



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2019-2020

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2019-2020 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2019-2020](#))

Members:

**MISS C BURCH (Chair)
MS B CODY (Deputy Chair)
MRS G JONES
MS C LE COUTEUR
MR M PETTERSSON**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 19 JUNE 2019

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms Annemieke Jongsma (Ph 620 51253)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.30 am.

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality, Minister for Tourism and Special Events and Minister for Trade, Industry and Investment

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Engele, Mr Sam, Executive Group Manager, Policy and Cabinet
Mehrton, Mr Andrew, Executive Branch Manager, Social Policy and Commonwealth State Relations, Policy and Cabinet
Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development
Verden, Ms Jo, Executive Branch Manager, Events ACT, Economic Development
Kobus, Mr Jonathan, Executive Branch Manager, VisitCanberra, Economic Development

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the fourth day of public hearings for the Select Committee on Estimates 2019-2020. The proceedings today will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate in relation to budget statements B, the Community Services Directorate in relation to budget statements G, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate in relation to budget statements D, the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate in relation to budget statements E, and the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses used the words, "I will take that as a question on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

Witnesses are also asked to familiarise themselves with the privilege statement provided. Could you please confirm that you have read the privilege card that is before you and that you understand the implications of the privilege statement?

Mr Barr: Yes.

Mr Engele: Thank you, yes.

Mr Mehrton: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. As we are not accepting opening statements, we will proceed straight to questions today. Chief Minister, the social inclusion statement mentions valuing and supporting the contributions and involvement of older Canberrans, but many older Canberrans publicly report feeling less valued. Fewer than half of Canberra's current suburbs are deemed age friendly, and age-friendly upgrades are occurring in only two suburbs per year, meaning that almost all of Canberra's current seniors will be gone before this process is complete. In addition,

many seniors have recently lost their bus services and dozens of local bus stops have been removed, increasing the social isolation of many. Is the government really doing everything it can to make Canberra a good place to be a senior?

Mr Barr: Obviously, there is change in some areas of the city. Our city demographics are changing, and that necessitates a change in service delivery in some areas. Some of the programs that you mentioned in your question necessitate the need for the government to prioritise particular parts of the city to undertake such initiatives now.

There will always be a limit on resources. We cannot have upgrades for every suburb under the age-friendly program all at once. There would not be industry capacity to do so. Within that program there has been an emphasis on identifying areas with a greater population density of senior Canberrans, where the existing infrastructure needed that immediate upgrade. I will take on board the desire, if it becomes a recommendation of the committee, that the government look at speeding up that program in particular areas. We can certainly look at that.

As part of the commentary from the Under Treasurer yesterday around the shift in the infrastructure program for the territory, and renewing infrastructure in older Canberra suburbs where, generally speaking, you find a larger proportion of long-term Canberra residents who are ageing in place, there is certainly a capacity, as we look at the next three or four years of those programs, to identify additional suburbs in order to expand that program.

In relation to the second part of the question, around transport options, the new transport network necessarily involves trade-offs between frequency of service, directness of service and distance from bus stops. That is a trade-off. One alternative model is to have a network that has a whole number of meandering bus routes that are the longest point between point A and point B that cover the broadest range of streets possible. That has not proved to be particularly popular with the majority of commuters and, for three decades now, it has not really resulted in any significant increase in patronage on the public transport network.

A more sophisticated solution is necessary in order to provide, in the common parlance, that last-mile transport connectivity into faster and more frequent services. In relation to the specifics of the transport network's next iteration, clearly, there will be an increased focus on options that get people, possibly even from their front door, to a frequent network stop, and to have that more tailored treatment and transport option available. The technology is emerging to enable that sort of transport connectivity.

We have had a first start through the community transport options that are supported through each of the regional community services. I think that more can be done in that regard, so we will continue to look at that specific question, which I acknowledge has been raised. I think there is a workable solution that will address that specific issue whilst at the same time maintaining the desire from the majority of Canberrans for their public transport routes to be more direct, to be more frequent and to run for longer hours. That is a trade-off. I think everyone understands that that is a trade-off.

THE CHAIR: Noting that our seniors are not usually using commuter services, did

you speak with the transport minister about making sure that social inclusion of seniors was considered in the current network?

Mr Barr: Absolutely, yes. This is where this quite significant discussion about what other transport options, outside 68, 70 or 110-seat buses or the light rail service, might provide more individual tailored services for a smaller cohort who need to travel outside peak times.

In thinking about our public transport system and network, it has an element of utilitarianism—it has to, because it has to move a lot of people in certain peaks. But as to what happens outside peaks, what sorts of services can be provided by complementary transport service providers to feed into that large fixed route network, I think that is an important conversation to have.

I know that Minister Ramsay, as minister for seniors, Minister Fitzharris in the transport portfolio, myself and others are certainly looking at it. The involvement of new on-demand transport providers who are entering into the market is something that is worth looking at, and we certainly will.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, the capital of equality statement, I believe, has just been released or is about to be released?

Mr Barr: The initial soft launch for the LGBTIQ+ administrative advisory council, with a formal community launch next week—yes.

MS CODY: I will be attending. I am very excited. Can you give us an overview of the plan for having the statement?

Mr Barr: The statement is the result of an extended period of consultation and engagement with the community. It has had strong leadership from the ministerial advisory council. It outlines a range of key commitments and will then lead to a series of actions and action plans under the headings and desired directions as outlined in the strategy. Part of that is around disability. Part of it is about respect. Part of it also is around how we might change or tailor the delivery of services to meet distinct community needs and the diversity of needs even within the LGBTIQ+ community. This feeds into some further work that also falls in this portfolio as it relates to the Chief Minister's charitable fund.

There is a particular emphasis on economic and social participation for the T and the I within the LGBTIQ+ community, as some of the most economically and socially disadvantaged members of the community fall within those particular sub-communities within that broader community. It is pretty clear in terms of workplace participation, social exclusion and the like. So there has been a real focus in this portfolio broadly around targeting initiatives that will assist the fuller participation of trans and intersex people in life in Canberra.

It is not to say that there are not still areas and pockets of disadvantage among lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer identifying Canberrans. There are high-level strategies and then, through this plan, more detailed actions that will be developed, again in partnership with the community and community sector providers. The

ACT government obviously has a role as a major service delivery entity, and different directorates within the ACT government will need to adapt some of their service delivery models. Part of this is around training and engagement with those areas of government. But a lot of the time, either by community sector providers or in co-design and partnership between government and the community sector, new programs and offerings will need to be developed. That is the work that lies ahead after the launch of the strategy sees the development of a range of key action plans.

The advisory council are highly engaged, motivated individuals who have a very strong desire to see change. Through the grants programs that we are offering, we are empowering communities to provide solutions at a local or community level to identify areas of need. It has been quite a step up in opportunity and engagement for sections of the community who have perhaps never before had this level of engagement with government and with service delivery agencies, to have their issues and concerns recognised.

MS CODY: Part of the strategy is to help front-line ACT government employees better understand how to interact with some of those disadvantaged members of the community?

Mr Barr: Yes. I want to acknowledge a very significant and positive journey for most within the ACT public sector over more than a decade now. I think the first sweeping range of law reforms in the ACT were in 2004, so—

MS CODY: They were. I remember.

Mr Barr: That is 15 years ago now. Various waves of relationship recognition and the like have meant that the 20th century approach to how government would deal with non-traditional relationships has evolved. I am hearing less frequent examples now of somewhat jarring interactions and assumptions being made about people's partners and their marital status and the like in terms of interaction with territory government. Clearly changes in federal marriage law have also now shifted the day-to-day experiences for many.

But what has come through in terms of engagement and feedback from the community in this process is that there are still, unfortunately, examples, much rarer now than before, where a degree of assumption or insensitivity is shown around an engagement with government services. But we are getting better and the ACT public service, as a member of Pride in Diversity both as an employer and as a service provider, has demonstrated leadership at a national level. It is terrific to see but we are still on the journey.

MS LE COUTEUR: The budget paper, page 117, reveals that the government intends to spend, I think, \$87,000 on a scoping study to consider the LGBTIQ strategy and its implications for health services. I understand, however, that ACT Health has already undertaken significant scoping of the health service needs of LGBTIQ communities. What exactly will you be scoping that has not already been identified in this work, or by the AIDS Action Council and A Gender Agenda, which produced the collective action blueprint for a coordinated response to health needs for LGBTIQ people and their communities? Are you going to be responding to that blueprint?

Mr Barr: The really specific fine detail of this initiative, Health will be in a better position to go through with you. This is not my initiative; it is the Health Directorate's. I support it as Minister for Social Inclusion and Equality. I can say there is a particular emphasis on trans and intersex in relation to this initiative. But, on the detail of what Health will undertake, what they have already scoped, what they are already responding to and what this further work is, there is a high level of engagement from the ministerial advisory council. Having met with them less than a week ago, I can report back that there is a great deal of interest there, particularly in trans and intersex issues, and a particular focus on resolving some outstanding policy matters where, to put it diplomatically, there may not be unanimity of view within the medical profession.

MS LE COUTEUR: I will ask more about that when we get to Health.

MRS JONES: Minister, the social inclusion statement mentions a funding boost for children and young people who cannot safely live at home with their parents, but not all youth in that situation are in the statutory care and protection system. Fifteen years after it was first identified as a critical area of concern, why do we still have no accommodation services for young people under the age of 16 experiencing homelessness?

Mr Barr: I understand that this is a matter the responsible minister is focused on. Given the limited time here and the fact that it is not directly in my portfolio—just to be clear, the direct portfolio responsibilities here are the charitable fund and philanthropy encouragement, diversity and equal opportunity, LGBTIQ affairs policies and services, the social inclusion statement and social inclusion and equality. I appreciate that it is in the statement, but—

MRS JONES: It is in the statement, indeed.

Mr Barr: Yes, but I am not the responsible minister dealing with that specific initiative.

MRS JONES: Can I have your view on what we can do?

Mr Barr: We acknowledge the issue and continue to work on that question but—

MRS JONES: After 15 years.

Mr Barr: the detail obviously will be in that portfolio area.

MRS JONES: I think most of what is in the social inclusion statement is in fact acted upon by other areas.

MR BARR: That is correct. That is why in the administrative orders it is clear on the directorate.

MRS JONES: In other committees we have also been dealing with this issue that younger people who experience homelessness are in a very vulnerable position.

Mr Barr: Indeed, that is acknowledged. The ACT has some of the widest range of programs and policies in place and—

MRS JONES: Obviously it does not help them, though, does it?

Mr Barr: we will continue to work in this area.

MR PETTERSSON: What is the ACT government doing to resource and provide visibility to the LGBTIQ community?

Mr Barr: As I mentioned in a previous answer, we have a grants program that is empowering local communities and diverse communities to resolve particular issues that have been identified in those communities or by the advisory council. But it is not just a problem-solving opportunity; it is also one around community development and growth, visibility and recognition. There are a diverse range of programs, events and activities that are supported through the grants round. We are also seeing, through the development of this strategy and the action plans that will follow, a clear statement from government, supported by communities, around visibility, engagement and a level of policy involvement that we have not previously seen in this jurisdiction.

I do note that our leadership in many areas is now flowing into a more competitive environment with other jurisdictions. Victoria lays the foundation stone for its Pride Centre later this week. The most progressive jurisdictions in the country are certainly showing leadership here and valuing a group in the community who historically have either been invisible, at best, or often the target of considerable hate and disrespect, more so in the last century than this century.

