it? We all see it for three days.

Mrs Mitcherson: There is a very big spreadsheet and a very big game chart of things we have to do. It is a huge amount of work that starts very early on and then goes for a good six months. There are people working on it now and then it will rev up in the last few months. Like I say, it is a big spreadsheet, it is a bit game chart.

We have been doing this for 21 years or 22 years now and we are still learning. We know where all our costs are. I can assure you that Mr Hubbard knows where every dollar is spent. We are very resourceful.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think the other thing that needs to be taken into account is the fact that the security environment has changed over the past few years. There is an enormous amount of work coordinating with other government agencies around everything from threats of terrorism to food safety to the safety of putting up the stalls and the stages. There are inspectors from other agencies on site during the day and that all needs to be coordinated.

Mrs Mitcherson: WorkSafe inspectors.

Ms Stephen-Smith: There is training for the stallholders and information sessions for the stallholders and showcase organisers beforehand and that all needs to be organised and people need to organise for them to come in and do that.

Mrs Mitcherson: Training for our volunteers.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, training for volunteers.

MS ORR: I was going to ask how many volunteers.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, coordination with and contacting Volunteering ACT which coordinates the main body of volunteers. There are a whole heap of moving parts that most people who go along to the festival do not see.

MS ORR: While we are talking about the festival, and within this area of responsibility, with the Reconciliation Day public holiday, the first one was this year. It is probably not quite as big an organising task as the Multicultural Festival, but I note that we have ongoing funding for the Reconciliation Day event. Can you run through a little bit of what you did this year and where you are thinking of going?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will hand over to Anne-Maree because I will get too excited.

Ms Sabellico: Given this was the first Reconciliation Day event and public holiday, it was important to engage significantly with community members. We established a Reconciliation Day council. There were also some ambassadors appointed. Those ambassadors were both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people who assisted us to look at the day itself, events leading up to Reconciliation Day and the event in the park, and the week following, so that we were getting the most out of the event itself and complementing all of the other activities that were happening in the week.

We worked very closely with Events ACT. Of the funding available, \$150,000 was specifically for the event. An events coordinator brought in all of the equipment items, and we spent months looking at what we were going to do on the day and how long it was going to be. We had some consultations around specifically what people would like to see on the day, and developed the program of work from there. That also included some consultation with the elected body around the day.

The work that CSD did primarily was from the office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. They undertook a lot of the community engagement, talking with different agencies to bring together the views of the community in terms of what was important about the very first Reconciliation Day.

MS ORR: What were some of the things they said and how was that reflected in what happened on the day?

Ms Sabellico: The most important thing was that this was about having conversations; for people to take the opportunity to talk to elders in the community, and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community as well, and truly understand the whole process of reconciliation, what it means and the journey that still needs to be undertaken.

There was also a lot around needing to be focused on family. We had lots of activities for children. The day was really planned around that. The large activity that the Red Cross ran for children was an art exercise that then went on to be displayed. There was also a large piece of work; we put up a big map and everybody got to identify where their country was from, and started to have conversations with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff on the day. Again we are working through how to now display that for Canberrans in terms of it being a very significant piece of work that was achieved on the day.

Of the funding made available, there was \$50,000 for grants for Reconciliation Day. We opened those grants up early enough to be able to also support events leading up to Reconciliation Day. A number of the grants were for schools, and schools that were particularly going to engage with the community, elders and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in their events. There were other grants that were focused specifically on community events, leading up to and post Reconciliation Day.

MS ORR: What were some of the things that came out of that grants program?

Ms Sabellico: A number of grants were for Indigenous food—being able to prepare

and understand the use of bush tucker in cooking. There were community barbecues. The Tuggeranong Netball Association had a reconciliation round, so there was funding for that. Cultural camps, afternoon tea, any event that allowed the broader community to come together to start to have conversations and really focus on reconciliation.

MS ORR: You mentioned that there was a Reconciliation Day council that was involved in overseeing the making of this day. You said a little bit about what role they played, but who was actually on the council?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The council was co-chaired by Dr Chris Bourke and Genevieve Jacobs. As Ms Sabellico said, it had a combination of prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members and non-Indigenous members. We can give you the whole list, if you like. Tom Calma, who is Chancellor of the University of Canberra and co-chair of Reconciliation Australia, was on it; Selina Walker, Barnardos Mother of the Year and prominent Ngunnawal woman; Di Kargas, Canberra Citizen of the Year; Katrina Fanning, the chair of the elective body; Alan Tongue—

Mrs Mitcherson: Matt Davies, CEO of Red Cross.

MS ORR: How many people attended the first event?

Ms Sabellico: Events ACT have assessed that there were about 8,000 in attendance on the day.

MS ORR: That was just on the day; that does not include the lead-up events and activities?

Ms Sabellico: That was just on the day. We have not accounted for the others yet.

MS ORR: With the funding to do the event again, through this conversation there has been quite a bit about engaging the Indigenous community within Canberra. How will you be keeping them involved in shaping the coming phase?

Ms Stephen-Smith: When we established the Reconciliation Day council it was to help us prepare for the event on Reconciliation Day and to help us to evaluate that. The council will be meeting again soon to reflect on the event and the activities leading up to it and to provide some advice about how we might shape the future going forward, including any ongoing role for the council.

MR MILLIGAN: We have so little time to talk about Indigenous affairs during this budget consideration. While we are on Reconciliation Day, with the grants, you have allocated \$150,000 for the government to spend and \$50,000 for community groups. Is that ratio looking to change over the next couple of years or will it stay at \$50,000 for outside organisations to get involved?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The expectation is for there to be \$150,000 for the event, which is, relatively speaking, a pretty modest amount of funding for a major community event. There is \$50,000 specifically for the Reconciliation Day grants program. There

are also a range of grants programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members.

It is really important, when we are having this conversation about reconciliation, to emphasise that reconciliation is everyone's business. It is not necessarily about providing \$50,000 in grants to Aboriginal community organisations. There might be other organisations that want to promote reconciliation by engaging with the traditional custodians or whatever. There is a range of other grant programs that are specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and community organisations. Ms Sabellico can talk about that.

Ms Sabellico: We also have three other grants programs, totalling about \$200,000 per annum. There are cultural grants, which is for about \$40,000. There are leadership and scholarship grants as well. They are open for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and adults to apply. Up to about \$5,000 per grant is made available across all of those. We are in the middle of reviewing the way in which we open and close those grants to make sure that they are more available throughout the year, particularly the leadership and scholarship grants, for people to apply for as needed, rather than only through certain windows of opportunity.

MR MILLIGAN: Was the full \$50,000 in grants awarded?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Actually, more than \$50,000 was awarded because some money was found from elsewhere in the directorate to ensure that some additional worthy activities could be—

MR MILLIGAN: Have you budgeted for that expectation for the years going forward?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We will have to play it by ear around what is available.

Ms Sabellico: It was about \$68,000 for Reconciliation Day grants. Because of the number of grants that were applied for and the number found to be suitable and appropriate, we found the dollars to do so.

MR MILLIGAN: In relation to the council, it is my understanding that the people were appointed by the minister. Is the government considering opening that to the public for expressions of interest from anyone who might be interested in joining that council?

Ms Stephen-Smith: When we get advice from the council on what they think should happen going forward; we will certainly look at that. The ministerial appointments—

MR MILLIGAN: To join the council?

Ms Stephen-Smith: How any ongoing council, if it exists, may be appointed. It was really a time frame issue around trying to get a council together within a fairly short space of time. We did consult with a few people, including Katrina Fanning, the chair of the elected body, around the appropriate make-up of that.

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The other thing I would say about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants program is that it does have a history, over the past few years, of being under-subscribed overall. One of the things that we are looking at in this review process is how we can better publicise the program, how we can better design it, so that it is easier for people to apply at a time that is appropriate.

It is always an issue with annual grants programs. If it is in a specific community space, they might know that an annual grants program comes up at such-and-such a time every year but, for others, particularly where individuals are applying, you might need to open it more often. These programs have a history of being opened every six months, but we are looking at how we can encourage people to apply and get funding.

MS ORR: The grants are there for the community, but it seemed that there was a suggestion there that Reconciliation Day was a government thing. Was the community involved in that as well? Could you clarify that for me, because I am trying to get my thoughts clear.

Ms Sabellico: With the \$150,000, the funding was used to engage a consultant to help to do the events coordination and bring it all together. The rest of the funding was used to establish the event, which was a community event, and to support the different stalls and everything else, so that people could participate. Reconciliation Australia, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council and OATSIA were there. The Red Cross was there. All of the infrastructure was put up to support the community being able to participate and engage.

Ms Stephen-Smith: And the performers.

Ms Sabellico: And the performers.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Let's not forget Busby Marou.

Ms Sabellico: That is right.

MRS KIKKERT: My question is about the multicultural framework 2015-20. It is committed to supporting ongoing funding to programs that assist refugees to settle in Canberra. Aside from funding to support the English language programs in MARSS, will any funding from this budget be given to support other programs and services delivered by MARSS in working to support individuals in ethnic communities? I understand you mentioned earlier that there is funding for other community multicultural services, but I specifically want to know if there is more budget for MARSS to continue providing services to refugees and migrants.

Ms Stephen-Smith: In addition to the \$40,000 a year we have committed to them to expand their English language programs?

MRS KIKKERT: Yes, because they offer other services besides English classes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. A lot of their services have historically been and continue to be funded by the federal government. The federal government is the primary funder of settlement services in Australia. We also fund MARSS for a range of activities, but

the federal government is the primary funder. Apart from that additional \$40,000 a year we have just announced, there is no specific funding in this budget specifically for MARSS.

MRS KIKKERT: If the federal government decides not to continue funding their other services, would you consider doing so?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The federal government, to my understanding, is unlikely to stop funding the services. It may be that MARSS may not be successful in a competitive tender to deliver those services, but in that case those services would be delivered by another organisation. It was the case recently that MARSS was unsuccessful in a tender process and that particular element of service delivery has moved to Red Cross. It is not that the services are no longer being delivered; they are being delivered by a different organisation.

MRS KIKKERT: As we know, some of clients transferred from MARSS to the Red Cross are falling through the cracks. Red Cross and MARSS are quite aware of that, and MARSS are picking up those clients that are supposed to be clients of Red Cross. If Red Cross is not supporting the refugees and migrants but MARSS can, will you consider supporting them in the future if they cannot get that budget?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not sure I accept the premise of the question that Red Cross is not doing the work it is funded to do. I am happy to have a conversation with MARSS, but this is a federally funded program and there are always issues in transition. I hope MARSS and Red Cross could work together to ensure that any clients that MARSS has are able to transition to being supported by Red Cross. That would be the ideal outcome. That is why there is often a transition period where services understand a service is transitioning from one provider to another. Our expectation and hope is always that service providers will work together collaboratively to ensure people can transition from one service provider to another.

MRS KIKKERT: It is not working appropriately, but thank you.

MR MILLIGAN: Given the short time left I will try to roll seven or eight questions into one. I will start with Gugan Gulwan and the \$150,000 that has been allocated for finding suitable accommodation. What are the deliverables for that and does that include the possibility of Gugan extending their current premises? Do you have a time frame in which you hope something can be achieved?

Mrs Mitcherson: CSD has taken the lead on this project. We will have input from other directorates as appropriate; we already have personnel identified for that. Anne-Maree and I have met briefly with Kim so we will be looking to establish exactly what their needs are going forward in the next month or so. As you say, there are current premises. I was out there last week, and if we were going to consider going up we would probably have to get some advice from a structural engineer, but I think we would look at that. Gugan love where they are, but we need to look at the whole master planning for that area. We hope to have that work wrapped up with some options for government in the next six months to eight months.

Ms Sabellico: Part of that work will be not just to look at what they need now, but

also to project what we might need into the future. It will be really important to understand that before we start to look at options.

Mrs Mitcherson: We will certainly be looking at census data, the current client base and the growth in the area where they are going to be so we do not get a situation where within a couple of years they are out of meeting spaces or places for groups to operate.

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is important to emphasise that this is also looking at whether there are—I know it has been explored many times—existing facilities that may be appropriate for Gugan to move to. That is part of this consideration as well. We are not locked in to any one stream at this point.

MR MILLIGAN: Given the announcement last week of the functional family therapy—that is great to see—where will they be hosted primarily? Will they be hosted at Gugan? I realise they have conferencing within the homes, but where else?