A lot of progress has been made for gay and lesbian Canberrans. There is more progress that can and should be made for transgender, intersex and queer identifying Canberrans.

MR PETTERSSON: On the events that have been mentioned, the SpringOUT festival, the Out and Loud festival—I have never heard of the Homosexual Histories Conference. Is that a new event?

Mr Barr: Yes, yes. I believe there are some significant anniversaries in 2019: 50 years of decriminalisation in the Australian Capital Territory, the 20th anniversary of the SpringOUT festival, and a number of significant milestone dates coming in this next period that reflect the ongoing journey to full inclusion for this section of the community.

THE CHAIR: We will move on to outputs 3.2 and 3.4, Visit Canberra and special events.

Short suspension.

THE CHAIR: I ask new witnesses to confirm that you have read and understand the privilege statement.

Ms Arthy: Yes, I have read it and understand it.

Ms Verden: Yes, I have read the statement.

Mr Kobus: Yes, I have read and understand the statement.

THE CHAIR: Page 47 of budget statements B refers to delivering the 2020 Australian Tourism Awards. What is involved in the delivery of these awards and what is the breakdown of expenditure.

Mr Barr: The Australian Tourism Awards are an annual event that rotates between the states and territories. We last hosted the event in 2008, so it does not necessarily come around once every eight years but it certainly is our turn now. 2020 is a very timely moment in our tourism journey and story to be able to host the event.

It involves around 800 tourism industry representatives from across the nation. Obviously the state and territory tourism authorities, together with Tourism Australia and various Australian tourism bodies, are represented at the event. As hosts we make a contribution towards the cost of staging the event but not all of it. I will invite Mr Kobus to talk a little about the planning for the 2020 event.

Mr Kobus: As the Chief Minister mentioned, we last hosted the awards in 2008 and we are taking our turn as part of the national fraternity and contributing to the tourism awards. The awards are a national event, so all states and territories run the same process. There is a state-based awards process that happens around the country that all states and territories have launched. That will culminate in our local awards in November this year, and the finalists across the 26 categories then represent their states and territories at the Australian Tourism Awards.

It is a great event; it brings together the senior people across the tourism industry in the country. The plan is to have the event on Friday, 6 March 2020, which is the lead-in to the Canberra Day weekend. It provides a great opportunity for people to extend their stay and do a whole range of things in Canberra. That is really where the benefit to the broader tourism industry comes as part of hosting this event. Generally the tourism industry makes a big effort to discover the destination they are in and explore and look at the tourism product and experience that is relevant to that destination. That certainly occurred when the awards were in Launceston earlier this year.

Our involvement is to work with the Australian Tourism Industry Council, the national body that own the awards, essentially. They own the rights to run the Australian Tourism Awards, and they do that each year. Our investment will be made to ensure that the event is something that reflects a true Canberra-based experience. By doing that we will integrate a whole lot of different themes within the event that help to ensure that the essence of the tourism experience in our region is demonstrated through the tourism awards in March next year.

THE CHAIR: In terms of the funding breakdown, did you say contributions are made by other entities?

Mr Barr: Yes, attendees pay a fee.

Mr Kobus: The Australian Tourism Industry Council have the base level funding to run the event. As per the budget papers, \$290,000 is committed from the ACT to go into running that event. But that contribution is offset by ticket sales and sponsorship. That process all starts now, now that the date is set and the event is launched.

MS CODY: Can you just repeat the date again?

Mr Kobus: Friday, 6 March 2020. The other advantage of holding it on that Friday night is that that is part of the Enlighten festival. That is an opportunity to raise awareness of one of our key anchor events for the year and have the Australian tourism industry be a part of that. It is a really good opportunity to showcase one of our really important events in Canberra for the year.

Mr Barr: Suffice to say there is a significant degree of national media interest in this where there is a supplement focusing on each of the award winners. From memory, it is the *Weekend Australian* magazine that follows on the Saturday after the awards that are held on the Friday night. So you get quite a degree of national media exposure. Obviously the winners get tremendous boosts to their business.

I think the rules are that if you win three years in a row you enter the hall of fame and you are not allowed to enter any more. We have a number of tourism hall of fame award winners; we generally do very well. With the national awards being hosted in Canberra this year we are very keen to see that we are represented in as many categories as possible, from our local tourism awards then going through to the national awards.

MS CODY: How are we promoting getting our local tourism industry to enter across the board in as many categories as we can?

Mr Barr: In the local context we have launched our local awards. There is a concerted effort across the local tourism industry and supported through VisitCanberra and others to ensure that we encourage more entries and work closely with entrants in the territory awards to make sure there is healthy competition locally so that we then have the best possible chance in the national awards.

I attended that launch and, together with many others in the industry, reinforced the point that this is a once-in-a-decade opportunity on home ground to showcase our tourism industry. Another feature of the awards is that it is a massive opportunity for Canberra region food and beverage providers. We will be unashamedly sourcing local for this event and showcasing all of those really world-class food and beverage experiences our city has to offer.

This will go to further reinforcing the emergence and depth and breadth of our tourism and hospitality offerings in a way that is clearly becoming recognised, from *Lonely Planet* through to many of the other travel writers, to the practical experience of the millions of tourists who are coming to our city each year. Our reputation is growing very strongly and this provides another opportunity amongst some of the most engaged in the Australian tourism industry to further promote our city and our

region.

MS CODY: How are we attracting more international and low cost airlines into Canberra? I know we have Singapore Airlines and Qatar, but what else are we doing?

Mr Barr: We continue to work with Canberra Airport, Tourism Australia and some of our other tourism industry partners on quite strategic engagement with particular aviation markets and airlines. Essentially the strategy is to provide more opportunities internationally to the east of Canberra. If you consider the Qatar service daily as effectively a service that takes you west and the Singapore Airlines one that takes you north-west, the major emerging markets and opportunities for us are effectively north to China and east through New Zealand to the Americas.

To complete the spectrum of opportunity for a region of our size, the two priority areas have been China and New Zealand. Hence our recent work has focused on engagement with a number of Chinese airlines and with either Australian or New Zealand airlines that could fly particularly through Auckland and then connect to the Americas. That is undoubtedly the medium-term objective in the international market.

On domestic low cost carriers, we continue to work closely with both Tigerair and Jetstar in partnership with Canberra Airport, VisitCanberra and the various jurisdictions where we are looking to add new low cost carrier services with the state government and state tourism authorities. That has meant work in collaboration with the Tasmanian government on a Canberra-Hobart service, and working with Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and other governments over the years—WA as well—where we are looking to expand direct flights from Canberra to other state capitals or other key destinations. The evidence has shown that when the low cost carriers enter into the market we see a boost in our tourism numbers. And it is another important milestone in our overall objective, which is to make it cheaper and easier to visit Canberra.

Aviation is one part of that objective, that story. The other, clearly, is land transport. Hence we have had a focus on the Canberra-Sydney rail corridor and improving the highways, the major roads, into our region: Monaro Highway, Barton Highway, Kings Highway. We work in partnership with other governments in order to achieve that very straightforward objective which is “cheaper and easier to get here”.

MR PETTERSSON: What is the pitch that you take to airlines and other jurisdictions in enticing airlines to come to Canberra?

Mr Barr: Our principal advantage is that we are a year-round destination with a diversity of visitor types. We have a lot of business travel; we have a lot of visiting friends and relatives travel; and we have a lot of leisure travel. Our offering is that the different segments, in terms of a yield curve for an airline, can all be met in our market and it is year round. It is not a summertime tourism destination like some coastal areas or principally wintertime like the ski fields.

We also pitch the benefit of our region. In addition to Canberra as a landing point, within two hours of this city you can have all of those unique Australian tourism experiences. There are some of the best beaches in the world. Hyams Beach in Jervis

Bay has a particular reputation at the moment for the whitest sand in the world; that is attracting more visitors to that region than they can accommodate. But with our ski fields, rural areas and national parks, there is quite a diversity of tourism offerings. We package that together with the support of the surrounding local government areas and the division within VisitNSW who undertake tourism promotions for this part of that state.

That is the key message, together with the willingness for the territory government, Canberra Airport, Tourism Australia and VisitCanberra to lock in long-term partnership arrangements. Our arrangements with Singapore Airlines, for example, are a decade long. The airport recognise the need to offer certain incentives around the start-up of a new route; they sharpen their pencil and do a very good commercial offer to new airlines.

Part of our objective here is to be in front of these airlines as they make their network plans—that tends to be an annual exercise, to look at new opportunities—to provide the data and information necessary for those sorts of investment decisions, and to keep a very close eye on market trends.

As I said, in recent times we are seeing the Chinese market grow. It is the number one inbound international market. But in the most recent data India is moving into the top five for inbound international visitors to Canberra. The United States and United Kingdom are also very strong for us. We had a big pick-up from New Zealand with the direct flight. The loss of the direct flight has impacted on New Zealand numbers; we are focused on re-establishing that connectivity. New Zealand has been in the Australian top five market because of proximity; we want to see the bigger markets for Australia also the bigger markets for the ACT.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you for that discussion. I am going to be approaching it from a different point of view. In the last sitting week the Assembly voted to say that there is a climate emergency. How do we work out that increased air travel to Canberra, increased tourism, is compatible with thinking there is a climate emergency?

Mr Barr: On one level, people will travel. Where they choose to travel is part of our job and part of our economic responsibility to the tens of thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on a robust tourism industry. The sustainability of the tourism industry is front and centre for that industry itself and for airlines. I want to acknowledge the work that Qantas and others are doing around sustainability of their business. In recent times that is everything from phasing out single-use plastics in their in-flight service to the research and development they are doing on biofuels for aviation.

In the end people are going to travel. I do not think there is any world in which people will give up travelling. I see opportunity for leadership for this jurisdiction. The more people who come here and see that you can have a city powered 100 per cent by renewable electricity the better that will be for the world, I think. Those sorts of messages and opportunities are very clear. Fundamentally, I do not think the climate emergency means that no-one can ever travel again. I just do not accept that argument.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is not the argument I was making. I was talking about an increase in tourism, which is what you have been talking about at great length, and suggesting that that does not seem to be very compatible with the concept that we have a climate emergency.

Mr Barr: I am not sure I see how. How is that a problem?

MS LE COUTEUR: Those planes are consuming—

Mr Barr: Is it just the plane fuel?

MS LE COUTEUR: No, it is not just plane fuel, though that is a very obvious one, because that is what we have just been talking about as something that we are trying to increase: the number of plane trips to Canberra and thus the consumption of fuel. I appreciate that our greenhouse gas emissions are accounted for at present. We do not have any responsibility for that. But that does not mean that we do not have any responsibility. We have just been talking about trying to increase it. I was just wondering if there was a way that you could see that they were compatible.

Mr Barr: Fundamentally, if the planes are not flying here they are flying somewhere else, so there is no net difference in terms of the number of emissions that come from that sector. More importantly, the focus, undoubtedly, will be for airlines to transition their fuel types. That is happening, and that is pleasing to see. As I mentioned, they are also undertaking a series of other steps to reduce the amount of single-use plastic within airline service.