Mrs Mitcherson: Ultimately the program is an outreach program. Gugan will be partnering with Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre. We have offices there, the staff will be there, it has very good parking. There is already a good relationship between the child and family centre and Gugan. They will be operating out of there with staff going back and forth all the time. We have already identified the office space for the six staff—five full-time staff and two part-time—and we are setting that up now as we speak. That part is being organised quite well.

MR MILLIGAN: Can you clarify the difference between the functional family therapy program and the family group conferencing?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We covered this earlier under children and youth, but we can do it quickly.

Dr Collis: Both of them are early intervention programs. Family group conferencing looks at identifying the immediate and broader family to come together to make a family plan. It is then their responsibility to go forward and enact that plan. Functional family therapy is an intervention approach that occurs in the home by trained professionals to support people on the verge of coming into statutory responsibility.

Family group conferencing may be used for people who are already in the out of home care sector where the family wants to step in and take that. For example, with family group conferencing we have had conferences at AMC. We are very grateful to the AMC operations management for facilitating that process.

MR MILLIGAN: How do the two communicate with one another? Is there some form of working jointly together in some circumstances?

Dr Collis: Yes, of course. Some people would know of Ozchild. Bear in mind the functional family therapy is a new thing and is commencing. Ozchild came into Canberra as part of the ACT Together consortium. They brought this innovation with them and adopted an MOU with Gugan Gulwan and brought this idea to government.

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The reality is that the referrals into both these organisations will come from CYPS because that is the definition of who is going to be involved: those coming to the attention of child protection or already in the attention of child protection. We work closely already with those organisations.

THE CHAIR: This session is now concluded so we will adjourn for a short time.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

Mitcherson, Mrs Bernadette, Director-General

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Director, Inclusion and Participation

THE CHAIR: Welcome, Minister Ramsay. I invite questions relating to veterans and seniors, still part of output class 2.3.

MS LAWDER: Minister, I want to start by asking about seniors cards, including those issued by COTA. Are there other third-party issuers? Who else issues seniors cards?

Ms Evans: COTA is responsible for seniors cards in the ACT.

MS LAWDER: I have had some correspondence about whether there is a reason why seniors cards do not have an individual's name on them.

Ms Evans: That is interesting. That has come up previously. I think it is around identification. There was quite a long answer to that question. I would have to go back and check, Ms Lawder. I do recall that we looked at that when we were looking at the MyWay cards as well, and there was a reason given. I am sorry that I do not know it off the top of my head, but I am very happy to take it on notice.

MS LAWDER: Do you know how many people who qualify for a seniors card have a seniors card in the ACT?

Ms Evans: That is an interesting question as well. I think you are testing me a bit today. Again, it is easy enough to take that on notice and get it for you. Really, it is just a matter of the total number of seniors over that age and the number that are accessing the card. Obviously, not everybody would access a card if they did not feel it held any value for them. But I think the vast majority of Canberrans, once they are able to, are happy enough to have the seniors card and to access those discounts.

MS LAWDER: With your taking it on notice, you said it is a bit of a long answer. Would that include what it would take or what it would cost to add a name to the seniors card?

Ms Evans: If it is all right with you, I might find out what it was that held us up or why there was a consideration and it was not done. In terms of the costing, that could be another matter. I am happy to find out all the information I can find out about it.

MS LAWDER: Thank you. The seniors cards can be used as bus passes as well, but I have been told you cannot put any money onto the seniors card. Is that correct?

Ms Evans: I do not believe you can. I think it is only something that allows you to

identify.

MS LE COUTEUR: With the MyWay ones, that is incorrect. My husband has one which he just—

Ms Evans: MyWay, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: But it is also a seniors card.

MS LAWDER: With the MyWay seniors card, you can put money on it as it is a MyWay card.

Ms Evans: You can. You add the money on for your bus, yes.

MS LEE: Is that just for the bus?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, just for the bus, but it is also a seniors card that is used as a seniors card.

MS LAWDER: It is to enable them to use it on free transport. Is that correct?

Ms Evans: They can use it.

MS LAWDER: If they were travelling outside, sometimes they would have to have a MyWay card as well?

Ms Evans: Yes; it is peak and off peak. To be honest, I cannot answer that with great accuracy, because I am not sure whether, when they pass it through the scanner, it would take off the full amount when it is peak and a lesser amount when it is not peak. I do not think they would have to have two cards. I think it would just register in the peak and off peak. Ms Le Couteur is telling me that that is in fact the case.

Mr Ramsay: I think, Ms Lawder, in reality, that this is a matter that falls under TCCS and Minister Fitzharris, the minister for transport, rather than CSD. It is not primarily a CSD or seniors matter.

MS LAWDER: Sure. Just continuing with COTA, I note that you were at a few Seniors Week events yourself, minister.

Mr Ramsay: Indeed.

MS LAWDER: The seniors expo was quite successful and is growing. Are there any plans to provide further financial support to COTA in future years to ensure that those Seniors Week events can continue to grow?

Mr Ramsay: We value the work that COTA does in providing not only the Seniors Week Expo but also the seniors card. As you say, it was good to be out there with the number of organisations that were out there. It would be a matter for us to continue to speak with COTA about, and also the different framework. It is not actually funded in the budget itself; it is a funding agreement that we have with them. That would be a

matter at any stage for us to be considering. It is 40,000.

MS LAWDER: Is the agreement indexed?

Mrs Mitcherson: Not at the moment. It is just 40 for the outyears, for the next four years.

MS LAWDER: I guess that proves the point in a way: it is almost a decline in real terms if it is not indexed. It might be nice to look at it again.

Mr Ramsay: When building on strengths, at times you do not necessarily always need additional money to be able to build on those strengths. The capacity of an organisation does itself grow and build for future work as well.

MR HANSON: I have a bit of a Dorothy Dixier for you, minister. Do you want to tell us about your new grants program that is in the budget, and specifically talk about how much is available, what the size of the grants can be, who is administering it, how it will be monitored, who makes the decisions, and all that sort of stuff?

Mr Ramsay: Certainly. I appreciate the question. It is a good and insightful question.

MR HANSON: Thank you. Let us hope we have a good and insightful answer.

Mr Ramsay: As you and other members of the other committee would be aware, we have been looking at the best ways of maximising the funding support for organisations that provide, especially, a social inclusion and participation focus for both veterans and seniors. This year we have moved from having a combined round of \$80,000 for the year that would address both seniors and veterans from this coming year on. We now have doubled that, so there is \$80,000 specifically for work with seniors and then a separate \$80,000 that is specifically for veterans.

We anticipate that that round will be opened quite soon. It is in the relatively final stages of putting it together. They will be running parallel. They will not be quite identical, acknowledging the difference that is needed to be able to focus on social inclusion work for veterans.

One of the important things that we have acknowledged as part of this is that the age of veterans, and the age of veterans in support, is not the same as supporting seniors. We know that, for example, the average age of separation from the ADF is in the early 30s. Therefore, the sorts of support work and social inclusion work that are needed for veterans can be quite different, notwithstanding that some of the work for veterans and for seniors does overlap.

I am happy to leave it to Ms Evans to talk through some of the things that have happened in the past with the grant round and how we are building up to this future one.

Ms Evans: Thank you, minister. In terms of the other parts of your question around process, what we are doing at the moment is working through the terms of reference. With all of our grants rounds we have a panel who consider the grants that come in.

We look to make sure that those people have some level of understanding of what is being delivered—we have a community member who is from that particular portfolio area—but we also have members of the panel who are just across the process in terms of making sure it is transparent, properly recorded and those sorts of things.

That is very much the case, and we will be looking to pull that information together for the minister to consider very shortly. We have started to look at the two sets of terms of reference, because we have had to separate seniors and veterans. The previous arrangement was that the money went out as a pool to both seniors and veterans. Does that answer your question around process?

MR HANSON: It does. Just as a supplementary, is the \$80,000 each year or is that just this year?

Mr Ramsay: It is \$80,000 each year.

MR HANSON: So for the forward estimates.

Mr Ramsay: Over the forward estimates in each, seniors and veterans.

MS CHEYNE: Minister, this morning there was a media release from you about the veterans employment executive champions. What are they? Why are we doing it? Was there any evidence that pointed to a need for us to do this? It does seem that among our executives we have many people with distinguished careers.

Mr Ramsay: Certainly, and I think this is one of the demonstrations that the veterans and seniors portfolio—that joint or parallel portfolio—works across a whole area of government. They are not siloed. What we did last year as part of the launch of our veterans employment program in the ACT was run a survey to see what it was that currently existed in the ACT public service.

We surveyed right across the public service. There were just under 150 people who identified as coming from the defence force. Putting that into perspective, that is about the same number as in the New South Wales public service, which is substantially larger. It is an order of magnitude larger. It demonstrates that already in the ACT public service there is a significant veterans presence.

One of the things that we discovered along the way was that people had found it somewhat of a challenge to move into civilian employment when they were separating from the defence force. Only about 20 per cent had moved straight into the public service; 80 per cent had moved through at least one, if not more, other careers along the way.

Some of the things that we discovered as well from the survey was that about 80 per cent had not said that it was easy to translate their skill set—the skills or the experiences from being in the defence force—into what it is that people in the public service—

MR HANSON: Sorry, did you say they said that it was or was not easy?

Mr Ramsay: Eighty per cent said it was not easy. I think that was a really key finding for us. That is part of the work that, therefore, we have been doing. I should note that one of the things that the people who completed the survey identified as being of the highest value in helping them to name their skill set, name their capacities, in a language that was understandable in the public service employment sphere was contact that had been made through other people who had time in the service or colleagues who had made the same sort of transition. They found that that was one of the most helpful things.

MS CHEYNE: So finding someone who was relatable.

Mr Ramsay: Common people and a common relatable language. One of the things in announcing the six employment champions—the defence champions that we have—is to be able to do that sort of work. They may well head off to some of the ADF transition workshops. They may be available for mentoring of people who are seeking to move into the public service. They may even sit alongside and provide advice to selection panels when they are working through selection criteria assessing applications with particular skill sets from the defence force on how they can be translated.

The six people that we have announced as our executive champions have a very high level of experience in both areas. Across the six people, they have nearly 140 years of military service between them and between them they also have a combined experience in the public service of around 30 years. Some of them are relatively new to the public service. Eight months is the least period of time and we think that is—

MS CHEYNE: Is that Mr Cantwell?

Mr Ramsay: Yes, indeed, it is. We think it is important to have some of the champions with that sense of fresh experience. But it includes people who have had quite a bit of experience in the public service. I think the other thing in relation to the champions is that it is an evolving role. I acknowledge that they will have insights and they will know answers to questions that I have not yet asked. I think one of the important things with the champions is for me, and for others, to be able to work well beside them, for the Veterans Advisory Council and other people in the public service to use their experience, their wisdom, to be able to help frame some of the future work, especially in the employment program that we have.

MS CHEYNE: Are we going to keep surveying our public service to identify veterans? That 80 per cent stat is pretty high. Do we have targets for that to come down?

Mr Ramsay: We have not set targets at this stage. Again, this initial survey was one that we were using to inform part of our future work. The question of future surveys or the regularity of surveys I think is a live one. That is going to be one of the questions that I think it is important for us to ask of the champions themselves as part of that work.

The whole area of transition for people from the defence force is something that close attention is being paid to in a number of jurisdictions. I mentioned the New South

Wales survey. We worked alongside them. We have picked up some significant assistance from South Australia and from Victoria. There is a lot of pooling of knowledge and experience across the jurisdictions as to what can help. Some of those jurisdictions are a little further along than we are in terms of surveys, results from surveys or analysis of surveys. I would be anticipating having another conversation with my colleagues at the next ministerial round table later this year.

There is a focus on defence force transition by all of the jurisdictions working in the area of vet support at the moment. Certainly, as we meet in October and around the time of the Invictus Games in Sydney, one of the things that we will be focusing in on very specifically at that stage is transition.

MS LE COUTEUR: We do not have very long. There is an issue that has come up in a number of estimates sessions already. It is the issue of complaints from people who are over 65, particularly people who are in the aged-care system. I appreciate that the commonwealth government funds the aged-care system. Nonetheless, these people are living in Canberra and are finding that they do not have somewhere that they can usefully complain to. Have you been looking at that issue at all? Is there anything you think we can do about it?

Mr Ramsay: As you say, issues in relation to residential aged care are national matters. Issues in relation to the provision of health services not in residential aged care are appropriately looked at under ACT Health or the minister for health. What I can say is that one of the key initiatives in this particular budget—in fact, there are a couple of key initiatives in this budget that also move across this—relates to elder abuse.