The majority of tourists who come to Canberra are not coming by plane. The majority of our tourists are domestic, and they are coming here in cars, principally. To single out the tourism sector here I think would be grossly unfair, frankly, to all the people whose jobs depend on tourism. I cannot accept that a climate emergency means we shut down our tourism industry and we do not seek to grow it. Those two do not sit comfortably with me. And I do not think we can draw the conclusion that you have in suggesting that a climate emergency means that we cannot grow tourism.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think it makes a difference to how tourism is growing, if we do grow it. And the emphasis on planes which you have just been talking about.

Mr Barr: Let me say that government policy is to grow the tourism sector, because it is fundamental to the livelihoods of tens of thousands of our fellow residents. We do not have many industry opportunities, and relative to most industries in this nation, tourism's ecological footprint is very light. Compare tourism to mining. Compare tourism to a range of manufacturing activities. Its ecological footprint is light and reducing because there is leadership within the industry to develop more sustainable operations. You are seeing that in all sectors, from hotels and the transport sector in tourism through to opportunities for ecotourism being a market segment that is of interest to a section of the community.

That is one of the things that we do well. We do not do as well as some jurisdictions, because we do not have some of the natural resources that some places have, but we do pretty well in that regard. The industry, when compared with most other industries

in this nation, takes its environmental sustainability very seriously and is acting on that. So I am sorry, but I just cannot accept this. I just do not think there is logic in that line of thinking.

MRS JONES: There were significant budget blowouts and issues occurring around the procurement of Floriade in 2017. Have legacy issues from that been resolved?

Mr Barr: Yes, I believe so. I will invite the team to talk about that.

Ms Verden: I am pleased to report back to the Assembly that the issues that were identified as part of the Floriade 2017 overspend have been addressed. Some of those issues that were identified related to the management of our budgets and the reconciliation of our budgets. There were procurement issues that were identified—contract management issues. I am pleased that the team have made a considered effort to ensure that those issues have been addressed.

There was a subsequent review that was done to monitor and report back on the progress that we had made in relation to the recommendations from the first review, and that second review indeed identified that we had made progress against all the recommendations.

MRS JONES: What was the final overspend for that year?

Ms Verden: The final overspend was in the order of \$1.2 million.

MRS JONES: How was it funded, given that it might have flowed on into this last financial year?

Ms Verden: We had identified cost savings throughout the Events ACT budget and we had also made some efficiencies through future contractual arrangements.

Ms Arthy: To add to Ms Verden's answer in terms of the \$1.2 million in 2017, it was also managed across the division and across the directorate.

MRS JONES: You tightened in other areas too?

Ms Arthy: That is right.

MRS JONES: It is a fair amount for a small unit to carry. I believe that Enlighten was outsourced to a firm called Visabel. Is that correct?

Ms Verden: That is correct.

MRS JONES: The major event strategy outlines the government's plans to outsource event delivery. Floriade 2018 and Enlighten were both Visabel, were they?

Ms Verden: That is correct.

MRS JONES: How have the outcomes changed as a result of using that private sector engagement?

Ms Verden: Having outsourced the delivery of Floriade and Enlighten has enabled us to bring a different level of expertise into the organisation. Particularly during last year, when we had a substantial staffing turnover, we lost a lot of corporate knowledge as a result of the activities following the Floriade 2017 overspend.

MRS JONES: You had to have a change in the staffing profile?

Ms Verden: Yes. We had to engage a considerable number of new staff. Bringing those into the organisation and the outsourcing of Floriade and Enlighten enabled us to have some stability, particularly around those two major events for the city. Visabel is an experienced event manager. We followed a tender process to ensure that we brought in the right level of experience and expertise necessary to deliver major events.

One of the things that we built into the contract with Visabel was the provision of coaching and mentoring of new staff coming into the organisation. While we are going through the recruitment process, obviously we are looking to recruit people experienced in event management and event delivery but also recognising the knowledge and experience that Visabel had brought to the organisation through past experiences with major events—past experience working with Floriade. A key focus of that contract was to ensure that that knowledge was indeed passed on to new staff members coming into Events ACT.

MRS JONES: Is there an intention to use Visabel into the future or to go back in house?

Ms Verden: Visabel is currently under contract for Floriade 2019. That is the final event under that contract. We have recently been in the market for a tender for an executive producer for Floriade 2020 onwards and Enlighten 2020 onwards. That tender closed yesterday.

MRS JONES: Ultimately with that Visabel experience for those two events, what were the comparative visitor numbers? Do we have a breakdown of who were interstate and who were international visitors to those events? Do we know what the occupancy rates were during that month of Floriade in particular?

Ms Verden: For Floriade 2018 the attendance numbers were just over 480,000, which was just shy of the 2014 record. Around 48 per cent of those were interstate and international visitors. That is a consistent figure that we achieve for Floriade. In relation to that number there was also the attendance at NightFest, which was around 21,000. Of the attendance at NightFest, about 67 per cent was made up of locals.

MRS JONES: Did you have a look at the occupancy rates for accommodation during that period?

Ms Verden: I cannot actually give you the number on occupancy rates. What I can give you is anecdotal feedback from the sector that it is traditionally a very busy time for the city in terms of occupancy.

MRS JONES: Finally, are there still question marks over the location of Floriade into the future or do we know what the plan is or what the intention is?

Ms Verden: At this stage the intent is to remain in Commonwealth Park and we are working very closely with the National Capital Authority to ensure the sustainability of the event.

MRS JONES: Have some of the issues been resolved? Are you just paying more or how are you—

Mr Barr: We operate at a slightly different footprint within the park and there is—

MRS JONES: Which they are happier with?

Mr Barr: I would not necessarily say that, but we are resigned to that termination. There are certain areas where we used to have more permanency. We had garden beds and flower beds that we now have to effectively grow offsite and then add in. There are certain areas of the park that we are not allowed to have. If you walk through Commonwealth Park now you will see obviously the event in preparation but not in the same range of areas that 15 years ago we were able to have. Obviously, subject to reasonable behaviour from the National Capital Authority around charging and access then that would continue to be a—

MRS JONES: Has that changed? Has that improved since the issues that you are discussing?

Mr Barr: I think peace has broken out, yes. It certainly has not been an issue that has been elevated to me in recent times, whereas before, clearly, it was an issue that needed resolving. Medium term I think there is an opportunity in West Basin as that precinct continues to evolve. Part of the intent there is to have a capacity to host events.

MRS JONES: That will be controlled by the ACT government?

Mr Barr: We own the land but any further improvements to the area require works approval from the commonwealth through the NCA.

MRS JONES: Being right on the foreshore of the lake?

Mr Barr: Yes. Obviously they provided approval for the first stage of Sir Henry Rolland Park that is down near Commonwealth Avenue Bridge. That is clearly a level of amenity higher than the rest of West Basin. We have set money aside and it is sitting there waiting for the commonwealth, for the NCA, to give us works approval to further develop that.

MRS JONES: What is the time frame that you hope or are you just literally—

Mr Barr: It is: how long is a piece of string? We have been waiting years now for the NCA to give that approval.

MRS JONES: Have there been recent discussions with them about what their intention is?

Mr Barr: I think, to cut a long story short, it might be tied up in some other negotiations that—

MRS JONES: Between the ACT government and them or not?

Mr Barr: In one part, yes. As we have discussed previously, the NCA requires additional land for diplomatic missions.

MRS JONES: You are thinking there might be a quid pro quo waiting to be had?

Mr Barr: We have been given a pretty strong signal that we are unlikely to get approval to undertake further work in West Basin until we find them more land somewhere else. Yes, we are being held to ransom on various things here, but we will work through that.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, can you please explain how sporting events have contributed to tourism in the ACT and how the government intends this to grow over the forward estimates?

Mr Barr: Yes, I think we have now more than a decade's worth of information and lived experience on the value of major sporting events for our city across half a dozen different types of sport, women's and men's. This is over this entire decade. We have significantly invested in our venues and their capability to host major national and international sporting events.

Obviously, this budget contains funding for other major sporting events in the early part of 2020. We have previously hosted Asian Cup football. We have had cricket test matches, international one-day cricket. We have had Rugby Union, Rugby League, major AFL, netball. We have hosted a range of major sporting events.

We commissioned research on each of those, and we survey visitors so that we get a good snapshot of who attends the events, where they have come from, how long they stay, how much money they spend. I think that gives us confidence that this sort of investment not only provides access for Canberrans to these sorts of major sporting events but also works as a tourism attracter from the region, the nation and internationally. Does anyone want to add anything more or has that covered it?

MR PETTERSSON: As a result of the surveys and the research that is undertaken, which major events are the most lucrative?

Mr Barr: Major events more broadly. That is cultural, actually. As a pure return on investment, it is our support for major exhibitions at the National Gallery, for example, largely because of their duration. They run for months. The cumulative impact is that, rather than peaking on a particular weekend or day, they tend to provide a very consistent base of activity over a number of months.

That is the reason that the majority of our special events fund has been allocated to

cultural events. Clearly, it is a comparative advantage and in many instances a unique thing that our city has to have so many world-class cultural institutions within walking distance of each other in the parliamentary triangle. I think that in terms of pure return on investment it is cultural events. But there is still obviously very strong interest in and support for sporting events as well.

MR PETTERSSON: Within the sporting events, which sporting events are most lucrative?

Mr Barr: That is interesting. I guess it will depend a little on target markets and how you would assess that. I think we have been building a very strong reputation as a community and a destination that supports women's sport in a stronger way, both per capita and in many instances even overall, than some cities and destinations that would actually have larger populations than we do.

I think we have built strength and credibility as Australia's leading women's sports destination. But we have also seen very strong engagement particularly with things that are held for the first time in our city. Our support for Canberra's first cricket test match provided some of the only sold-out days of test cricket in the entire Australian summer. They were here in Canberra. Cricket Australia had incredibly positive feedback around how well we staged that event, how well the community responded and the benefits, frankly, of having a venue that is practically full in terms of atmosphere for test match cricket. It stands us in really good stead for future opportunities there.

I think it has been remarked that the best match in the 2015 Asian Cup was the quarterfinal that was held at Canberra stadium. We get very strong and positive feedback around the playing surface at Canberra stadium. It was rated the best in the tournament. That has continued to be a trend around the playing surfaces, both at Manuka and Canberra stadiums, for major sporting events.

If you go back a decade to when we hosted the Mountain Bike World Championships at Stromlo Forest Park, there was incredibly positive feedback there. Generally speaking, although there are some events that are simply too expensive or too big to attract into our market, for the ones that we do, we perform very well. The feedback from the sports, from the players and from the spectators is very positive.

MS CODY: Chief Minister, just a moment ago you were talking about mountain biking at Mount Stromlo. I am not mountain biker but I do go running through Mount Stromlo a lot. The access to Mount Stromlo is getting bigger and bigger now. Do you keep figures on that sort of access?

Mr Barr: I believe there is that data. It is not specifically this group—

MS CODY: No. Is that sport and rec?

Mr Barr: It is with territory venues, but I am certainly happy to provide that data for the committee. Clearly, our venues in their diversity are a key part of our tourism offering. We are looking at ways to leverage on-site activity for the tourism sector. There is a market sounding exercise out now in respect of Mount Stromlo around

some on-site accommodation to further enhance amenity and facilities at that venue.

The long-term plan for the Arboretum is for an eco resort. Following on from my earlier comments in response to Ms Le Couteur's question, one of the benefits of that venue, through the sorts of environmental standards we want to set with a resort offering there, would be that it would be boutique, unique and world class. I think that that would demonstrate the credentials and capacity for the ACT tourism industry not only to be a sustainability leader but also to be an Australian and international tourism leader.

THE CHAIR: To confirm for the transcript, you will take on notice to provide that data?

Mr Barr: Yes; the specific question around attendees at Stromlo Forest Park relates to territory venues, which appeared earlier. We will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Barr: I am sure my office will follow that up. Yes, I am getting nods.

THE CHAIR: On the market sounding proposal for Mount Stromlo, it does say that no funding has been allocated. What is the plan to fund that?

Mr Barr: We intend not to fund it, that it would be the private sector, where we would make—

THE CHAIR: There would be no government contributions.

Mr Barr: Yes; we would make land available under a licence arrangement. That would be the opportunity then for the private sector to come in. That is the market sounding. It is not a government-run facility.

MS CODY: Sticking to the tourism theme, yesterday I spoke about diversification of jobs in Canberra and you did touch on tourism. What sorts of jobs are we creating and what are the local opportunities for business with our tourism numbers? They seem to be expanding but—

Mr Barr: Yes, undoubtedly we are seeing opportunity emerge across the broad tourism and hospitality sector. It is coming in many sub-sectors within that broader industry. There has been a lot of new investment in hotels in Canberra in recent times. There are a lot of staff jobs associated with that increased offering in that sector. We are seeing remarkable growth in the more boutique areas of food and beverage. Five or six years ago, we did not really have a craft brewing industry. Now we have—

MS CODY: Huge.

Mr Barr: It is certainly a rapidly growing and highly regarded craft brewing sector. The Canberra district wine region has been around now for four or five decades, but in the last 10 years in particular it has got the recognition that it truly deserves for the quality of its output. Part of that recognition, and obviously increased sales, has led to

reinvestment in the tourism offering.

You are starting to see a much higher quality cellar door experience. There is a food offering that complements the cellar door experience in a number of places, which is really encouraging to see. A lot of the activity is on the New South Wales side of the border, but we are seeing it at Mount Majura and Pialligo, happily in the electorate of Kurrajong, I will point out.

There is fantastic recognition nationally and internationally. Export markets are being developed. That is leading to the creation of new jobs in industries that did not exist previously. I guess this goes to reinforcing a continuing theme of mine over the last few days around diversification. It is that we are seeing that in the sectors of the economy that previously did not have any offering, and now we do. It is small-scale by global standards, obviously. We are not going to be mass producers of average wine and mass producers of average beer, but we are boutique producers of some world-class craft beer and wine, and our truffle industry continues to emerge and grow.

They are just a handful of examples of where we are seeing the Canberra region growing incredibly strongly and all of the hard work from those individuals and small businesses getting the recognition that it deserves on a national and international stage. I guess that is part of the benefit of tourism. We are able to grow our markets because our community is too small for there to be significant growth opportunities for a number of these industry sectors. We are not going to grow rich or richer as a community buying and selling from ourselves. We have to have national and international market access.

Nothing pleases me more, as Canberra's tourism minister, when I am in other jurisdictions, to find Canberra beers on tap in pubs in Sydney, that you can get wine from this district right across our nation and when waiters, unprompted, say, "You really should try that wine from Canberra. It is fantastic." All credit to the incredibly hard work that has gone in year in, year out from some of these businesses. It is just so encouraging and rewarding in my role to see that work that we can do in partnership with those sectors come to fruition and to see it recognised. That is the benefit of tourism for Canberra.

MS CODY: You were unavailable, and I was lucky enough to represent you at the ACT wine region tasting event.

Mr Barr: One of the best representative events, I am sure.

MS CODY: I know; I am not a fan of Canberra region wines at all! There were so many people there, and so many people were talking about our region wines. I know, as you said, that a lot of them are in surrounding areas of New South Wales, but Mount Majura is going gangbusters. Are we looking at what is next? I know it has taken some time to get the wine industry to the pinnacle, so that they are finally getting the recognition they deserve. Do we know what is next? Is it the Truffle Festival? Is it the winter festival?

Mr Barr: We are very focused on the different areas, and not just in terms of what we

do in VisitCanberra promotions and the opportunities provided by our events to showcase these local producers. We are doing a lot of work in the venues area, around our new contracts and arrangements with our football teams; there is the opportunity for Canberra craft beer and wine to be the beverage offerings. If we retain those rights in those commercial negotiations then we can, as part of our local procurement promotion, give opportunities, with the appropriate commercial arrangements, to our local providers.

Too often in some of the national and international things, locals are locked out. I point to the shift at Floriade to move largely from a catered-style event to a local region boutique food and wine offering. Pialligo Estate's involvement there is a practical example; so too is having the Capital Brewing Company involved in it, together with—

MS CODY: Contentious Character were there, with their wine.

Mr Barr: Absolutely. These are the sorts of practical examples where we can leverage our tourism promotion, our events and our venues to support local business. In terms of the wine industry, nothing amused me more than attending a dinner in Sydney over the long weekend. I had been up there watching the Brumbies beat New South Wales, which is always a highlight in any Brumbies fans' year.

MS CODY: Absolutely.

Mr Barr: The waiter at a particular Sydney restaurant, when we had ordered a bottle of Ken Helm's half dry riesling, then give me a 10-minute explanation about why this wine was so fantastic and how Ken had been working for all these years. I did not say anything. I thought, "I'll listen," and I said, "Yes, it really is very good."

These little anecdotal stories highlight how well some of these industry sectors are doing, and the role we can play through VisitCanberra, through Events ACT and through territory venues and events. It is rewarding not only for me as minister, but also, I am sure, for the officials and teams that work so hard through the year to stage these events and activities; to see this sort of recognition is fantastic.

Ken Helm has been a pioneer for our district. His international riesling festival is one that the territory government has supported year in, year out, and we will continue to do so. It further works to boost the reputation of our wine industry.

MS CODY: Young Chris Carpenter out at Lark Hill was nominated as "a young gun of wine".

Mr Barr: Yes, indeed.

MS CODY: He was nominated for two years running.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MS CODY: That is huge.

Mr Barr: Yes, absolutely. I have omitted many names, and there are many—

MS CODY: There are thousands; we could go on all day.

Mr Barr: We could.

MS LE COUTEUR: A CBR cycle tourism strategy has been launched. How is it going?

Mr Kobus: We launched the CBR cycle tourism strategy earlier this year. It is a great way of adopting a whole-of-government approach in terms of how we grow cycle tourism in Canberra and, through that, generate a whole range of benefits back to the community.

For example, we have a working group that meets quarterly. All the major areas of government that have an interest in cycling are represented—EPSDD, VisitCanberra and Transport Canberra and City Services. We work collaboratively on actioning a range of initiatives that look at positioning Canberra as a cycle destination of choice. We also look at ways in which to do the ongoing work to grow the Canberra cycle network and how that takes into account the needs of visitors to the city.

The strategy had several goals around it. One was creating a positive and collaborative culture for cycling to strengthen the ACT's perception as a cycling destination. Generally, there was low awareness of the fact that Canberra was a great place for cycling. We want to increase visits to Canberra from a cycling perspective—not only for it to be a primary motivator for travel but also so that when people come here it is something they can do while they are here. We also want to provide flow-on benefits to the community and enhance the sustainability and livability of the ACT.

One of the key advantages for the strategy and how it has been executed is about taking advantage of the diversity of experiences that people can participate in when they come to Canberra. One of the great things about cycling in Canberra is that you can access a really diverse range of experiences on a bike. The iconic route around the lake, the bridge to bridge ride, is something that cannot be done in many other cities around Australia. You can take in and immerse yourself in Australia's capital in that way. Stromlo Forest Park has a world-class mountain bike facility that is a five to 10-minute drive from a hotel in the city centre. The proximity of that venue to the city centre is one of the primary reasons why events come to Canberra. It is because of the proximity of that facility to other things, such as hotels and the things that people need to access when they are participating in an event.

In the implementation of the strategy, we are looking at leveraging existing programs and resources. From the perspective of VisitCanberra, our role is to look at how we better promote Canberra as a cycling destination. It involves everything from how we represent cycling experiences on our website to how we communicate that through social media; also, how we support local businesses and their growth, helping them to position themselves as sustainable operations in the city, and how we connect with other parts of government to ensure that the initiatives that they implement have a line of sight to the recommendations in the strategy.

MS LE COUTEUR: Does this include encouraging the various cycle for hire schemes we have in Canberra? Is that part of your strategy?

Mr Kobus: Yes, the cycle for hire schemes are certainly part of what we discuss as a working group in implementation of the strategy. Our role in developing the strategy is to provide input to ensure that those types of services that are delivered by other parts of government, from VisitCanberra, take into account the needs of visitors to the town. When those services are implemented, the stations and locations at which the bikes are placed need to be in areas that provide access for people who are visiting and enable them to navigate the city in an appropriate way.

THE CHAIR: There are not any new expense initiatives for the strategy included in the budget. How is it being resourced and funded?

Mr Kobus: The strategy deliberately looks at leveraging existing resources across government. That was a key part of it, so that it provides a template for how investments that are going to be made in cycle networks, infrastructure and marketing programs are informed by the best market intelligence to help them operate in the best way possible.

THE CHAIR: And not just in VisitCanberra but across the government?

Mr Kobus: Correct, yes. For example, from our perspective as a destination marketing body, we will use our existing budget and ensure that we take the recommendations from the strategy so that we have a better narrative, better imagery and better content around the cycle experiences that are available. That is easy for us to do. We do not need additional dollars to do it; it is about incorporating it into our business as usual approach.

In a similar way, when it comes to looking at events that we want in Canberra, we can understand, through the research on the cycling strategy, the types of events that are best suited to Canberra, how we would attract those, how we may support them through existing event funding programs, and leverage those events to grow awareness of Canberra as a cycling destination.

MS LE COUTEUR: While I am not suggesting that cycling to Canberra is ever going to be the major way that tourists would come to Canberra—

MS CODY: It is a hard road.

MS LE COUTEUR: Not so much hard as long and dangerous. There have, over the last few years, been a number of deaths of cyclists on the roads to Canberra. Do you have any visibility on that in terms of the cycling strategy? I know people who do cycling tourism. They go on their bike; that is how they do it. But the roads to Canberra are not that safe.

Mr Kobus: Through the strategy I do not have visibility of the exact issues with cycling into regional New South Wales and access to Canberra. Through the work that we do, we do not directly address cycling road safety issues, but the information and the data that sit behind the strategy certainly assist those parts of government that

are responsible for developing the cycle network and taking into account the needs of visitors and how they can navigate their way around Canberra.

THE CHAIR: The strategy primarily focuses on cycling around the city, not so much the mountain bike trails that we discussed this morning. What is the reason for that? Is that based on your research?

Mr Kobus: In the strategy we identified three major user groups that are formed. The biggest user group by quite a considerable way, in terms of what motivates people to use a bike when they come to Canberra, is just general leisure, people who want to cycle around Canberra and engage in the experiences here. Cycling around the parliamentary zone and the lake is a key experience that people want to participate in when they are here.

It was not done at the expense of looking at mountain trail development. The people that come here for mountain biking specifically are an important part of the cycling community and a really important visits driver, but they are a smaller subset of those who cycle purely for leisure and experiencing the city while they are here.