The seniors rights hotline that we are establishing and that will be run through Legal Aid, commencing on 1 July, is a very significant one. There will be a clarity of space to be able to provide not only legal advice, but Legal Aid will, as it has in a number of other forms of support, be linking with other service organisations and support organisations to provide a wrap-around area of support for people.

We know that the work on elder abuse is something that is growing in its attention right across jurisdictions. There is a national plan that we are working on with that. We think that a seniors rights service through Legal Aid is going to be an important part of what is an overall system-wide approach.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will they be able to look at things relating to people who are in residential aged care? Quite often their issues relate to the residential aged care. They may well feel they are not being treated appropriately.

Mr Ramsay: Again, they will have the knowledge and the contacts to be able to assist people. If there are complaints about something or other that sit appropriately with the commonwealth government, and with the regulator in response to residential aged care, they will certainly have the contacts and the information to be able to pass that on. They are not being set up to take that role in any way. It is not appropriate for the ACT government or for Legal Aid in that sense to take over, or to seek to take over, the work that is rightly the commonwealth government's work.

PROOF

MS LEE: I have a very quick supplementary question.

THE CHAIR: We need to stop, Ms Lee. There is an opportunity to ask questions on notice. Thank you, Mr Ramsay. We will suspend for an afternoon tea break. We will resume at 3.30.

Hearing suspended from 3.17 to 3.29 pm.

Appearances:

Berry, Ms Yvette, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood Development, Minister for Housing and Suburban Development, Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence, Minister for Women and Minister for Sport and Recreation

Community Services Directorate

Mitchell, Mrs Bernadette, Director-General

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Senior Director, Corporate Services

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Director, Inclusion and Participation

Wood, Ms Jo, Coordinator-General for Family Safety

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Director, Housing

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

Barbaro, Ms Fiona, Director, Business and Capital, Housing

THE CHAIR: We welcome Minister Berry to look at the remaining portions of the Community Services Directorate. We will kick off with her responsibilities relating to the women's portfolio.

MS LAWDER: I want to talk about page 7 of budget paper G, strategic objective 5, "Promote an anti-violence culture in the ACT to ensure that women feel safe". It appears that this target for women feeling safe by themselves in public places at night has been the same for about the past five years and looks to remain the same for the next four years. Could you talk me through why there is not a projected improvement in that space?

Ms Berry: Yes, I can. That number in the budget papers is based on a national survey conducted by the police. The ACT government and the Office for Women have not in the past—and I am not aware of any other government contributing—contributed to the questions that are developed. Before we came in I asked whether we could get a copy of the questions asked for the survey so that the committee could understand the reasons, the numbers and why they are put in the budget as a measure for governments to be aware of.

It is a pretty good dataset. It has I think about 2,500 participants in the ACT. It gives some good information. I do not know what the questions are, so we will get a copy of those for my own knowledge and also for the committee's. Also it should be acknowledged that the ACT is recognised as the safest city in the country. That is a good start for us.

But there is a long way to go for women and girls to feel safe more generally. That is a big cultural shift that we need to continue to work very hard on—all of us—so that women from birth do not continue to be disadvantaged in the way that they continue to be, despite all the work that has happened for the past 100 years in trying to achieve gender equality and make a real difference for women and girls in the world.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to provide a copy of those questions?

Ms Berry: We will try to find them. We will then provide them. I think it is useful to

understand the context of where the information has come from and the kinds of questions that are being asked.

MS LAWDER: In budget paper G, page 7, it says that the ACT women's plan works under the national plan to reduce violence against women and their children. It talks about targeted women's programs such as grant and leadership programs. Can you give me a feel for how much is spent on these programs? Why are we not seeing a tangible improvement given the money that we are spending in this area?

Ms Berry: You will have seen the contribution made in this year's budget of \$696,000 which will directly resource actions out of the ACT government's women's plan. The work that has happened so far for the Office for Women and in working through those actions in the women's plan include the equity forums—I think you might have attended at least one of them, maybe both of them—to engage women, girls and organisations on improving gender equity for women and girls across the city.

We have launched the ACT diversity register more recently. We are hoping to ensure that not only government positions on boards are advertised but also private and community organisations advertise their positions on the diversity register and get to have a check in on the diversity register to find out where there are opportunities to, a, network and, b, get more women onto board positions.

There is the women in trades grants program. There is the first investigation to promote gender equality. There is greater promotion of the women's safety audits across ACT government-run events. We are encouraging private events to use that audit as well. There is the gender equity and education advisory group, which is researching how gender perception in school impacts on the wellbeing of female students.

It is never just in the women's portfolio that this change will need to be made; it is across government as well as across the community, so we can change attitudes and unconscious bias that impact on our abilities no matter what we do to ensure that there is improved gender equality across our city.

MS LAWDER: So I will repeat the question: how much has been spent given that we have only had a two per cent increase in women feeling safe alone at night in the past five years and it is expected to remain the same for the next four years? What result are we seeing for the money that we are spending, given that it looks like no additional women are going to be feeling safe?

Ms Evans: Ms Lawder, regarding your question around the budget there is probably more than one aspect to the budget around women. As the minister has mentioned, a number of measures are in place around supporting women and gender equity. I think that, at the end of the day, the cultural change that will be required for women to feel safe is a national issue; an international issue in fact. In making the changes that we are making it may take a number of years before women will feel safe. It is actually around changing the behaviour not necessarily of women, but across our broader community.

The full budget listed in the budget papers is used to engage with all those things the minister has mentioned. But to change those feelings that women have around their safety is certainly not a new thing. Women do not feel safe. That has been very consistent, really, over quite a number of years.

My understanding is that the 2005 survey results are very similar to the 2015 or 16 survey results that we are reporting on; that we get that 38 per cent from. I do not think anything we are doing, necessarily, is affecting women's feelings of safety, because this is a very big issue around women's feelings.

MS LAWDER: That reinforces my question. For all the great work that we are doing in this area, which is really important and valuable, we are not seeing a tangible result. You, minister, spoke about a whole-of-government approach. But it is also about police presence; it is about lighting; it is about landscaping, those types of things as well.

What influence have you been having over your colleagues to ensure that those types of issues are addressed? The latest bus network has fewer stops. Women, men and children will potentially have further to walk from their stop. Surely these are very tangible, targeted things that you could be talking about with your colleagues to improve the women's safety figures.

Ms Berry: I am happy to receive correspondence from you if you have particular areas. I know you have identified one just today which I was not aware of. But now that I am aware of it, I will certainly be following that up.

MS LAWDER: I have been corresponding with the government, with the relevant minister, for years.

Ms Berry: That is okay, but I was not personally aware of that particular issue. I am happy to follow up on that on your behalf. Whilst the government is doing everything it can—and is doing really great stuff around supporting women, improving opportunities for women and girls to feel safe, to be included, and to make a change around gender equality and equity in our city—it does take leadership. It takes leadership from officials; it takes leadership from elected members of parliament, both here and federally.

Sadly, today, we saw a lack of leadership from the most senior leader of the Liberal Party in supporting a motion federally that would put women, when they are feeling at their most vulnerable and least safe, in a very difficult position. He supported some sort of an alleged right for people to have an opportunity to harass people when they are seeking a legal health service.

That kind of leadership sends a very clear message to women and men, young women and girls, and young boys, that that behaviour of a senior politician in this town supporting a motion like that is acceptable. I think you probably have a different view from the most senior politician, Zed Seselja, and his comments; I appreciate that. But when senior people in this town get a big media story saying that it is okay to harass someone when they are feeling at their least safe, that is a problem. That is the kind of thing that we are up against every step of the way when we are doing everything we

can to improve women's safety as a government.

MS LAWDER: Finally, can you point me to any other indicator of the government where an achievement of one third would be considered a target?

Ms Berry: Well, I go back to the—where the actual target—where the indicator comes from—

MS LAWDER: Irrespective of where it comes from, you put in your budget papers as your target for the next four years that basically one third would feel safe, which means two out of three do not feel safe.

Ms Berry: All of the work that the government is doing around gender equality, women, and domestic and family violence—which I know we are going to be talking about soon in this committee—is all about improving the safety outcomes and opportunities for women and girls to participate in an equal way in our community. All of us would like to see a better indicator, absolutely, every single one of us.

I note the very good gender balance in this room today. There are clearly more women than men in this committee hearing, which is great. But we also have a need for men to stand up and be the ones talking about gender equality and what they are going to do to improve the status of women and girls in our community. I have to say, another issue that we are up against, when you have people like Zed Seselja making his comments in the paper today—

THE CHAIR: Ms Berry, I will ask you to refer to him by his correct title, please.

Ms Berry: The other issue that we are up against is the unconscious bias that occurs every day in our community. You all may have received an invitation—and I table a copy for the committee if it is interested—from this organisation, Geocon. It is a major developer in this town. In their invitation to an event they have an unnecessary sexualised image of a woman.

I keep talking about leadership and taking a stand against this kind of behaviour not just by politicians but by other leaders in our community. Geocon are going to be around for a very long time, and they have form. They have form on this issue. When you are asking what the government is doing, we are doing everything we can. But every day it is up against things like this and comments from Zed Seselja. I know—

THE CHAIR: Minister, please, we are in a committee hearing. There are standing orders that apply. If you are referring to an elected representative, it is important that you refer to them by their correct title.

Ms Berry: Sure, I apologise for that. I can do that. I am happy to table that for the committee's information, as well as the year one reporting on the women's plan, and the media release which I put out recently around all of the things that have occurred in ticking off 44 of the 90 or 100 actions that have come out of the women's plan and the action plan that the government is working to deliver on that.

We will get a copy of the survey, and definitely have a look at those indicators. All of

us agree, we would like to see that number improved, or that there is a better way that we can encourage more of us in this place to make sure that we—at every opportunity that we can—do everything that we can to ensure that women and girls feel safe wherever they are in this community.

It is not acceptable that they do not feel safe. When Ms Lawder raises issues such as this—if that is an issue, if that is a place where women and girls do not feel safe—I am happy to take it up on her behalf. I will see what can be done in that respect.

MS CHEYNE: Thank you for your comments on this, minister. I am not sure if you were able to review the transcript of the hearings yesterday. We had a pretty decent discussion with the Chief Police Officer about these statistics, these indicators and perceptions versus reality, and she made an interesting comment about Haig Park and how the amount of criminal activity there has significantly decreased in the past five years.

I said, “How many sexual assaults were there in the past five years versus how many there are now?” She said there has actually only been one total in the past five years. I have got a perception that that was not a nice place to go. I know we have done some things to improve that. I thought those were very telling comments. Within all that, she said, and I am quoting from the uncorrected transcript, “There is often disparity but the reality is that ACT Policing is very conscious of the perceptions of community and we do what we can to address those perceptions via education and communication.”

As Minister for Women, you take this seriously. I note your comments before about other things we could be doing or you might be looking at doing to assist with communicating and educating not just women—not through that lens—but the whole community about how we can be a safer community.

Ms Berry: The other work that is happening for women, but in a different portfolio, is around women in sport. That sends a very clear message about the government’s position on how we want to support women and girls to participate in sport, particularly young women because of the high number of young women between 15 and 17 not playing sport for lots of different reasons. Some of that includes the facilities. We now have guidelines to improve sporting facilities at sporting grounds.

All our new facilities are built with more inclusive infrastructure—out with the urinals, in with the doors—which means it is going to be a much more inclusive environment for athletes. Remember that when these pavilions were built, they were built at a time when it was never, ever considered that women athletes would be playing on a footy oval or playing Australian rules in the numbers that we are these days. That sends a very clear message that we want to make sure that women and girls have the same opportunities as boys and men so that everybody is considered an athlete, not an either/or gender.

In addition we have asked all sports who get tri-annual funding from the ACT government to move to 40 per cent, at least, representation of women on their boards. If they are finding that challenging then we will support them to get there. The diversity register will also assist them to be able to find the women that they need to

fill the roles on their various boards. Most sports, I think, are at a stage now where they have already moved to 40 per cent and are sending my office letters to say how happy they are and to prove that they are doing it. That sends a message as well to those sporting communities and young girls and women who participate in sport that the government is serious about making a change around gender equality.

We have partnered with HerCanberra to have an active portal where women and girls can network but also engage in women's sport and sport and recreational opportunities with other women and girls. That is a four-year project. HerCanberra has a significant reach for women and girls not just across the city but also across the country and the world. It is a great opportunity for us to make sure that we continue to share the message as a government that we are serious about making change in this place.