THE CHAIR: When you say a smaller subset, do you have some kind of breakdown of figures on that?

Mr Kobus: Yes. I do not have them in front of me at the moment, but I can certainly provide those—

THE CHAIR: Could you take that on notice.

Mr Kobus: The work that we do through the cycle tourism working group looks at mountain biking, and future mountain bike trail development and sustainable trail development, as a key priority within that strategy. It looks at how that can evolve not only through existing facilities like Stromlo park but also through other areas within the ACT where land might be used in an appropriate way for new trail development.

MS CODY: Do you also incorporate the bike stop cafe program? I think that is what it is called. It was an initiative announced last year by Transport Canberra and City Services. Do you know what I am talking about?

Mr Kobus: Yes, certainly. That is part of the advantage of the collaboration where it sits across government, within the limitation of the strategy: the capacity to understand those types of initiatives that are being developed, by Transport Canberra in this instance, and the capacity for us as a communicator of a message to incorporate that into our marketing programs.

MR PETTERSSON: Chief Minister, has the government met its goal for overnight visitor expenditure to the ACT? What events or factors have contributed to these numbers?

Mr Barr: We are targeting \$2.5 billion by 2020, and we are sitting on \$2.4 billion now, so we are very close. Given the trends in recent years, I suspect that we will get to our \$2.5 billion, probably not this calendar year but certainly in 2020. It has been a

considerable effort across the entire tourism sector. I want to acknowledge the very close working relationship between VisitCanberra and our tourism industry partners towards this shared goal that we have been working on for the best part of a decade.

MS LE COUTEUR: There is \$1.7 million to support hosting five matches at the women's T20 cricket world cup. What is the money going to go to for this?

Mr Barr: Staging the event, in large part. Jo, do you want to add something?

Ms Verden: Yes, I can give you that. The territory's investment is largely to cover off the host city responsibilities underneath the agreement that we have to deliver those five matches over the three consecutive days that will occur in February next year.

I will take you through some of the items that that covers. It includes things such as city activation and dressing, as well as specific marketing and promotion activities that we will undertake to support that event; hosting of host city functions and any ancillary events; looking after city-wide services such as traffic management, parking, safety, security and crowd management—all very important to support the event—and managing venue infrastructure and any temporary infrastructure that is required to be brought in to support visitor services, including medical and emergency services. It also covers things such as training venue temporary infrastructure requirements; any operational costs associated with the warm-up and warm down facilities that are required by the teams; and media, broadcasting and insurance.

MS LE COUTEUR: When you decide to take this on, do you do a cost-benefit analysis and work out what benefits we expect to get from it?

Mr Barr: Yes; that is correct.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can we have an idea of that for this case?

Mr Barr: The benefits are many and varied. Some are financially quantifiable; others go to slightly more intangible questions. As I highlighted before, a policy focus has been to support women in sport. This is a further demonstration of that.

It would be fair to say that at the moment some elements of these sorts of events are more expensive than we would like them to be but are simply fixed costs associated with being involved. You either are or you are not. If you do sign up to be a host city, you have to undertake some of those events.

As general commentary, I would say that I am concerned about market inflation and bidding wars between jurisdictions for these sorts of events. I do not think that that is sustainable in the longer term. We have sent that message to a number of sports and sporting organisations: that it is unrealistic to expect that the market can continue to be bid up, because it will simply price smaller jurisdictions out of the market. We are starting to see even some of the larger Australian states say, "Look, this is just not feasible." In some instances we have seen organisations wanting to insert fees in events that have previously been held that have not attracted hosting fees, and that is not sustainable.

What is driving that is that the revenue that can be earned from broadcasting rights has peaked. Sports, in particular, are now also in a position, though, where they can broadcast themselves; they can go onto different platforms and not rely on network television as much as they used to. There is still a bit of a tipping point here and a transition.

One of the issues that we faced in this specific instance was that there was also a men's tournament. We had the choice to bid for both, neither or one. We made the conscious decision—for a number of factors, price being one of them, but also our policy around supporting women's sport—to support this event.

THE CHAIR: You said that a large component is fixed cost. Are the fixed costs for the men's tournaments higher than the fixed costs for the women's tournaments?

Mr Barr: They can be.

THE CHAIR: You said there is a pricing factor there.

Mr Barr: Yes. Part of that would appear to be driven by relative remuneration for male athletes ahead of female athletes. Part of that also is how much is offset against expected attendance. Although there is growing support for women's sport, in some of these international tournaments the attendance for the men's events is higher and what is charged through the gate is higher.

If we do not make policy decisions like we have, that will never change. Part of this is leadership, but it is also about a sustained long-term strategy to be Australia's leader in supporting women's sport. I am prepared to wear the criticism that the cost-benefit is slightly lower at this point, but it will not change unless we actively change it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will adjourn for a short break.

Hearing suspended from 10.59 to 11.16 am.

Appearances:

Ramsay, Mr Gordon, Attorney-General, Minister for the Arts and Cultural Events, Minister for Building Quality Improvement, Minister for Business and Regulatory Services and Minister for Seniors and Veterans

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Tyler, Ms Sam, Executive Branch Manager, artsACT, Economic Development

Starick, Ms Kate, Acting Executive Group Manager, Strategy and Policy, Economic Development

Engele, Mr Sam, Executive Group Manager, Policy and Cabinet

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

Green, Mr Ben, Executive Branch Manager, Construction and Utilities, Access Canberra

Rynehart, Mr Josh, Executive Branch Manager, Customer Coordination, Access Canberra

Chan, Ms Yu-Lan, Executive Branch Manager, Projects, Governance and Support, Access Canberra

Potter, Ms Chantel, Executive Branch Manager, Fair Trading and Compliance, Access Canberra

Cultural Facilities Corporation

Elvin, Ms Harriet, Chief Executive Officer

Community Services Directorate

Mitcherson, Mrs Bernadette, Director-General

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Group Manager, Strategic Policy

Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Branch Manager, People Management

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

Brady, Dr Erin, Deputy Director-General, Land Strategy and Environment

Morris, Ms Vanessa, Coordinator, Building Policy

Justice and Community Safety Directorate

Glenn, Mr Richard, Acting Director-General

Ng, Mr Daniel, Executive Branch Manager, Legislation, Policy and Programs

THE CHAIR: I ask new witnesses to confirm that you have read the privilege statement and understand the implications.

Ms Tyler: I have read the privilege statement.

Ms Elvin: I have also read the statement.

THE CHAIR: The budget for 2018-19 shows an underspend for artsACT of \$483,000. What is the reason for that underspend?

Ms Tyler: That is the difference in the estimated original budget and estimated

outcome. Those changes are associated with initiatives being reprofiled into the 2019-20 financial year, including the artist in residence programs, Canberra theatre complex community consultation, and some funding from the growing our creative capital funding initiative from the previous year.

THE CHAIR: Is there a specific reason why those programs have been pushed out?

Ms Tyler: The residencies program has been due to consideration of how that program will be implemented in the future. The Canberra theatre complex community consultation is a result of work between the Cultural Facilities Corporation, the CRA and the infrastructure finance capital works on the business case for a new Canberra theatre. The more and better jobs is related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and engaging with community about the most appropriate way in which to go forward with programs for that.

Mr Ramsay: One of the key things relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander program is making sure that matters are done well relationally and are culturally appropriate. The time frames around that need to be adjusted accordingly to make sure it is done with the appropriate level of sensitivity.

MRS DUNNE: There was an initiative of \$300,000 in the last budget but you did not, Ms Tyler, have a conversation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community before you funded that?

Ms Tyler: The initiative has been funded with \$100,000 over the last number of years and we have rolled that money forward in previous financial years as well as this financial year. We had started the consultation work with the community and we released a consultation report and action plan in terms of how we were moving forward.

MRS DUNNE: When did you start that?

Ms Tyler: The reports were released in January 2018.

MRS DUNNE: But the budget funding was after that.

Ms Tyler: The budget funding was before that as well.

MRS DUNNE: The 2018-19 budget had \$312,000 over four years, so you had a budget appropriation then.

Ms Tyler: That funding was for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts officer, so it was about the recruitment of an individual. That person started in January this year. That is separate to the re-profiling.

MRS DUNNE: In relation to the re-profiling, what has happened to the discussion paper and consultation that you did in January 2018?

Ms Tyler: We are working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts network and the arts officer who started in January on the programs going forward from that.

We have taken the information from the consultation and we are continuing to work with the community to firm up some programs that will be delivered in the next couple of months, I believe.

MRS DUNNE: And they will be fully funded from that cumulative rolled over money, which is how much?

Ms Tyler: There will be \$350,000 available in the 2019-20 financial year.

MRS DUNNE: And going forward?

Ms Tyler: It is \$100,000 per year after that.

MRS DUNNE: So you might get a big sugar hit and then it might fall off?

Ms Tyler: Part of the work that we have been doing is around establishing programs. They might not be the same programs that continue forward; they are not necessarily ongoing programs but initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and communities to work on highlighting cultures and significant elements within their community. It is community building as well as arts outcomes.

MS CODY: We have had the Chief Minister in for the last few days and we were talking about the budget initiative to look at the staffing profile and reducing insecure work across the public service as a whole. How is that going in the arts and cultural affairs portfolio?

Mr Ramsay: It is probably good to have a response from both artsACT and the CFC on their particular profiles.

Ms Tyler: There are 14 occupied positions within artsACT. We have a headcount that is a little bit higher than that, due to part-time work. We have a number of people on short-term contracts and we are working through a process now of finalising our structure for the next financial year and looking at recruiting those positions permanently.

Ms Elvin: Our staffing profile is set out on page 193 of the budget papers. As indicated there, we use a lot of casual staff and the reason is the fluctuating nature of the work we do, particularly in the Canberra Theatre Centre, for example. We could have three shows on one day and then no shows for three days. Obviously you need a lot of staff for intensive periods perhaps to bump in a production, to set it up and to sell drinks at the bar, programs, merchandise and so forth. Obviously that fluctuates according to the different shows that come in both for front of house staff and technical staff.

Our casual staff really value the opportunity to combine casual work with other activities in their lives. A lot of the Canberra Theatre Centre staff are uni students. Other people we engage in a casual capacity might be artists. For example, two of the region's finest glass artists work on the front desk of CMAG—Ruth Oliphant and Harriet Schwarzrock. They really value the opportunity to combine that work with their artistic practice.

Others combine casual work with family responsibilities, with study. In some cases the Canberra Theatre Centre staff actually have a job during the day and they might do some casual work in the evening. It is an area where we engage a lot of casual staff but there are particular reasons for doing that.

MS CODY: And that is more casual staff rather than labour hire?

Ms Elvin: Yes, correct.

MS CODY: Casual is a very different concept to labour hire.

Ms Elvin: Yes, for sure.

MS LE COUTEUR: This is for the Cultural Facilities Corporation again. I have read through your discussion of risks. One of the key risks, you say, is parking. Have you found that the new light rail has been sufficient to make any difference in terms of people's willingness to go to the theatre, particularly at night?

Ms Elvin: It is very early days to judge that yet. We are hoping that that and other new transport opportunities, like Uber and eventually autonomous vehicles, will be part of the mix in providing transport options for theatre patrons. But there will be an ongoing need for car parking, particularly for our older patrons and people with access issues. So I think that still needs to be a focus of our transport planning for our patrons.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you looked at any way-finding from the theatre down to where the bus is? The Assembly bus stop is actually very close to your theatre, but I imagine that the vast majority of your patrons would have no idea of this information. While in the past it probably was not that relevant, we have managed to expand the hours of buses, so there will be some shows at least that it is possible to go to on public transport.

Ms Elvin: Particularly for matinee performances, for example, that might be a good option. We can certainly look at that.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think it would be worth looking at. How does CMAG consult with local heritage groups such as the National Trust and the Canberra Historical Society?

Ms Elvin: We have a range of partnerships and consultations. One particular way in which we actively engage with the local community generally and also with specialist groups is through our advisory committee. We have an advisory committee that is set up for CMAG. We also have advisory committees for the Canberra Theatre Centre and for historic places. We find that through the membership of those committees, which typically have people with expertise in each of those different areas and links into specialist organisations and also the broader community, they provide a very good opportunity to get that diversity of views.

MS LE COUTEUR: From the theatre point of view, do you consult much with local

groups, noting that virtually all the performances at the Canberra Theatre are not local?

Ms Elvin: I challenge you a bit on that. Going back to my annual report, it shows quite a high level of local usage because, for example, the Courtyard Studio is very much dominated by local use.

MS LE COUTEUR: Sorry, I forget about those.

Ms Elvin: But even in our larger venues there would be a lot of local use—local dance school performances, for example, from QL2. We do work very actively with the local performing arts community and provide a range of support to allow them to use our venues.

MRS JONES: Going to capital works, \$1.675 million over three years from 2019-20 has been put down for the Ainslie and Gorman arts centres and Strathnairn. How much of the capital works budget will be spent on Ainslie and Gorman arts centres and Strathnairn?

Ms Tyler: I do not have the breakdown of that in front of me at the moment.

MRS JONES: Could you take that on notice?

Ms Tyler: I can take that on notice. But one of the things that we are looking at at the moment is more detailed cost planning for those initiatives and getting detailed quotes for those. While we have some indicative breakdowns that I can provide, they are not—

MRS JONES: Great. Perhaps as you look into that you could have a look at what information you have about what the upgrade works that you are looking to achieve are and what the briefs for design for further capital works at the same places are.

Ms Tyler: The Ainslie and Gorman arts centres designs will build on previous master plans and look at spatial reorganisation to meet current standards of stability and usability. The initiatives at Ainslie and Gorman also include cost planning for the centenary of Gorman House in 2025. At Strathnairn it is about ongoing vehicle and pedestrian access requirements at the centre. We also are looking at strategic asset management plan implementation, including roof repairs at Strathnairn arts centre and works at Ainslie and Gorman on work health and safety.

MRS JONES: So, mostly, the focus of those works is on modernising access, in line with accessibility for people who are less mobile and so on?

Ms Tyler: Yes.

MRS JONES: And obviously just the roof issue as well.

Mr Ramsay: Strathnairn is a great facility but—

MRS JONES: I think you know more about it than me—and Mrs Dunne.

Mr Ramsay: That is right. It is a really important community arts facility and is well engaged but, because of its history, it has some issues. One of the key things with the roofing at the moment is around the kiln shed, making sure that that is kept up to date. That has had some impact on the capacity of the arts organisation and the individuals out there to use the kiln and the space itself. One of the other things with Strathnairn is the Ginninderry Strathnairn suburb development, which has changed significantly over the last few months how you get into Strathnairn, and trying to make sure that accessibility is good, strong and sound and is well connected with the Ginninderry site as well, with the linked buildings. A range of things need to be thought through as part of that. That is all planning and development.

MR PETTERSSON: What work is being done to provide arts events in Gungahlin?

Ms Tyler: There was a budget initiative that included funding for pop-ups in Gungahlin and Woden. Part of that initiative was around employing community arts and cultural development officers within Woden and Gungahlin. Belconnen and Tuggeranong arts centres put in the bid for that work. They have each recruited an officer who is located in Woden and Gungahlin. The works are really in initial planning phases at the moment. Those officers only came on board in the last little while. They are working with those communities and with businesses and existing groups to work on the program. In Gungahlin there has been some work on NAIDOC in the north events. That is one of the first things that the arts officer out at Gungahlin will have involvement with there, with Belconnen Arts Centre.

Mr Ramsay: One of the key principles with this initiative is that, rather than having a drop-in festival, it is a pop-up festival, with the thinking that it should arise from the community itself, from the values, the relationships and the desires of the community. That is why the approach was to put on an officer to be able to work with the community to allow the arts festival to come out of that, rather than to have someone say, "Here's what arts should look like in Gungahlin or in Woden. Let's drop it on you."

Ms Tyler: That initiative has been funded over three years too, so those officers will be in place over the next three years. That is really an opportunity for community building and those principles of community arts and cultural development to make sure that the things that are happening in Gungahlin and Woden are really based on what the needs of those communities are.

MR PETTERSSON: The Gungahlin officer is based out of Belconnen, I understand.

Ms Tyler: They are employed by Belconnen Arts Centre but they are based in Gungahlin. Their home organisation is Belconnen Arts Centre.

MRS DUNNE: Where are they physically located?

Ms Tyler: I do not have that information.

MRS DUNNE: It would be great if you could—

MRS JONES: Take that on notice.

MS CODY: I am assuming it will be the same answer for Woden. You are talking to the community, ensuring that you are getting the right mix of what works for community to bring arts—

Ms Tyler: Yes, absolutely. I think with Woden there is the added Woden experiment element and working with that space to see what events can happen.

MS CODY: Have you looked to broaden the Woden arts precinct into the Phillip business district as well? There are some pretty cool courts that are a bit interesting and have some apparently untenanted buildings that might be of use.

Ms Tyler: I think Phillip is definitely in that scope of Woden, but we can provide some more detail about that as well.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, why are there not any expense initiatives identified in the arts budget this year? If they are, where can I find them?

Mr Ramsay: What we are doing this year is looking through how it is that we would be able to best invest in the community. It is a matter of looking at budget initiatives over a period. There have been some significant expense initiatives in previous years. The concentration this year was on particular infrastructure upgrades, knowing that that sets a very solid foundation for arts practices. It obviously sits alongside the ongoing matters such as the events fund, the program, the activities funding and the reworking of the way that we have done the grants funding over the last couple of years as well to make sure that that funding is probably more accessible than it has been in previous years.

The changes that we have done with that funding have certainly been very well received by the arts organisations. One of the things with the establishment of the Minister's Creative Council, which has been formed and has been meeting recently, is that I have asked them to look at initiatives for the future as well.

THE CHAIR: In relation to the Kingston arts precinct, specifically what is that money going towards delivering, and has a development application been lodged yet?

Mr Ramsay: In terms of the development application and anything in relation to the construction or that part of the project, I ask you to hold your questions for the Minister for Urban Renewal. That sits under her responsibility. In terms of the funding and the work with the arts organisations, I am happy to take that today.

Ms Tyler: The funding from the budget review that flows through to next financial year is for staffing within artsACT to support the project going forward, and that is around liaison with arts organisations that are moving to Kingston, as well as establishing the management model for the precinct and liaising on the design development process. It is quite a detailed and lengthy process to go from the point at which contracts are signed through to construction commencing. That is to make sure that all the requirements for each of the organisations are met and to provide that support and liaison for those arts organisations through to the construction.

THE CHAIR: Which arts organisations have entered into those agreements and what is the nature of those agreements?

Ms Tyler: Currently the agreement that we have in place is really a process agreement, it is not a binding agreement with those organisations, and the organisations that are included in that are Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Craft ACT, PhotoAccess, Canberra Glassworks, Megalo Print Studio and Gallery, M16 Artspace and ArtSound FM. That agreement really is looking at how the Suburban Land Agency, artsACT and those organisations are going to work together through the design development process and it is about the key issues that need to be addressed, the principles that we are adhering to and the information that we already have in terms of the way that the contract negotiations are happening with Geocon.

THE CHAIR: What assessment has the government made of the cost of infrastructure and the cost of relocating for those agencies?

Mr Ramsay: For the cost of infrastructure, again I think that is more appropriate for Minister Stephen-Smith.

THE CHAIR: The cost of relocating?

Ms Tyler: Given that the estimated construction date is still in the 2022-23 financial year, we are working through the design process first. It is really about a staged involvement with those organisations. They are very small organisations, in the main, and we need to focus our energies on the information that is critical at different points throughout the process. At the moment it is really about getting them to a point where they understand how the project is working and then we can move into the design development phase. Once we have got through that phase then we will look at things like transition plans for those organisations and relocations.

MRS DUNNE: I go back to taws. What is the relationship with the preferred tenderer? Is the preferred tenderer now the tenderer? Is there a contract?

Mr Ramsay: That really is a matter that is under the development side, which is for the Minister for Urban Renewal.

MRS DUNNE: What is artsACT's role in the Kingston arts precinct?

Ms Tyler: artsACT is liaising with the Suburban Land Agency on the requirements for the arts facilities at the end of the process. We have been involved in the conversations that SLA are having with Geocon. We are not in the room on the negotiation. That is not the involvement that we have had, but we are—

MRS DUNNE: You are not in the room with Geocon?

Ms Tyler: No, but we are heavily liaising with the organisations that are moving to Kingston. That is our role, in terms of making sure that the end result for the arts organisations is meeting the requirements.

MRS DUNNE: Are the arts organisations at any stage in the room with Geocon or are they doing it through intermediaries?

Ms Tyler: No. The arts organisations have had the opportunity to meet with the architects who are designing the Kingston arts precinct through Geocon, Fender Katsalidis and Oculus. Once we move into the design development process phase, the arts organisations will have a direct opportunity to have a conversation with the architects and with Geocon on their requirements.

MS CODY: Can I ask about the local film industry now?

Mr Ramsay: Depending precisely on the question, but it is more likely to be for the Chief Minister.

MS CODY: Which parts are in this section?

Mr Ramsay: It is only to the extent that it arises out of any of the arts funding, rather than any of the screen funding. I am happy for you to ask the question and we can tell you whether it sits here or with the Chief Minister.

MS CODY: Maybe it is arts. I am not sure. Are we looking to work with local Indigenous organisations or communities to have a bit of a focus around some film/arts projects?

Ms Tyler: That probably would fit within the artsACT funding. We provide funding to Screen Canberra for the screen arts fund. Individuals can apply to that fund for screen projects that have an arts development outcome. In terms of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we have not focused on any projects of that nature through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work. But that is not to say that that is not a possibility in the future.

MS CODY: That would probably tie in with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander work you were talking about a moment ago?

Ms Tyler: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think this is within scope: public art. We have some in older suburbs. It was great to attend the opening of “the new woman” or whatever we should call her now.

Ms Tyler: The artwork is called *A Delicate Moment*.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Ramsay: Given that that is what the artwork is called—

MS LE COUTEUR: I might take issue with the “delicate” name.

Mr Ramsay: But it is a great artwork.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is a great artwork; I was definitely saying that. My question is about artwork in new suburbs and developing areas. Do you have a role in either providing it or ensuring that somebody else provides it? Once upon a time there used to be a one per cent levy on new developments to go to public art. I know that has gone; a previous Chief Minister did that. Do you have a role in this regard?

Mr Ramsay: There are a number of ways of working with public art, and I will ask Ms Tyler to provide some of the details. Certainly, not all public art in Canberra is government-owned public art.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, absolutely.