I can say that, when sporting organisations, particularly the more elite level sports, come to my office now to talk about funding or anything that they are doing in their space, the first thing that they talk to me about is their women's plans or how they are ensuring gender equality is improved within their sport. That says to me that there has been a very clear message getting through to those organisations about the government's policy and direction that it wants to go for women and girls, because that is the first thing they talk to me about.

MS CHEYNE: The Chief Police Officer also spoke yesterday about the survey and its methodology. She said that she is prepared to take up with those who actually deliver the survey the questions, the scope and whom they are actually asking. If it is all right with you, minister, it might be a recommendation of ours that you and the Chief Police Officer work together in looking at that survey.

Ms Berry: I am happy to. The Chief Police Officer, Justine Saunders, has been an excellent champion not only for women in the police force but also within the work that I have been doing with gender equality and domestic and family violence as well.

MS ORR: Everyone is reading my mind today. I was going to ask about the comments that we had yesterday from ACT Policing too. We had that quick discussion. I think we have canvassed the difference between perception and what might actually be happening in reality. In the answers you have given so far, minister, you have said that there is a lot going on around, I guess, empowering women and girls and making sure that they feel more included within our city.

I particularly want to get an idea—in relation to the women's plan, especially given it has now been a year since the first action plan has been put in place—and more detail of the work we are doing against that broader sense of raising the profile of women and girls and making sure they are included.

Ms Berry: The information that I have tabled will also give you a pretty good outline.

MS CHEYNE: I will ensure I read that shortly.

Ms Berry: I will get Jacinta Evans to provide a little bit of extra comment for you.

Ms Evans: As the minister mentioned, there have been 44 actions undertaken in year one, which is a substantial amount of work. I did want to refer briefly to the women's safety audit. As the minister was responding earlier around the safety matters it occurred to me that we had not touched on that.

Certainly as part of the first year of the action plan we have reviewed the safety audit toolkit. It is available online. It is now something that is used for all our major events. For instance, with the Multicultural Festival, there is a walk-through done both day and night to check not only matters of accessibility but also safety. We will note where there are areas where there are dark corridors as a person might be returning to their car, for instance, and look to have some temporary lighting put up or whatever is required.

I think the safety toolkit is a really important action that we will continue to promote and use. For more of our private organisations, when they are setting up events, we will also be encouraging the use of the safety toolkit. The important thing about that is that it gives us a good baseline as well. If we are doing events again and again and using the toolkit each time, we are getting a sense of whether we are getting better at doing that. I think that is one important aspect.

In the next portfolio area around housing there will be an opportunity to talk about the housing summit. I think there were some actions in the first action plan that relate to that. There have been those forums that the minister mentioned earlier around the case for change and looking at gender equality. Women in sport is another essential part.

I think very broadly we have been looking to make sure that the plan is not limited to just gender equality in that sense but is really looking at women working in trades, employment opportunities, vocational training, health. It is a very broad area. I think the committee would probably find helpful most of that information the minister has tabled.

MS ORR: This work has all been done by the office for women, is that right?

Ms Evans: The office for women, but we work in partnership with all our women's organisations in the sector.

MS ORR: It was suggested in our community day by the YWCA that there would be more of a push to achieve the outcomes if the office for women was moved to CMTEDD. Given that that has been put forward, I would be interested to know if you have a comment on that or if you have a perspective that you would like us to consider around that suggestion that it would achieve more if it were in the Chief Minister's directorate.

Ms Evans: I will have to leave that with you, minister. It is a difficult one to answer when both of us are women and we are responsible for the plan.

Ms Berry: Yes. I think that it is an interesting proposal. I do not understand why the YWCA, a good feminist organisation, would want the Chief Minister, who happens to be a man, to be the minister for women, particularly given this year the significant contribution by the ACT government, announced in the budget, to the office for

women to work on the action plan. That will resource that office in a way that it has never been resourced. Many years ago, with the Chief Minister's directorate, this kind of funding did not exist. I am not sure what achievement they are after.

MS ORR: I cannot speak for them. If I cast my memory back to what seems like quite a long time ago now, after almost two weeks of estimates, they were indicating that it was not resourced as well as it could be and that chief minister is a more prominent area. Based on what you have just said, it sounds like it has got the most significant resourcing it has ever had. That probably answers my question.

Given that we have this additional resourcing and this additional funding—and I know you have tabled that document—can you give us a bit more of an idea on some of the things that you are doing under that, particularly the progress on gender auditing?

Ms Berry: In the action plan—and I am delivering the ACT women's plan; it is a three-year action plan—there are around 100 actions that will be completed or underway as a result. In the first year there were 44 actions. Some of those have been identified in the information that I have provided but are also available in the report that is publicly available as well. We are about 95 per cent through those 44 actions.

I have given over my list of examples; so I cannot read them out for you. Some of them include work in the Health Directorate around better understanding the health needs of women from diverse backgrounds and how they can be supported better; investigating gender differences for women and children, including in the autism spectrum; research around emerging mental health issues for women and girls; obtaining more data about the experiences, opportunities and barriers to women in the ACT public service.

Whilst some of these action items that are being delivered under the action plan might not be immediately obvious to people in the same way as the infrastructure program is—and you will obviously be able to see the difference between no urinals and toilets with doors; that will be very obvious—this work that is happening in the background across government will not be immediately obvious to women and girls but goes absolutely towards improving gender equality outcomes for women and girls in the ACT.

MS ORR: Is the diversity register part of the action plan?

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS ORR: Can you give us an update on where that is up to?

Ms Berry: Jacinta Evans can give you an update, I am sure.

Ms Evans: Yes, the diversity register is now live and hopefully everyone will have seen some of the social media and promotional material. It has been very well received. This initial work that we are doing is particularly around encouraging women, because what we are looking for with the diversity register is to allow women to be connected with board opportunities. The minister has launched that as Minister

for Women.

However, in time to come, we will also be looking at other diverse groups in our community and encouraging other people to register on the diversity register so that we can link people up more broadly, because boards of course want gender equity but they also want people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or a range of other diversities. That has been one of the major actions.

We already did have a number of people registered. Those numbers have continued to come in, but we are still in the very early stages of promotion. I do not have the number of exactly how many are on there right now and how many boards we have to match them up with. That is a work in progress at the moment.

MS LAWDER: Ms Orr mentioned the YWCA on the community day.

Ms Berry: I did not actually see the contributions, but I have heard them talk about the Chief Minister's directorate before.

MS LAWDER: One of the questions they asked was about the fact that organisations and companies that are not compliant with the gender equity workplace act should be unable to tender for ACT government business. What is the government's position on that?

Ms Berry: I met with the YWCA last week, and it is something I will definitely be looking into.

MS LEE: Going back to the ACT diversity register, does that focus only on government boards? Can private business and companies also take advantage of that?

Ms Evans: Absolutely.

MS LEE: I know, Ms Evans, you were talking about how you are not quite sure of the numbers as yet. Is that something you can take on notice or do you not have them?

Ms Evans: Absolutely. I am happy to. I will take it on notice.

Ms Berry: And if members could promote the diversity register amongst their own networks, that would be helpful as well.

MS LEE: In terms of the board traineeship program, are you able to tell us what the curriculum is and the numbers of women who are currently undertaking it or who have undertaken it?

Ms Evans: We do not have numbers as yet. We are just developing that. It is a new budget item. The idea is that the traineeship program will focus on industries where representation is low. What we are looking for is both the training package and some strategies and tools which can be used very broadly and will help us if there is some unconscious bias. It will not be just for the people who engage in the training; there will be tools and materials that will be available broadly, up on our website and that sort of thing. So in terms of numbers, we have not narrowed that down yet.

MS LEE: You just talked about industries that have low women's participation. What are some of the examples of the industries?

Ms Evans: I have not got that, but I guess we are all quite aware that it is around our STEM kind of areas, science, technology, engineering. Those kinds of areas would certainly be areas where there is a gender—

MS LE COUTEUR: Will the training be delivered by the Institute of Company Directors again?

Ms Evans: Sorry, I did not catch that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will the Institute of Company Directors, who I know have done this training for you in the past, continue?

Ms Evans: I do not know that we have actually engaged them. They certainly do some work for us.

Ms Berry: I have met with the Institute of Company Directors previously and discussed their program. I think we are going to have a look at a different program, but we will definitely work closely with them if that is the program.

MS LEE: You are taking on notice the numbers on the actual register.

Ms Evans: Yes.

MS LEE: Are you able to provide a breakdown of ethnic diversity?

Ms Evans: The kind of the diversity the person is registering? Yes.

MS LEE: Just so that we see a spread of diversity.

Ms Evans: Yes.

MS LEE: I know that you are going to get the actual numbers, but is there a forward projection for the capacity, how many women? Do you have a cap in terms of how many women that you put on there?

Ms Evans: I think it will depend on the cost of delivering the training.

MS LEE: And that is all to be worked out?

Ms Evans: We will have to determine that as we engage with the provider.

Ms Berry: I guess it should not be assumed that all these women do not already have these skills.

MS LEE: Sure. It really just depends on who it is.

MS ORR: Are we moving to the next output class?

THE CHAIR: I think we should.

MS ORR: Can you give an update on how the family safety hub is going?

Ms Berry: Yes, we can. Most of you will know of the work that Jo Wood, the Coordinator-General for Family Safety, has been doing; really good engaging work bringing the community services organisations together to work towards developing the family safety hub and, importantly, engaging the community in the co-design process. I will ask Jo to give an update for the committee.

Ms Wood: The final model for the family safety hub was launched by the minister on 11 May. We launched the hub with a test of the way it was going to work so we launched the hub with its first challenge. The hub is working as a network for collaborating on reforms to the system. Our insights showed us we could not make one new service delivery offering that would make enough of a difference and that we needed a system reform. It is a really complex system reform because we are talking about our health system, our justice system, community services, financial services; five or six intersecting systems. We are tackling that system reform a problem at a time, and the challenge is the way we define the problem.

We started with looking at how we improve early intervention and prevention for pregnant women and new parents. Evidence shows that the period of pregnancy and the birth of a first child is a higher risk time; it is a time when violence often starts and many women who experience violence in their relationships experience it during pregnancy.

We were looking at the opportunities, and thinking about the population of people we are trying to reach in the ACT. We almost have universal touch-points for women and families during that period. There are really good opportunities to look at early intervention, how we connect people with support, how we raise awareness, and how we build the capability of the range of professional staff interacting with families at that point: midwives and other health professionals and our child and family centres.

The challenge started an idea, the generation-workshop. That was a 1½-day workshop with community sector and government partners. Coming out of that were 57 ideas, and we are now working through taking those ideas and looking at those that have the most potential to have a positive impact while being feasible to implement in the real world, which is an important test. Some of the people involved really want to champion the ideas and develop them further so we have some things ready to pilot probably around August.

This was really a test of: how does this work; will we generate ideas; and will we generate things we can turn into concrete action? I think we have identified that we can do that. We found some ideas we think we can run with relatively quickly, so that is the August time frame. But some other good thinking that came out of that first workshop needs some more work. We want to look at more of the published evidence to look at how we shape some of those ideas, so they will be on a slightly longer track.

MS ORR: Is it just the ability to implement them and the timeliness that is determining the priority of what you are going ahead with, or are you considering other things as well?

Ms Wood: The way we are choosing the things to pilot is looking at the idea and the potential impact it will have. We are looking for the things that will have the most impact and deliver the most benefit, and you can measure that in different ways. If we are reaching people who are at high risk, even if it is a small number of them, that is a huge benefit. If we have a more early intervention approach and reach a broader range of people that is another way to measure the impact. We are looking at the ideas that will have the most impact and those where the evidence backs up that it is the right approach. We are also looking at the feasibility of implementing an idea and what is required to implement it.

MS ORR: What do you see as the next steps for this challenge in addressing domestic and family violence within our community?

Ms Wood: We are working closely with some of the stakeholders to develop a couple of the ideas to be ready to get to a plan for a pilot. In the future operation of the hub we will have an expert panel that will bring together a range of expertise across community sector, government and people with lived experience of violence to advise the minister on the work that comes out of our challenges, that is, which ideas make the strongest case, which ideas we should proceed to pilot phase and how we spend the funds to invest in those pilots.

MS ORR: How do you determine what projects are included as challenges?

Ms Wood: The work we did in the co-design is in the design report for the hub, and I can table a copy of that if it would assist the committee. The insights work we did was quite extensive with people in front-line roles and people with lived experience of violence, and that gave us a broad set of priorities for reforms that we need to work on. They cluster around three major areas: one is around building a shared understanding of domestic and family violence and the dynamics of that both within and across the service sectors and also the broader community. That is critical to enabling early intervention and ensuring appropriate responses across all kinds of services.

The second clustering is around building capability of services to offer an integrated holistic response to victims and families, to ensure those responses are culturally competent, and to ensure that across the board we are connecting the right capability to respond.

The third cluster of priorities is around what we have labelled pathways to safety, which wraps up a range of areas where our insights have identified that we do not yet have the full suite of responses we need for all the individuals and families affected by domestic and family violence. We know we need to do a range of work to support better responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that more design work needs to be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We know we need to do more to look at the needs of children in families affected by domestic and family violence and ensure their needs are explicitly identified and responded to.

We are looking at the published evidence about the opportunities to have the biggest impact and where the highest need is. We are looking at our own evidence and also the published evidence to work up a set of more detailed priorities. Once we establish our expert panel to be the governance group for the hub, that panel will be looking at setting priorities for each year of the hub, so basically setting a work plan. We will be in a position to brief that panel on the published evidence and continue to use the insights work based on local knowledge and understanding to guide where we put our effort.

MS ORR: It has three broad areas, and the consultation you have done so far is informing the project. You mentioned the governance panel with experts. Is there any more information around how that will work and who you might be looking at putting on it?

Ms Wood: We are in the process of working out the terms of reference and the processes and procedures for that panel as well as the potential membership of that panel. We intend to keep it to a size that can make decisions and provide clear advice. We are really interested in multidisciplinary expertise. We definitely want community sector and government service delivery expertise, but we want to continue to make sure we are bringing people with lived experience into guiding the work of the hub. We have put diverse needs at the centre of our work in the hub, so we want to make sure we continue to bring diverse perspectives into it. That is the work we are doing at the moment.

MS ORR: People have said to me, “Well, where is it? Where is it located?” Do you have any comment on that?

Ms Wood: The hub is not necessarily a place. Because we are bringing people together to work on developing new options and new pilots and designing reform, we need space to work in. Up until this point, because we have worked with ThinkPlace to do the co-design, we have used their spaces, which are fabulous, although the parking is less fabulous in that part of Canberra. So we are looking at options in terms of the working space we need for the hub.

We are looking at spaces the ACT public service already has access to, but we are also conscious that we need to make sure we are not setting up something where we are expecting people to come to us all the time. We need to be getting out and meeting people where they already feel comfortable gathering and where there are already some trusted relationships.

We are looking at having some physical workshopping space to do that kind of work in, but we are also looking at making sure we work in a really flexible way and that we are taking the conversation out to different parts of the community. The hub will be virtual in that it could work in a range of different spaces.

MS LEE: Ms Wood, you mentioned earlier that pregnant women and first time mothers are particularly vulnerable to risk. Have we figured out why that might be? If we are looking to early intervention, surely the why must be an important factor?

Ms Wood: I have a fact sheet on this first challenge which talks about what the data

shows. We know that the point of pregnancy and the birth of a first child in particular is a time that can change the dynamics in a relationship and can disrupt the roles of people in that relationship. A range of people have looked at this issue. We cannot have a definitive answer, but we know it is a period that disrupts relationships.

When we think about domestic and family violence and particularly intimate partner violence, it is very strongly grounded in power and control. The dynamics that happen during pregnancy and early parenthood shift those dynamics of control and within in a relationship. That seems to be the context that causes violence to emerge at that time. It is not always the case that that is where it starts, but it is common that where there is violence in a relationship it is experienced during pregnancy.

MS LEE: How do we address that as a society? What are some of the intervention steps you have been able to identify?

Ms Wood: It is easier to focus just on women because they are the ones who are pregnant. But we want to make sure we are thinking about couples and families as well and thinking about men's role within this. One of the ideas that came out of the idea generation part of the challenge that we are really interested in is how we reach men and how we have a more preventative approach to support couples during the big disruption of having their first child. That idea needs quite a bit more development because we need to work through what the right intervention is and what the right setting is for that intervention. For example, is a health setting the right setting? Are midwives the right people or are there other ways?

Some interesting models look at supporting parents in that early period of parenting and helping people navigate the big change and the major stresses that are going to come into their family at that point. They are the things we are looking at and what the evidence shows about those.

Ms Berry: What has come out of the work through the co-design of the hub and working with all of the services and listening to people who have experienced domestic and family violence is that they do not necessarily want a legal response to the situation. More and more people are saying they want to find another way. There could be a combination of things, and this this work will go to some of that as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: Budget paper 3, at page 96, talks about the family safety hub. It talks about all the wonderful things it does and then says:

This initiative will be delivered by reprioritising existing projects funded by the Safer Families Levy.

How will this work? You have talked about innovation and change, and that sounds great. It seems that it is at the cost of what we are doing already. Am I misreading this? It refers to "reprioritising existing projects" which I presume means stopping them.

Ms Wood: The particular initiatives that have been reshaped to deliver the hub were two initiatives that were already earmarked for the hub but we are using the money in a slightly different way. There was an initial commitment to an initiative that was

broadly described as a case coordination capability in the original safer families package. There was a specific family safety hub commitment in last year's budget. It is those two initiatives that have been rolled together to support the hub over the forward estimates.

All of that funding was already earmarked for the family safety hub, but because we had not completed the design work, we had not actually worked out the best way to use the funding. Now that we have, we have reshaped what that funding is for, and we are using it across the four years of the forward estimates.

MS LE COUTEUR: When it says "existing projects funded", they are not actually existing projects; they are existing ideas?

Ms Wood: They are existing funding commitments, yes, but money that was not being currently applied because we had not completed the design work.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you going to do work with the broader community in terms of family safety out of the family safety hub?

Ms Wood: I think there are good opportunities to do that. As I said earlier, one of the priority areas for the work of the hub is about building a shared understanding of domestic and family violence. We know from our insights that friends and family of people who are experiencing violence are critical in terms of them not only being able to see the signs, and concerning signs, within relationships, but also being people who can respond, not necessarily intervene in a direct way, but respond empathetically, understand the complexity for people, and that it is not as easy as saying, "Why don't you leave?"

With building that understanding, we need to engage the broader community in that conversation. That is part of the long-term job of how we shift community understanding and social norms around these issues. If we do not engage the whole community, we are not going to get to that end point.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is this likely to lead to legislative reform or haven't you thought about that at this point?

Ms Wood: In the work we have started with the hub, we have not looked at legislative reform. It may be that there are some ideas that emerge that require legislative reform, but there is already a range of work. There was the Family Violence Act. The government has commitments. In the background there is continuing to be work on the Australian Law Reform Commission recommendations. The Family Violence Act implements a tranche of those, but there is longer term work happening that can be looked at.

Ms Berry: That work that has already been done will be reviewed over the next 12 months so that we can see whether, in operation, it is doing what the plan was for it to achieve.

Mrs Mitcherson: While people think about the idea of what a hub might be and what it might look like, when you actually talk to people with lived experience of the

different pathways, we have traditional pathways, but often those pathways were at a point where it is about referrals to statutory systems if there are children involved, and there might be medical issues.

We want to intervene early, if we know that families want to stay together. For example, most child concern reports are for babies and those under two, which is around that time when family violence might happen. So a lot of this work links as well in terms of pathways. We also know that for some women going to a judicial service centre is not an option for them, because it is too obvious, so a soft pathway might be through a child and family service, through a child development service or through a MACH nurse, where you can build the relationship, build the trust and then do the referral onwards.

That is what people have been saying as well. They want a different pathway, because there are a whole lot of women that we are not actually reaching, because they are not available to go to a traditional service. They might have English as a second language; they might be in a very patriarchal relationship where they cannot move around too much, but it is safe to go to see a MACH nurse. What kind of a pathway can that be in terms of prenatal work and—

MRS KIKKERT: Do you have data on the form of domestic violence that is being used on pregnant women? If it is physical domestic violence, has there been a case of a miscarriage?

Ms Wood: I do not have data specifically on the types of violence women experience during pregnancy. From what we know about domestic and family violence, broadly we would expect it is both physical violence and coercive and controlling behaviours. As an example, when we talk to some of the midwives, they talk about the partners of women they see, where the woman is never left alone in an appointment. Unless they are quite skilled at creating the opportunity, they cannot even have a conversation, because the woman is being pretty much constantly monitored by their partner. They see those kind of behaviours, which point to controlling behaviours.

In an emergency department, there would be some people who present with physical injuries from physical violence. I do not know if anyone has actually estimated miscarriages from domestic violence during pregnancy.

Mrs Mitcherson: We know that women do not always report it, so there is a whole lot of unspoken or unknown—

MS LEE: If it is very early, sometimes they do not know.

Mrs Mitcherson: Yes, true.

THE CHAIR: While we are in this space, and talking about the family violence issue, what work is your area doing, Ms Wood, to deal with violence towards men? It is the under-reported violence, and I think it has taken a back seat whilst we have been focusing on violence towards women, which is the main form. I am curious as to what work is being done to address violent or controlling relationships when it is inverse to the convention?

Ms Berry: At the outset we need to remember that by far the majority of domestic and family violence occurs against women.

THE CHAIR: I recognised that in my question.

Ms Berry: Yes, and I am getting there. It has never been the case that we have said that it does not occur against men, but the majority of cases are against women. We have talked a bit about that, around gender equality, and the effect that has, and the unconscious bias that occurs in our community from a child's birth, to when they are a young woman or a girl, which means they are not included in the same or equal ways that men are.

For men, though—and we need to make sure that that message is clear—organisations like the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the domestic and family violence service provide services for men as well as women, as with EveryMan and Menslink. There are organisations available to provide the same sorts of support services for men as for women. In particular, in last year's budget there was the announcement by the ACT government to work in partnership with DVCS on their room for change program, which supports men and keeps the family safe in the home—the women and the children stay safely in their home, and the man participates in a group program or in an individual support program to support them to change their behaviour if they are the perpetrators. That goes to the whole thing of women or victims not wanting the perpetrators to be locked up, necessarily, but to change the behaviour or perhaps—

THE CHAIR: Yes, I recognise that. Specifically, it was around what happens when the male is a victim? To be honest with you—

Ms Berry: Those support services are all there for men as well.

THE CHAIR: Obviously, given that there are a lot of same sex couples in the ACT, particularly—

Ms Berry: Yes.

THE CHAIR: it is reasonable to suggest that there would still potentially be issues in those relationships.

Ms Berry: Absolutely. Some of the work that we have done in the co-design went to how those different groups, like the LGBTIQ community, women with a disability, people who are living with disabilities, people from non-English-speaking backgrounds, are being supported in different ways. As we were saying earlier, it is not always the one door that suits everybody.

Whilst those services are there for men as well, and that is probably not as well known as it could be, I see it all the time across my social media that DVCS and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, particularly given the work around the royal commission's investigations, are seeing more and more men coming to get support from those services.

The services are absolutely there for men, but primarily it is women who are affected by domestic and family violence, and it has been for a long time.

Mrs Mitcherson: As part of the consultation, too, there was quite a bit of work done to engage with different groups with lived experience. I think it would be fair to say that some groups are harder to engage because some groups do not want to come forward because of stigma. In terms of same sex couples, there is already enough stigma around trying to get equality, so they do not want to engage. We continue to do work in that area to make sure we can engage them, in terms of getting their experiences—

THE CHAIR: I think there is a lot of shaming that is carried around in this space—

Mrs Mitcherson: Yes.

THE CHAIR: and particularly, as I say, to use the example of a male in a relationship who is the victim, there is probably a greater sense of social stigma around that being the case because it goes against the convention and the norm.

Ms Berry: In fact there was significant work done with the LGBTIQ community. I will ask Jo Wood to talk to that a bit as well.

Ms Wood: In our co-design work we wanted to put diverse experiences at the centre, to make sure we were really looking at everyone's needs as we did this work. The LGBTIQ community are one of our priority groups, and young men with a lived experience of violence in their family was another one of our priority groups. I would say both of those groups of people have been harder to engage directly because—exactly as you talked about—the stigma and the shame in help-seeking for those groups is higher.