Mr Ramsay: Nor is all of the government-owned public art with artsACT. For example, effectively every tram stop is a piece of public art. Every light rail stop has artwork built into it. There is public art deliberately, so to speak, woven into the fabric of the seats on light rail, and the glass as well. There are a number of ways that public art comes through.

MS LE COUTEUR: Appreciably, yes.

Mr Ramsay: Therefore, it does not just sit within artsACT. I think that is healthy as well. Some of it sits within ACT Health. There are a number of pieces of public art that are a part of health bodies and health precincts. There are also things that are done within private exhibitions. The *Contour 556* display of public art that generally coincided with Floriade last year was a privately run exhibition that was put together. There are a range of ways.

One of the things that also happens from time to time is that a piece of public art is transferred or given to the government. Part of the role of artsACT is to find appropriate places for that to be displayed. That has been done recently. So there are a number of things.

MRS JONES: Is that done by artsACT?

Mr Ramsay: It can be.

MRS JONES: It sounds very complicated.

Ms Tyler: artsACT has been involved in a number of commissions across the ACT government. The new courts have a public artwork within the foyer. artsACT was involved in that process, as well as at the University of Canberra Public Hospital and with works at the Canberra Hospital. When public artworks are being developed by other ACT government agencies, artsACT is usually involved in those processes, in terms of assisting with developing an arts brief, through the procurement process, and with installation in terms of providing advice and experience in that space.

A few years ago there was a public art guidelines release which talked about encouraging private sector involvement in public art, as the minister said. There has been an increase in the number of developers and people who are interested in putting public art in places and transferring the asset ownership to the ACT government.

Some examples of that—

MRS JONES: Denman Prospect.

Ms Tyler: Yes, Denman Prospect.

MRS JONES: There is quite a lot of artwork.

Ms Tyler: The development out at west Belconnen is another example. There is a development in the city that we have been working with in terms of new artwork going into a private development, and the outcomes of that. So we are quite involved in conversations and work around public artwork across the city.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you having those conversations with the SLA about where it is developing? The two instances that have just been cited here are not SLA developments. One of the things that my constituents would point out is that Denman Prospect looks very different from Coombs. One is SLA; the other is a private development. Are you doing anything to encourage or enforce the SLA to do more?

Ms Tyler: We have had quite a successful relationship with the SLA. Some kangaroos that were part of the Floriade event a few years ago have been installed in Throsby. We are continuing to have conversations with the SLA about future public artworks in those spaces, but we do not have any firm details of anything at this point. We do not have any projects that are in the mix at the moment, but there are conversations that are—

MS LE COUTEUR: They do not have any requirements to do anything?

Ms Tyler: I am not sure about their requirements.

MRS DUNNE: There was an Auditor-General's report last year on public art which advocated that artsACT have an overarching curatorial role. Have those recommendations been implemented? If so, how?

Ms Tyler: We are working through the implementation of those recommendations. We can provide further detail about each of the recommendations and—

MRS DUNNE: That would be great.

MRS JONES: On notice.

Ms Tyler: where they are up to. Part of that is around the condition reports for each public artwork. There is a new accountability indicator for the arts output this year, the 2019-20 year, around public art and the condition of artworks. That is done through an annual stocktake that we do of each artwork, and a condition assessment. We are implementing those recommendations and working across them.

THE CHAIR: You will provide that detail on notice?

Ms Tyler: We can do that.

MRS JONES: My question is around the new major theatre brief. What is the status of planning for a new major theatre and has a site been identified yet?

Ms Elvin: The current preferred site—of course, this will be subject to later confirmation—is the site where the MLA car parking currently is.

MRS JONES: Up from the circle?

Ms Elvin: Yes. It is great to have that car park holding the ground for the future.

MRS JONES: It certainly is holding the ground.

Ms Elvin: And serving a very useful purpose in the meantime. That is the current preferred site. We are in a very intensive part of the business case phase. I am working very closely with my colleagues in artsACT, with the City Renewal Authority, with treasury, and also now with the Major Projects Canberra organisation on that business case.

We have just appointed consultants to undertake the design aspects of that design, the technical aspects, and the commercial analysis. That work is already at a very intensive phase. The consultants are meeting; they are doing site inspections and having consultations. That work will all come together by the end of this calendar year so that the outcomes of the business case can then, depending on what they are, go into the next budget cycle.

MRS JONES: Is that site that has been identified large enough?

Ms Elvin: It depends on what the exact limits of the site are.

MRS JONES: Obviously, there is a road on one side, which makes it somewhat difficult to enter that space.

Ms Elvin: Correct, yes.

MRS JONES: The other side has the laneway and the back entrance to the current theatre, presumably, and there is CMAG, so it is a bit bound in. Is it considered to be big enough?

Ms Elvin: Those are the issues that are currently being looked at. There are all sorts of options in terms of whether you retain the current road alignment or whether you start dropping the road underneath and provide underground access to stage doors and so forth. That will all be looked at as part of the current studies.

MRS JONES: With the design concept, you have not got to that stage yet?

Ms Elvin: That is currently being done.

MRS JONES: For that site?

Ms Elvin: Correct, yes.

MRS JONES: Is there an expectation that as part of that design there might be changes made to existing infrastructure—as you were saying, to road alignment possibly?

Ms Elvin: I think that would have to be contemplated, and also looking at how a new theatre on that site could integrate with other facilities, both the existing theatre facilities and looking at what else is built on what is currently the car park site opposite the Sydney Building.

MRS JONES: And what we will do in the long term about things like car parking?

Ms Elvin: Correct.

MRS JONES: Will the infrastructure development be potentially managed through Major Projects Canberra?

Mr Ramsay: I think that is probably a question that is several steps down the track at the moment.

MRS JONES: Yes, it is still in fairly early stages.

Mr Ramsay: Given that our commitment at the moment is to ensure that during this parliamentary term there is a business case considered, I think it is probably a bit early to speculate on what might happen after the business case, after the cabinet consideration of the business case and how it would be implemented.

MRS JONES: Given that you are in the process of doing the actual planning, what is the scope of the new theatre? We have heard lots of possibilities, but given that you are now at the point of doing a possible design, do we have the number of seats, size of stage, number of stages? Do you have that sort of information?

Ms Elvin: Certainly the pre-election commitment and the commitment to the parliamentary agreement contemplates a theatre with about 2,000 seats. That is the scale that we are looking at. With a theatre of that size, you need to look at the sorts of other facilities that would support a facility of that nature. That will dictate things like the size of the stage, the height of the fly tower. Essentially, it would need to be comparable to other major venues on the touring circuit so that we can take shows from Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide and so that we can take major musicals, ballets and so forth. Those are the sorts of things that will dictate the actual dimensions.

MRS JONES: It seems to me that if there is a design process in place right now, there will be a document or an instruction to that design team that has details of what is expected.

Ms Elvin: There will be procurement documentation, yes.

Ms Tyler: Yes, the actual business case procurement process and management of those consultants is being done by treasury. The scope is currently around concept

planning to inform the business case. It is not actually a full design process at this point.

MRS DUNNE: It is not a full design process?

MRS JONES: So it is a pre-business case concept plan.

Ms Tyler: It is a business case concept.

MRS DUNNE: While we are in this pre-feasibility stage, are we looking at the acme of what theatres should be? Are we looking at the sorts of things that we might have—for instance, a QPAC, where the bump-in is done more vertically than horizontally? What are we talking about here?

Ms Elvin: We are certainly looking at best practice. We would want the new facility to achieve that. Indeed, the consultants who have been selected to do this concept design, ARM, are considered perhaps the leading firm in Australia in performing arts design. They would certainly be drawing on their own expertise and looking at state-of-the-art facilities elsewhere in Australia.

MRS DUNNE: You have touched on this already, Ms Elvin, but if the site is that car park—I share Mrs Jones's concern about whether the footprint is big enough—the whole theatre complex is then quite attenuated. What thinking is there about—

MRS JONES: It might take up the whole car park.

MRS DUNNE: What thinking is there about linkage? We did a whole lot of work about a link when we built the Playhouse. Now that is going to be quite attenuated. The Playhouse currently turns its back on that side. What do we do to sort of make this a coherent whole?

Ms Elvin: I think certainly all those aspects of how the different facilities would connect and integrate are being looked at as part of this concept design. It even includes issues like the existing theatre—what will be the purpose of that once a new theatre is built? We visited facilities in Sydney and Melbourne, for example, that could be useful models for that. If that is the case, that might want to have more of a separate identity. I think all of those factors will be taken into account in the current concept design.

MRS DUNNE: But we cannot turn the Playhouse sort of 90 degrees so that it faces—

Ms Elvin: It would be nice to be able to rotate it, wouldn't it?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Ramsay: It is round.

MRS DUNNE: And if there were one of those things in the stage where they—

Ms Elvin: A revolve.

MRS DUNNE: A revolve; that is the word, thanks.

MR PETTERSSON: I have some questions about the upgrades for the very current Canberra Theatre. What are the upgrades that you are looking at doing this year?

Ms Elvin: That package has three main elements. Sorry, are you talking about the current work we are doing or the work that has just been funded in the budget?

MR PETTERSSON: Does the workplace—

MRS DUNNE: The \$995,000 over two years.

MR PETTERSSON: Yes, the workplace health and safety issue, enhanced security infrastructure and upgrade to the centre's building management.

Ms Elvin: There are three main elements under workplace health and safety that will look at replacing electrical equipment and purchasing a new forklift. We use our forklifts very intensively for moving set, obviously. The second element is enhancing security infrastructure. That will do things like upgrade doors, door hardware and security control systems. It will also link the centre's CCTV systems with the wider public safety network. There is a third element, which is upgrading our building management system, what is called the HVAC system. It is our heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system. It is those three elements and some smaller works as well.

MRS DUNNE: As a follow-up, there is also about \$3 million for Lanyon. Is that mainly water?

Ms Elvin: That is correct. Again, it is three elements. Mainly, as you say, it is water infrastructure upgrade. A lot of our water infrastructure is 70 years old at Lanyon. It is lovely to have heritage listed things, but in some cases they break down and leak.

MRS DUNNE: They probably have lead piping as well.

Ms Elvin: Indeed, yes. There are all sorts of issues about water supply and water quality. The majority of that \$3 million is going to go into water infrastructure. But there are also amounts for building stabilisation and conservation works and also for some security upgrades there.

MRS DUNNE: Can someone tell me where we are up to with Belconnen Arts Centre? What is the final completion date of stage 2? What is the final predicted budget for stage 2, as compared to the original budget?

Ms Tyler: The budget for Belconnen Arts Centre stage 2 is \$15 million, and we are working towards that being the end result for that project.

MRS DUNNE: So it has not changed?

Ms Tyler: It has not changed. In terms of completion, we are looking in the first part of 2020.

MRS DUNNE: That has blown out quite a bit. What are the causes of the delay?

Ms Tyler: There have not been any greater delays to the project. We have been working through the design process and making sure that all of the elements the Belconnen Arts Centre requires are included in that process. There has been some discussion around completion dates versus opening dates and things like that. It depends on which date was earlier reported on. There will be some minor things that have extended the time frame, but it is not a significant delay.

MS CODY: Is Tuggeranong Arts Centre still getting extra?