We worked closely with the AIDS Action Council and Menslink as we did the co-design, to bring those perspectives in. I have met with the LGBTIQ Advisory Council, and we have had the conversation about how we start to open up this conversation in the LGBTIQ community. We have to create a safe space for people to come forward and talk about it. Ensuring that we are able to respond to the needs of victims in that community is one of our priority areas for future work at the hub. It is not where we have started, but we are really open, as we look at that period of pregnancy and early parenthood, to make sure we are considering the full range of families.

We know from the national data that although the rates of violence experienced by women are much higher—one in four women experiencing partner violence compared to one in 13 men—we also know that men who are victims are less likely to seek help. In current partner violence, 50 per cent of women who have experienced that, and 70 per cent of men, have never approached anyone for help. The help-seeking barriers for male victims are higher, and that is something we need to focus on.

MRS KIKKERT: Small funding increases of \$100,000 each for women's refuges in this year's budget have certainly been welcome, but concerns remain. These refuges have been turning away people in need and have stated publicly that they need more

to stay afloat. Are you confident that \$100,000 will be sufficient to stop the need to turn people away?

Ms Berry: The funding that has been committed to in the budget has been as a result of working very closely with the sector through the design of the hub, but also within each of the different refuges to ensure that funding that has been committed to in the budget would actually work towards addressing the issues that they have spoken to us and to Jo Wood about, particularly around supporting people who are particularly disadvantaged.

These are people who are in a significantly challenging situation where they might not have permanent residency anywhere. They cannot leave the country but they cannot stay either. It is those kinds of individuals and women who are seeking support. But because of their citizenship situation, it is incredibly difficult for them to get the support that they need. This funding that was announced was about acknowledging that there is a particular cohort of individuals who just cannot get the services they need because of the circumstances they are in. That funding is also on top of the funding that is already provided to those organisations.

MRS KIKKERT: Does some of that funding come from the safer families levy?

Ms Berry: No, that is separate to the safer families levy.

MRS KIKKERT: Some members of the Canberra public would like to know whether what they are paying for in their levy is actually going towards the women's refuges.

Ms Berry: That is right. The safety levy very clearly identifies where the funding actually goes across each line area so that the community is aware where it is going and the work that it is doing. Funding for the refuges is provided through the national partnership agreements on funding for homelessness support. Also, those organisations are part of the work in the design of the family safety hub. Did you want to provide some more detail?

Ms Wood: I am happy to go through this in more detail. For the committee's information, on page 417 of budget paper 3 we have a really detailed breakdown of the safer families initiatives funded through the levy. We have also included this year in the budget papers the complementary initiatives that support the objectives of safer families that are above and beyond the initiatives supported by the levy.

In that, we have obviously included additional funding for homelessness services, obviously the direct funding for women's refuges, but also the new funding particularly for migrant families really is an important contribution to women's safety. We have ensured that we have covered safer families specifically, but also covered those broader initiatives that also support that objective.

MS LEE: I have a supplementary on that. Thank you for the reference to the page, Ms Wood. Are you aware of the initiative, "Safer Families—Early assistance for families at risk of violence (room for change)" that has funding of \$385,000 in this year's budget?

Ms Wood: Yes.

MS LEE: Then it goes to zero. Is that program being cut?

Ms Wood: It was a pilot. It was established as a pilot and it is being evaluated this year.

MS LEE: Obviously the assumption is that it will not be—

Ms Wood: I do not think that is the assumption. I think the assumption is that we want to see what comes out of the evaluation and see what the evidence shows us and then make a decision about the future of that program based on that.

MS LEE: For example, in next year's budget, that could be back as a line item?

Ms Berry: The program itself is the only one of its kind, really. There is something slightly similar in Western Australia, but this one in the ACT is of its own sort of making. So we need to make sure that it is working; that the funding is actually delivering the outcomes that we want to see in the community; that families are safe and that behaviour is changing.

We will do due diligence on that funding. We will do that checking on the pilot to see whether it is actually achieving. It is a quite complex and detailed piece of work that sort of individualised support for a family and an individual who might be perpetrating violence against their family. We want to see if it is working. If it is working, that is fantastic.

So far, whilst it has been difficult—well, not difficult; challenging because it is so different and new—we are seeing some positive outcomes. But we do need to check in on the pilot to make sure it is actually working in a longer period of time rather than just going six months or 12 months and saying, “Yes, it is fine. We had this many through.” It cannot be just about numbers. We actually need to see outcomes from this, that people's lives are actually changed and safer, and that relationships are either ending or staying together, but that it is amicable.

MS LEE: When will the evaluation be complete and the decision made?

Ms Wood: We might have to take that on notice as to exactly the timing of the evaluation.

MS LEE: Yes, that will be great. Thank you.

Mrs Mitcherson: I think it is important to note that often the clients in this service are very complex. A lot of men who volunteer to be part of the service and who want the family to be together have very complex lives and often have significant histories of alcohol abuse, for example. It is actually trying to manage all those sorts of behaviours that impact when they are violent. It is more complex than people thought in terms of the client group.

MS LEE: Yes, sure.

Mrs Mitcherson: It is positive that they are volunteering to be part of it, but we still have to get to the end and see some change in behaviour.

MS LEE: If you are taking that on notice, Ms Wood, could you come back to us with the time frame but also what that review actually entails?

Ms Wood: Yes.

MRS KIKKERT: You mentioned before the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre. Several weeks ago I received a phone call from a lady. She was trying to get in touch with the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre, but she could not. It was a week day; it was during a morning. She was at the court. She had been trying and trying and trying. It gave her a voicemail message that would transfer to a mobile, and that just completely rang out. Are you confident that \$308,000 per year will be sufficient to make sure that women in crisis are able to get the help they need from these services when they need it? What is up with not picking up the phone at the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre?

Ms Wood: There is additional funding in this year's budget for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service as well as Canberra Rape Crisis Centre. That is in recognition of the increased demands we have seen for crisis support. We can see it in the data from both of those services. Domestic Violence Crisis Service is the only service that offers a 24/7 service helpline in the ACT. They are physically generally present at the court as well.

I do not know what happened in that particular case, but they are very actively supporting people through court processes. I think they have presented data recently to say that they have supported about 800 people over the course of 12 months. They are very actively supporting women at the court. I am not sure how there was a disconnect in that particular case.

MRS KIKKERT: How many people are working at the office waiting for phone calls at the call centre?

Ms Wood: That I do not know.

Mrs Mitcherson: We could take that on notice.

Ms Wood: We could take that on notice.

MRS KIKKERT: You can take it on notice; thank you.

THE CHAIR: In the interests of trying to keep on time we might move to public housing. Given that we have an influx of new officials, I trust everyone is familiar with the pink privilege statement that is in front of them and around the room.

MR PARTON: I want to know if this is the right place to ask this. I am anticipating that it might be batted back to Friday, but I just want to go with it first up. I have got a question regarding the upcoming public housing development at Chapman. Do we

deal with that here or do we deal with it on Friday in public housing renewal?

Ms Berry: Except that I understand it is still in ACAT and I do not know that there is much I could tell you either today or Friday.

THE CHAIR: In case you are not able to get answers, Mr Parton, do you want to put questions relating to that development on notice and then if they can be answered they will be?

Ms Berry: It might be better. It is just that it is actually in ACAT right now.

MR PARTON: I am aware of that.

Ms Berry: I could not really comment on anything that is going to change anything on that situation, I think, about which we have not already spoken on numerous occasions in this place.

MR PARTON: I am of the view that there are some things that have emerged in recent weeks that certainly have not been covered off in here at all. I am tipping you probably know some of the things I am talking about. Anyway, I will hang onto that and go to the total facilities management contract, page 35. Can I ask: when will the new contract come into effect? What is the status? Where are we?

Ms Berry: Thank you for that question. I have been very interested in ensuring that the total facilities management meets the needs of our tenants and provides a service that the government can be satisfied with and, importantly, ensures that our tenants get the maintenance in their homes dealt with in a timely manner and dealt with in a way that supports their needs. It is something that the directorate has been working on for a little while now, to make sure that we get it right.

It is a massive contract and, importantly, we wanted to make sure that we heard the tenants' voice in that process, as well as subcontractors and others who work as part of that maintenance work. I am going to ask Mr Frank Duggan, who has been doing most of the work in this area, to provide you with some more details.

Mr Duggan: Thank you for the question. As you know—and I think I have discussed this previously at other estimates—and as the minister says, we have really had to work very hard to actually establish exactly what we would like to purchase by way of a professional total facility maintenance service going forward. We have been very conscious of actually achieving efficiency and value for money in this contract, and we have worked very hard to do a lot of work outside the process to actually get us to the position we are in at the moment.

We are very cognisant of best customer experience. We have worked on those clauses to make sure that they are highlighted very significantly in the way forward. We are also trying to promote social outcomes. As you know, the present contract does that very successfully, and we are hoping to achieve a far better social outcomes opportunity.

As to the process to date, we are in negotiation. We are still in the situation of probity

and procurement but we are actually at the negotiation stage. We are on time to actually be able to develop with the preferred provider the outcomes of the contract. We hope to finalise the negotiation stage very shortly and then move into what is called mobilisation. We will mobilise the contract on schedule for the agreed date, which was 1 November.

MR PARTON: Is the intensity of the work that you, Mr Duggan, and the minister have described, into this new contract indicative of a feeling that the current arrangements have not been satisfactory?

Mr Duggan: No. We have an opportunity to go to the market to take advantage of changes. When you think of this type of contract and the absolute opportunity we have for the provision of services, we really wanted to go out to the marketplace to test that. We also wanted to test value for money concepts. We also wanted to really take advantage of technology and the advantages that it brought. We also wanted to drive a very strong social outcomes agenda within the contract. We went out to market on those principles, and we are happy to have actually tested the market, we believe, very successfully.

There was significant interest in this contract. There were significant providers who have now moved into this marketplace. We had 34 people, representing 19 different providers of services, at the workshop, and we received eight applications. We are, very happy with what the marketplace now has. I think it is really important we do test it.

MR PARTON: I think it is, too, and so do the many people who email my office about the current situation. I am just wondering if we have strengthened the statement of work in the new contract.

Mrs Mitcherson: If I could perhaps add a little more to what Mr Duggan has said, the opportunity to go to procurement for a contract of this size is really significant, regardless of what the current provider is doing, because you want to take that contract for the next decade. We needed to make sure we positioned ourselves as to what we want a contract to look like in 10 years time and which will give us flexibility. We do not want someone to say, "Okay, here is the contract, our IT stops now," and things change and nothing else changes.

We needed to know what other commercial contracts look like in this space across the country to make sure we were getting the most modern contract going forward. Obviously we work with GSO in that area. That was really important. It is a lot of money and it is a lot of work to put this kind of procurement together. We have been very diligent in relation to how we have done that.

We also wanted to make sure that we took into consideration the things that work well in the current contract but also things that did not work well and that we would like to work better. We are at the forefront of wanting the tenants' voice heard in terms of customer service. We also talked to our subcontractors to make sure of the things that were working for them and what were not and what kind of technology would they like built into a contract to make their business go better. We did a whole lot of pre-work before we even got to that stage, trying to make sure that whatever contract

we have lives and lives well and is innovative going forward.

MR PARTON: You mentioned the things that have not worked well. What is your view on what specifically has not worked well in the current arrangement?

Mrs Mitcherson: I am not going to pick bits and pieces, but in anything we do it is always indicative to look at what works better and what we can do better. We have nearly 12,000 properties and I think it is about 80,000 calls a year. What was working well in the call centre? What could we have done better? Are we getting the right service there? Do we want to add something in? I think it was diligence around that kind of stuff. We also talked to the client. “What are you liking about the current service? What would work better for you?” What is currently the best way that tradies work in a different field in terms of bundling work in this area and that kind of stuff? It was very complex. I have to say I quite enjoyed the work, because you do not get to do this kind of procurement all the time.

MR PARTON: It is big. It is massive. It is huge.

Mrs Mitcherson: This is a great piece of work.

MR PARTON: Are there other areas and functions that will be serviced by this new contract? Is it just public housing? What other areas are going to be serviced by this?

Mr Duggan: Just public housing.

Mrs Mitcherson: Just public housing.

Mr Duggan: It is public housing with, additionally, Bimberi.

Mrs Mitcherson: Bimberi.

Mr Duggan: And the Narrabundah long-stay park. That is the component.

MR PARTON: Are we expecting a reduction in complaints received in relation to public housing maintenance once we roll into the brave new world?

Ms Berry: Before I ask Mr Duggan to provide you with some more information there, our housing stock in the ACT is getting older. That is why our renewal program is so important. Having new homes will mean that maintenance on those homes will also be affected in a positive way. We will not have the same kinds of maintenance issues that you get with an older home, if you have one.

Part of this work that Mr Duggan talked about—changes in technology and the funding in the budget that was announced around technological changes to how our housing managers interact with clients, with public housing tenants as well—will mean that their information can be dealt with and processed in a much quicker way, because it will not be a paper-based system. It will all be real time, digital. Those two processes—housing managers and how they interact with clients as good social landlords, and how the maintenance services interact as well—together will mean that the tenants’ experience will improve, because it will be addressed or dealt with in a

much more timely manner because of the way that the communications will occur.

MR PARTON: Before I monopolise this session any further, can I ask, because I just do not know: where are the funds provided for the new contract? In which budget paper do I find that?

Mr Hubbard: If you look at the budget statement, on page 42, in the supplies and services area. That is where it is all is. You can see it is a big cost.

MS LE COUTEUR: You are looking at the social outcomes for your tenants, which is great. Are you also looking at the social outcomes from the point of view of employment?

Mrs Mitcherson: Yes.

Ms Berry: Yes, absolutely. That has been a very important part as we have worked through what the total facilities management contract would look like, ensuring that there are more opportunities for people who would not get the same kind of chance to get employment. Housing tenants—

Mrs Mitcherson: Housing tenants.

Ms Berry: the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and others.

Mrs Mitcherson: The current contract actually met or exceeded their numbers in that area, and we are looking to probably progress that even further going forward. Absolutely, it is really important, I think, to have tenants working in call centres and other parts, very much so.

Mr Duggan: We had 108 as the agreed contract provision for social cohorts which were tenants, youth, apprenticeships, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with a disability. The present TFM averaged 188 rather than 108, and we built those figures into the request for tender. Aspirationally, we are looking for more people who will actually get those opportunities through this contract. I think that is a fairly significant component of what we have tried to drive as some of the changes going forward.

THE CHAIR: Who is the department in negotiation with on the new contract?

Mr Duggan: I am not at liberty to say who I am in negotiation with.

THE CHAIR: It cannot be disclosed yet?

Mr Duggan: It is still in property.

THE CHAIR: I thought a decision might have been taken as to a supplier and it was just the—

Mr Duggan: We are negotiating with a preferred contractor but I cannot—

THE CHAIR: If that fails you will go to the next best and—

Mr Duggan: If that was the situation.

MR PARTON: On social housing services, on page 39, you are indicating here a major ramp-up in client service visits. I am talking about (e). It goes from 9,000 to 12,500. Why?

Ms Berry: Because we have considered the way Housing ACT works with tenants and we want to improve the outcomes for tenants and not just their landlord but actually provide better social outcomes for tenants in public housing as well. I am going to ask Louise Gilding to provide a little more detail about those visits and what they mean.

Ms Gilding: Before we go to the heart of that actual CSV indicator, I just want to note the Auditor-General's performance audit towards the end of last year—and the committee is probably familiar with the report—where they did an audit across multiple government indicators. She specifically looked at several of ours.

We took the opportunity to run those principles around making sure that the accountability indicators were actually reflecting government priorities and reflecting the work we were doing, and we were actually accurate in their measurement. What you will see in the accountability indicators for this budget is that we have repositioned them and we have aligned them based on the recommendations from the Auditor-General.

The CSV, which is client service visits, which is how often our housing managers interact with tenants, was a particular count. It was a statutory count, which was just looking at literally one visit, an annual visit for the client. But what we have done is change the business model in terms of the interaction that housing managers have with tenants as our cohort has changed; the changing nature of the tenants. What we have realised was that the full effort of our housing managers was not actually being recognised by this particular indicator.

There were changes several years ago around modernising our services for tenants, which meant that we changed how often we visited folk. We realised that people needed to have support when they first established their tenancy, which was a 90-day visit. We also realised that there were many of our folk who actually did not need us to visit them every 12 months and maybe we needed to extend that out. We also realised there are some other folk for whom we need to provide far more intensive support in the community.

MR PARTON: How do these visits work in relation to specific things like complaints of antisocial behaviour? Are they included in these figures or not?

Ms Gilding: What I will do is get our chief operating officer to comment.

Mr Duggan: They are included in these figures. We will see those figures grow. We have tried to balance out what we believe are the numbers in the client services against the national figures. Our model really is to intensively support people, as you

know, who may get into difficulty with their tenancy. These figures are to pick up those visits. For example, in the public housing renewal space we are doing two pre-visits and maybe three or four post-visits of people moving through. In the same way as we are doing an intensive intervention around antisocial behaviour, we are going to count how many times we are in the property and what work role they are taking with clients.

MR PARTON: In relation to social housing services, can I ask: how many complaints you receive each year regarding antisocial behaviour by public housing tenants? I understand that there is probably not a figure that people have got directly in front of them.

Ms Berry: I am pretty sure I got a question on notice from you about this particular issue and I am pretty sure I provided that information previously. If I could just get some of that detail for you again—

MR PARTON: While we are looking at that, how many tenants were evicted this financial year due to antisocial behaviour?

Ms Berry: It was not you that asked the question, it was somebody else. We can answer it.

MR PARTON: We are asking how many complaints do you receive each year on antisocial behaviour and how many tenants were actually evicted this financial year due to antisocial behaviour.

Ms Barbaro: I can answer your question certainly about how many antisocial complaints we receive each year. It is roughly 1,000 each year. Starting in the 2013-14 financial year it goes 975, 1,125, 1,107 and 940. In terms of evictions, I think Mr Duggan—

Mr Duggan: I think we did about 18 evictions in the past financial year, 2016-17. I am not specifically sure the proportion that were antisocial.

MR PARTON: I am thinking, based on the anecdotal stuff that I have got, that most of those are about rental arrears.

Mr Duggan: Yes. For us to go into the ACAT, as you know, we have to be the model litigant and we have to have proof of the issue. It is not that we will not pursue an issue through the ACAT, it is how we successfully get the outcomes that we try to achieve. At any one time we 100 matters being dealt with in ACAT. But there are other resolution points, as you can imagine, about conciliation, mediation; a different type of order around general orders where the person will actually comply and their behaviour will minimise. There are a lot of touch points that can be actually engaged by using the legislative base we have—the ACAT base—and then there are other outcomes that we achieve.

MR PARTON: Would you concede that there are some matters though on which there seems to be no resolution, they are ongoing, and the nearby residents do not wish to go to ACAT and there is no resolution?

Mr Duggan: We will support any other tenant or other person who actually pursued that opportunity. If they choose not to, that is their decision and I accept that.

MR PARTON: Sometimes they will choose not to for their own safety, won't they?

Mr Duggan: They choose not to for various reasons. What we will do is support them in any action they wish to take. However, we support the tenant and we try to actually resolve the issues. And we will use any resolution process that we have available to us.

Ms Berry: Sometimes people get in touch with my office because they have a dispute with their neighbour but it is actually not public housing tenants that are having that dispute. I do not know if there are figures about the number of disputes that happen amongst privately owned or rented residents—I am sure that number exists somewhere—or through different services that might provide conflict resolution for disputes between private tenants as well. Housing ACT works very closely with the tenant and with the neighbours of the tenant to try to reach some sort of resolution.

THE CHAIR: What role does CSD have in dealing with complaints of antisocial behaviour in other social housing complexes with non-government providers such as Argyle or others?

Ms Gilding: We are not the landlord in that case. We would support organisations in terms of advice, but it is up to their own community organisations, policies and procedures in terms of how they deal with that situation.

MS ORR: Minister, I want to talk about homelessness. What are some of the programs and services funded to reduce homelessness in this year's budget?

Ms Berry: We can talk about issues around resolving homelessness in the ACT, but one of the things to kick that off is to recall that in the recent figures through the census the ACT had the second lowest homelessness numbers, despite a population growth significantly higher than anywhere else in the country. Whilst all of us would like to ensure that people are better supported all across the country when we are talking about homelessness, it is not something the ACT can do on its own.

However, we have an excellent record with our support services in supporting people who are experiencing homelessness or who might be sleeping rough in the ACT. There is about \$20 million that is spent each year for support for homelessness services in the sector, and this year's budget contains \$6.5 million over four years to provide additional support for specific cohorts of need in housing. We talked a bit about that before: older women, young mothers, migrants and refugees, women and children escaping domestic and family violence. That support goes towards some of the work that is being done around the different kinds of cohorts that need support and ensuring extra funding to women and refugees to provide that extra support as well.

MS ORR: Can you give me a bit more of a breakdown on the specific cohorts, the \$6.5 million that you have funded and what you are going to be doing with it?

Ms Gilding: It is specifically for preventing older women from losing their housing

and preventing children from entering into the statutory child protection system by supporting young mothers, as the minister was saying. That also helps them to gain vital education, training and life skills. That 6.5 also goes to supporting people who have no income because they have no immigration status and also keeping women and children escaping family and domestic violence from churning through our crisis accommodation.

There are various funding components of the 6.5 over four. What you will notice in the budget papers is that it scales up over the outyears. This first year we have \$1.2 million. That is broken down in the following ways. We are providing a funding variation to Beryl, Toora and Doris, those refuges that specifically focus on women and domestic violence safety issues for those women. We are topping them up by \$100,000 each year; that is a variation for the contract. Beryl and Doris in particular run a child program, and that will enable that to continue. There is also \$80,000 there for the continued supports at Karinya House.

The remaining funds are split between two programs: one for older women and another one for, as I said, people who have no immigration status. What we want to do with those two programs very quickly in the next six months is to work with the sector to actually co-design what they would look like so that we can put that money where it will gain most benefit. We will be calling our sector partners together to co-design what those programs will look like to make sure that we leverage the funding as best we possibly can. Then we will run a procurement process towards the end of the year and, hopefully, roll that funding out. Those two programs will begin early next year.

MS ORR: Is the money that is going to Beryl, Doris and a few others for existing programs?

Ms Gilding: It is for existing programs, yes. There were the commonwealth funding cuts back in 2012-13. The way the funding was recalibrated, they were struggling to continue with some of those programs. We have topped them up while the national housing negotiations have continued. What we have been able to do, though, is actually lock that funding in so that they have certainty.

MS ORR: Commonwealth cuts have been a theme today. Is the co-design of the two new projects for the older women—

Ms Gilding: And the refugees program; that is right.

MS ORR: They are new initiatives?

Ms Gilding: Correct.

MS ORR: With the co-design process, is there any more information you can give at the moment about what you are anticipating as part of that process?

Ms Gilding: No, apart from the fact that we know that we have a sector with 28 providers out there at the moment providing 48 different programs. They have incredible expertise. We need to call them in and have the conversation about what

they are seeing and how best we might design or commission for outcomes, how we might design the contracts, what type of housing and support is the best mix in this case.

MS LE COUTEUR: In this 6.5 it says that 36 places have been funded. Where are those 36 places, 36 beds? Are they actual new physical spaces? Is it a new physical space with physical beds in it or is it just continuing to fund things which were not properly funded? Can you tell me more? Who is going to get them and where are they?

Ms Gilding: It is new places. When we provide funding for homelessness services, we are largely talking about funding for intensive case management support. That does not necessarily equate to beds. We are funding staff time and resources to increase the capacity of the services to support more people. The 36 is an estimate based on the funding so that the sector can employ additional staff to undertake intensive case management for 36 individuals or families at any one time.

MS LE COUTEUR: So no more physical beds?

Ms Gilding: This is why we need to come together to actually design that. I mentioned the 28 providers and the 48 programs. That is some of those contracts. When we redesigned those contracts, and they started back in June 2016, what we deliberately did was actually separate out support from accommodation so that it could be tenure neutral. What we are interested in is early intervention and prevention. We want to get in early before something actually becomes a crisis and to help somebody support their tenancy. Whether they have a mortgage, whether they are private rental or whether they are in community housing, we want to help them to sustain it where they are.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is just that this budget item says it is for an additional 36 places.

Ms Gilding: That is right.

MS LE COUTEUR: Which gives you the impression that they are going to be physical places.

Ms Gilding: We currently fund 900 places. That is what is currently funded with that 20 million. We have 900 places across the sector at any one time. Last year AIHW data showed that we supported nearly 5,000 clients. That can be with support and it can be with accommodation. We have over 600 properties that are headleased to the community organisations at the moment to provide those support services.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you take this on notice if necessary. You have given me the 900 total beds. How are they broken down?

Ms Gilding: No; 900 support places at any one time. And there are 600 houses that sit alongside those.

MS LE COUTEUR: In that case, my question would be about how many physical

beds that is and how that is broken up into the different cohorts. We have already had discussions about older women, refugees who have no means of support and the various women's services. I am sure the list would be quite a bit longer if I was going to list them.

Ms Gilding: It sits all in our contracts, which are online. That details the support places and the accommodation places. I have that table right in front of me now, but are you happy for me to take that on notice? We can certainly tell you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I was suggesting you take it on notice.

Ms Gilding: It is really important. The point I would like to make is that what we have seen with this redesign is redesign with the sector. The sector told us several years ago, before these new contracts came into place, that they needed to be able to separate out support from accommodation; they needed to be able to support somebody in their existing tenancy to prevent the crisis happening. That is what you see in these contracts and in the increase in support places. What we have seen is that that has come through in our statistics. Not only the ABS statistics but also the AIHW administrative data show that our sector are actually achieving a reduction in homelessness because they are able to intervene early and move into that prevention space.

MS LE COUTEUR: Right; it is confusing how it is written.

Ms Gilding: I agree.

MS LE COUTEUR: Last year there was \$100,000, I believe, for training for front-line staff. This year is it the same 100,000 that has been rolled over or do you have a new 100,000?

Ms Gilding: It is ongoing. That funding was from last year. We are working with ACT Shelter in looking at that training. The first part of that funding was a piece of research or an analysis following on. You might remember that four reports were commissioned around trauma-informed practice several years ago, again done by the sector. Working with that base of information, we said that we need to do another piece of work that does a gap analysis of what training is out there and what training the sector wants. We are working with Rebecca Vassarotti at the moment as a consultant.

MS LE COUTEUR: But substantively it is the same: we have not yet spent it, but we will next year, hopefully.

Ms Gilding: It is, hopefully, going to front-line sector worker training this coming year.

MS ORR: I have a follow up on that. The conversation has focused on whether we focus on beds or whether we focus on support services. You gave quite a lengthy answer on that, but is there anything you want to add? Should we be prioritising one over the other? Is there value in both? How do we get the balance right?

Ms Gilding: In this area we would always say we always want more, but we need to use what we have got as efficiently and as best we can. What we do know, and what the sector clearly told us, was that if we can prevent homelessness, if we can intervene early, that will cost us far less than if we then have to find the crisis beds and accommodation.

Let me take an example of some of the new programs that we are looking at and the innovative ways we are trying to deal with this. Room for change is a classic example of a behaviour change program that is seeking to intervene early, seeking to help a woman and a family stay in their family home whilst helping a partner with behaviour change. That is an example of early intervention and some of the funding supports that we see. There are accommodation places attached with that program, but also places where people can actually attend those programs and undertake the therapeutic component of that program without necessarily being in a bed. It comes down to program design and working with our experts in the sector.

MS ORR: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: You can again regard this as a follow-up question about homelessness. It is in respect of public housing tenants who have become residents at AMC. They may or may not have been convicted, but they are nonetheless there. How long can they keep their tenancies? I have had different answers to this question.

Ms Berry: Yes, I had a good old chat with Shane Rattenbury, your colleague, yesterday about this particular issue. I understand that you asked a question of him about it yesterday as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: I did, yes.

Ms Berry: We can confirm today the information that was provided in the conversation that I had with Shane and the response was provided yesterday.

Ms Gilding: There is an overarching response as well. Specifically in terms of your question, it is quite an operational question. What I would like to put on the table is that we work very sensitively with tenants who are either in custody or incarcerated. It is not an automatic and immediate eviction process.

In actual fact, in this past year I think we have worked with five folk who have handed back their tenancies. It had not even gone to an eviction process for those tenancies. We are talking about only five who were public housing tenants who then were in the AMC. I think it is really important to note the programs coming back out the other side. I have already mentioned Room4Change. Again, it works with folk who can transition from the AMC who are ready for that program.

We also have the managed accommodation program which is delivered by EveryMan Australia. It has over \$500,000 in funding. We have also got the coming home program delivered by Toora. Together with those programs, I think we have 25 support places, plus tenancy and property management for 15 men. There is your split between your property places and your support places. In addition, the coming home program has 20 support places and property and tenancy management for up to

five women.

When you add the back end of the flow coming out of AMC, it is far greater than the five tenancies that were handed back as a result of somebody actually being in custody or incarcerated. There is always going to be that tension in terms of ensuring that the property is not vacant because there is always somebody on our waiting list who is in need while somebody is in the AMC. But we need to be flexible. We need to understand the individual circumstance around how that happens.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I get some clarity on this? I have been told—tell me if I am correct—that for three months people are able to pay just \$5 a week rent. Then it goes to market rates. Is that, in fact—

Ms Gilding: I will hand to Frank.

Mr Duggan: No.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that, in fact, the situation?

Mr Duggan: No. People will pay \$5 rent during periods of incarceration or in periods of rehabilitation on occasion, or in fact people who may be escaping, for example domestic violence. We actually apply a \$5 rental arrangement for the period of that. If we want to evict anyone under a no-cause notice through the RTA, the Residential Tenancies Act, it is actually a 26-week period. The subject would have 26 weeks minimum at a \$5 rent.

MS LE COUTEUR: Sorry, can I be clear? You have 26 weeks on \$5?

Mr Duggan: If we issue a no-cause notice, you get 26 weeks before we can operationalise that decision. If you are incarcerated, we would keep you on \$5 rent during that period.

MS LE COUTEUR: If you are incarcerated, you are on \$5 rent—

Mr Duggan: For 26 weeks.

MS LE COUTEUR: For 26 weeks—

Mr Duggan: Minimum.

Ms Berry: Could be longer, though.

Ms Duggan: The minimum is 26 weeks.

Ms Berry: Depending on the individual circumstances, and that is—

Mr Duggan: Sorry, but if the individuals are on remand, their matters have been dealt with and they are getting out in eight months, it would be \$5 for that whole period.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay, right. The other issue that I have told is that if you are in

AMC, you know you are going to be discharged and there is a real idea of when you are going to be leaving, you cannot, in fact, sign up to be on the Housing ACT wait list in the lead-up to being discharged. You have actually got to leave, become homeless and then—

Ms Gilding: I will hand to Frank, but we have those programs that I have just talked about which support—

MS LE COUTEUR: You talked about a number of programs. But I interpreted that as, yes, there is a number of programs and, if you are fortunate enough, you will get into them but that, as a matter of normal procedure, you could not get yourself, or your relatives or supporters could not get you, on the ACT Housing waitlist until you actually had left AMC and become homeless. No doubt, those were a bunch of great programs that had, presumably, fairly limited space. So there is still a possibility that people would leave into homelessness.

Ms Gilding: The short answer is “no” and I will get Frank to—

Ms Berry: Before you do, Mr Duggan, our priority housing list is there for a reason. Housing is allocated for individuals who are most in need. Part of our current agreement and, likely, the future national housing agreement with the federal government is to priorities women and children who are experiencing domestic and family violence.

The challenge for the disciplinary panel in assessing a person’s need is: who is the person who is most in need at the time? We are obligated under the federal agreement to prioritise women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. So it is then: who is the person in need? Is it the person from AMC who also has access to all of these programs? Where do they fit into the disciplinary panel’s work in assessing a person’s need, whether it is into public housing, into one of those support services that have been described or into some other kind of accommodation?

Mr Duggan: We accept pre-release applications for public housing from folks in the AMC. We register them immediately on the standard housing list. Then we start an assessment process, usually with them and their case manager, as the minister says. They actually then go through a process to see whether they will receive priority. If they do receive priority, they go to the multi-disciplinary plenary panel and they are assessed there. We made a decision to actually accept applications from folks who are incarcerated and then to work through the process as we work through the dates for their release. That is how the process works at the moment.

Mrs Mitcherson: I add that the programs that Ms Gilding was talking about are really critical. Sometimes, particularly with men coming out of the AMC, they may not have ever sustained a tenancy before in their lives. So as part of their management, it might be better for them to be somewhere like EveryMan to get some experience in how to sustain a tenancy. Then we can slowly move them through. Sometimes that actually works better, because if you go too far, too quickly, without structure, their lives sort of cave in on them. In some cases that sort of process actually works better, notwithstanding that sometimes there are issues around offending, what they might have done and where they could actually be allowed to live.

Mr Duggan: I had a meeting with the Sentence Administration Board. That was their overall view, as Mrs Mitcherson says, that they were looking for transitional housing with high levels of support. They talked about the transitional housing on-site. They would like that model replicated. From what Ms Gilding and Mrs Mitcherson are saying, that was the proposal that they were more interested in because of the very issue about how you sustain a tenancy after leaving a period of incarceration.

MS LEE: I have a question about the Common Ground development at Dickson. I note that the notes actually say “the design of”. Can you give us some detail about exactly where that is up to?

Ms Berry: It has not really started, but what we have been doing in the lead up to the development of the Common Ground is to have a look at the different kinds of cohorts that might reside in a new secondary Common Ground in the ACT. The first Common Ground in Dickson has a particular cohort. It is 40—

MS LEE: The first one in—

Ms Berry: Sorry, Gungahlin.

MS LEE: There has been a lot happening.

Ms Berry: Gungahlin, yes. It has a particular cohort. It has been designed and built in that way. The site at Dickson is quite a large site. It could mean that as part of this design work it could have a different mix of residents at the Dickson development. That is what this design work will go to. It is having a look at the site, what kind of residences it would provide for people, but also mix in with the work and the conversations that we had leading up to the summit and during the summit last year, together with the cohort work that Housing ACT is doing to look at the different kinds of needs of different cohorts in our community.

We have already heard very loud and clear that women, single women in particular, who have experienced domestic and family violence with children are a particular cohort that needs extra support. We know that across the country as well. But there are also people with different kinds of mental health challenges that they might be living with; single young men. It is those kinds of things. We are looking at what the possible mix could be, how big the site is and what the design is going to look like, because it is bigger and different from the Common Ground in Gungahlin.

MS LEE: Have we got to the stage of having firm details, for example, in terms of the basis on which the land is being provided by the government? Is it free? Is it peppercorn rent, that kind of thing? Who will pay for that construction on the ground?

Ms Barbaro: Not yet. To date, we have been contributing to the broader community consultation on section 72. That has been led by EPSDD. In terms of the design money that we have spent so far, we have just done some really general block and stacking of what it may look like in order to contribute to the community consultation. I think we will be in a position later this year to talk about the finances, how we are going to pay for it, and that kind of detail.

We put out an expression of interest recently to our design panel that we have in Housing ACT. We have informally allocated an architect so that we can get on with some more design work. We are about to organise a consultation with interested stakeholders in terms of Common Ground 2 as to what it could look like, what we need to bear in mind for the tenant cohort, what we have learned from Common Ground 1 in terms of building design and other issues. That will be happening probably later next month.

THE CHAIR: How do you informally appoint an architect?

Ms Barbaro: We have selected the architect from the panel, but we are yet to formalise the correspondence.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Ms Barbaro: Yes.

MS LEE: Perhaps more information can be provided at the annual reports hearings?

Ms Barbaro: Yes, definitely.

MS LEE: As you said, minister, the block is quite a large one. Is it all going to be Common Ground or is it going to share the block with any other community facility?

Ms Berry: I do not know. I think that is part of the design work for what it could look like. I think it is important to reflect on the Common Ground in Gungahlin, how that is working, also common grounds around the country that have a different make-up and what would work here in the ACT and how then that whole different design works with the different cohorts that might be living there.

When I was down in Adelaide last week for education, I took the opportunity to visit a couple of common grounds that had really mixed cohorts. They had small two-bedroom units for women and children, small families, and then some single bed sort of studio places as well that were living together in one common ground. This was in Adelaide. Looking at that design, whether that fits into something that we would do here, whether it is bigger or smaller, single, double or even three bedrooms, that is all the kind of thing that we are looking at.

MS LEE: I suppose the takeaway message is that the way that Common Ground 1 in Gungahlin is working is not necessarily going to be the way it is done for the Common Ground in Dickson.

THE CHAIR: We will put a pin in it there and adjourn for the day. The committee will reconvene tomorrow morning. In respect of any questions that were taken on notice, the committee asks that they be returned to the committee secretary within five days. For the purposes of counting, tomorrow is day one.

The committee adjourned at 5.32 pm.