Mr Ramsay: The ongoing funding for any of the community arts centres is part of the arts management capital. I think it is always a case of looking at what are the appropriate upgrades or repairs that may be needed for that at any stage.

Ms Tyler: And Tuggeranong is included in the program of works for things in the next financial year as well.

MS CODY: Excellent. I guess that is what I was trying to—

Mr Ramsay: Can I say that, just before Mrs Dunne finishes up, in terms of the supplementary answer to your question about arts funding for this year, of course there is the funding for Kulture Break and the National Eisteddfod that is in the social inclusion fund as well. That is funding over the next three years.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. We will move on now to seniors and veterans. I ask new witnesses to confirm that you have read the privilege statement and understand the implications.

Mrs Mitcherson: I have read the privilege statement.

Ms Murray: I have read the statement.

Ms Evans: I have read the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: The budget notes as a priority support for the ACT's response to the national plan to respond to the abuse of older Australians. There is a commonwealth program here, but can you provide an update on the services being provided or under development to deal with elder abuse.

Mr Ramsay: Absolutely. The issues around elder abuse have been a key priority for government, the responsibility for which sits partly within this portfolio and partly with the Attorney-General's portfolio when dealing with legal areas. The members of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, who just finished their term at the end of May, were recruited specifically with a focus on expertise in elder abuse. I place on record my deep appreciation of their key leadership under the chair of Fiona May.

A lot of work has been going on in the area of elder abuse within the ACT. As part of that, one is feeding into the national plan, and an implementation plan will be

considered by the next Council of Attorneys-General at the end of June this year. The national implementation plan will have not only commonwealth-led activities but also matters under the responsibility of each of the states and territories. When that is released there will be further public information about the way the ACT implementation plan fits within that.

There are specific things going on in the area of elder abuse. You would be aware of the establishment of OPALS, the Older Persons ACT Legal Service, that has been funded through Legal Aid. It provides information and referral services and community information sessions, so it is a matter of people getting out and about. Legal Aid, under the leadership there of Liz Samra, who is also on the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, is getting out to information sessions for older people.

OPALS is designing resources for older people that are available online and in hard copy, both informational and protective resources as well. There are information and referral services to concerned third parties so that they can be followed through. It also works very collaboratively with both health organisations and community service organisations.

OPALS has been established with a budget of \$640,000 over four years. When I was at an event recently that I know Ms Lawder was at, the head of Legal Aid was talking about the fact that over the course of this financial year they are anticipating 500 contacts, and around a third of those will be raising issues in relation to elder abuse as well.

In addition to OPALS, we have the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It has changed practices recently and now holds regular hearings at Canberra hospitals. In relation to matters under the Guardianship and Management of Property Act and the Mental Health Act, one of the great things about ACAT members going to the hospitals is that it manages to speed up the way the hearings are able to take place and also ensure that people are able to be heard directly and have their interests strongly supported. They started guardianship hearings at both Canberra and Calvary hospitals in November 2017.

ACT Policing is one of the front-line service areas that work specifically in the area of elder abuse. The ACT Policing seniors liaison unit provides very strong and supportive contact for concerns relating to the safety of people over 65. I was recently at the Florey Neighbourhood Watch group and they were talking very positively about the liaison they have had with the relevant policing unit. That deals with issues of elder abuse, scams and information on home and personal safety.

There is also a relatively new service called the senior relationship service, provided by Relationships Australia for Canberra and region. That is funded through the federal Attorney-General, but the ACT government was able to facilitate that process. It is one of the ways this works collaboratively across government. We were able to pass on a nomination of that service to the federal government for its funding.

There is also the ACT Human Rights Commission, where referrals can be made to the Public Advocate for investigations around elder abuse. The Human Rights Commission can provide advocacy and a management assessment panel, if it is

necessary.

This budget doubles the amount made available to seniors grants. It used to be \$80,000 for seniors and veterans together; it is now \$80,000 for each of those. As part of the terms of reference for those seniors grants, a specific invitation has been made to organisations to put in applications dealing with elder abuse, and in recent years there have been a number of those.

In the 2018-19 grant rounds there was \$6,000 for Legal Aid to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members about elder abuse. Noting that the issue of elder abuse is often very culturally specific, it is important to make sure each community has an appropriate response. We were very pleased to be able to provide that funding to Legal Aid.

THE CHAIR: Can you provide any statistics on the prevalence of elder abuse within sections of the Canberra community?

Mr Ramsay: I will come back later to a couple of the other things that are going on. The event Ms Lawder and I were at last week was for the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The question of elder abuse is very simple in some ways, in that you know exactly what elder abuse is when you get to one end of the spectrum. When you are at the other end of the spectrum it is not elder abuse at all. Then there are a whole range of areas in between that move from relational support to strong relational support to inappropriate relational support through to criminal activities.

It is easier to provide information around criminal activity than it is for other areas. The accepted definition of elder abuse is any act that provides a financial, emotional or social harm to elders, and nowhere in Australia or, to my understanding, internationally has a sound way of being able to measure that.

It is different from the criminal activity of, for example, child sexual abuse, where there was the royal commission into institutional responses to that. That is a very clear area of the law. Elder abuse is a less clear and emerging area of the law.

THE CHAIR: Do you have statistics? In terms of criminal activity, though, do you have statistics on that?

Mr Ramsay: I will follow through with ACT Policing on that one. But going to things the ACT government is funding, there was \$10,000 for ADACAS, the ACT Disability Aged and Carer Advocacy Service, to counter elder abuse through individual advocacy and community education at aged-care facilities. They are able to get to the facilities, rather than having people coming to them. One of the important parts of elder abuse is making sure that services are accessible. There were also further things, going back in history, in the 2017-18 round.

In terms of the government's commitment to elder abuse, front-line worker training has been taking place. The ACT domestic and family violence front-line worker training is being rolled out to equip the front-line workers of ACT government to recognise and respond to domestic and family violence. Part of that work will help people to understand the issues of elder abuse as well. That is being rolled out to all

ACT public servants.

As I said, there is the work of the national plan, which will have an ACT-specific plan. The other key area—I am happy to table this for the committee—is the age-friendly Canberra vision for our city. This came out of the work of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing over the last 12 months, where there was broad community consultation on how we can continue to make Canberra the best possible age-friendly city.

Twelve principles came out of the consultation with the community and the reflection across the whole of government, which were drawn together by my ministerial advisory council. Key principle 7 is that the abuse of older people in any form is not tolerated and that the protection of older people from any form of abuse is a priority and is paramount.

There is an Incoming Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, whose appointment I announced last week. Four forums will be held over the next few months, looking at each of the four areas in this vision: being involved, connected and valued; being safe, secure and free from abuse and discrimination; information services and supports which embrace diversity; and a city for all ages. We will hold a public forum on each of those four areas.

The ongoing consultations with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, chaired by Professor Diane Gibson, will be drawn together as an ongoing plan for each of those four areas and 12 principles. That will help guide the government's work over the coming years.

MS CODY: Minister, I want to ask about some of the veterans stuff in the portfolio. In particular, I note that there was Veteran Connect event trialled, looking at veterans' employment and matching veterans leaving services with work. Can you expand on how that all went and give me a bit of an overview?

Mr Ramsay: I will give an introduction before I hand over to Ms Starick. That was really important. The ACT government veterans employment strategy is a focus within the ACT public service, making sure that we have a diverse, agile, responsive and innovative public service. It lines up how we can be a best practice employer.

One of the things that arose out of that, and out of a round table that I held with both industry and the University of Canberra, was how we might be able to help model that for private industry as well. As part of that, we thought it was appropriate to model that behaviour and see how we can help create an ongoing culture across Canberra. The connect event grew out of that. It was a wonderful night, a really great experience. Ms Starick will pass on some of the details.

Ms Starick: As Minister Ramsay said, the event was a really great event. It was hosted out at the University of New South Wales. We partnered with the University of New South Wales to host the event. We also engaged a recruitment specialist that specialises in the area of defence recruitment. The aim of the night was to support the ACT defence industry to access, attract and retain the skills and experience of veterans and Australian Defence Force personnel who are planning to be

decommissioned within the next six months.

It was really important to have that defence recruitment specialist there. One of the things that I had not appreciated is the need for translating the skills and experience that people develop as part of the defence industry into transferrable skills for private businesses. That was quite an interesting point that they really emphasised on the night.

There was a group of other stakeholders. That evening we had people from the Veterans Advisory Council, members of the Defence Industry Advisory Board, defence community organisations, CIT and the Career Development Association of Australia. We had 18 industry representatives, who all set up stalls around the building. As well, we had veteran mentors who assisted the veterans to pitch their experience and skills and connected the organisations with veterans.

On the night itself, there were a number of welcome addresses by our partners. As well, there were defence industry pitches. The defence industries all got up and pitched because they are all looking for people with these skills. They really had to get up and promote what they do: promote the culture of their workplaces and the innovation of their work. There were 30 jobs on offer for the evening. During the evening we know that at least 54 interviews took place—brief interviews on the night—but we have heard that there probably were more.

The next step is that we will await an evaluation of how that event was received by industry, defence and the veterans. We will receive a report and understand how we go forward.

Mr Ramsay: One of the things that I understand is that at least one full-time job has arisen specifically from that. It will be interesting to see if there are more to come, but there has been at least one.

Going to the initial response from the veterans on the night, noting that there is still a report to come on the broader event, 100 per cent of veterans who were in attendance on the night said that they would attend that style of event again; that the event gave them tangible job opportunities in the defence industry; and that they got an increased awareness of potential employers in the defence industry. The fact that we got that sort of follow-up from 100 per cent of the veterans in attendance demonstrates, as I say, that it was a wonderful event. We are looking now to see how we might be able to either replicate or build on that for the future.

MS CODY: I am assuming that the mentors and the recruitment organisation were there to assist exiting defence men and women to understand how they could transfer their skills. Often it is not just employers that do not understand how those skills are transferrable; it is defence men and women who have not quite grasped that. That is my first follow-up question. And when did the event actually occur? I might have missed it, or maybe you did not say.

Ms Starick: It was 8 May. Part of the defence recruitment specialist role was to provide the tools for the veterans to actually do that translation, to understand how the skills that they gain as part of the defence industry can translate into private industry.

MS CODY: So it was helping the veterans but also helping the potential employers understand those transferrable skill sets?

Ms Starick: Yes. To understand how to ask the types of questions that will draw from the applicant what skills they have developed—not just the technical skills but the management skills and other types of things that they can translate.

Mr Ramsay: One of the particularly helpful addresses that was given on the night was doing some of that work, giving the explanation that when you say you have led or you have been in charge of this many people within the defence forces, here are the sorts of skills that you have demonstrated; and when you say you have understood work health and safety issues from a defence perspective, work health and safety from a defence perspective may be at a slightly increased level than work health and safety in other areas.

MR HANSON: It is pretty dangerous around here, too.

Mr Ramsay: A really powerful speech was given to the people who had gathered there, the different recruiters who had gathered there, to say, “This sentence that a potential recruit might give you means these sorts of things with this sort of experience.” It allowed them to sell themselves better than simply a line saying “WHS skills”, tick.

That sort of capacity, both for potential employees and potential employers, to do that translation and know the message behind each sentence, is a really important development. It is something that we are working on across the ACT public service, to help model that and build it into a number of employers, noting that one of the employers said that no-one there needed to be convinced of the value of hiring veterans; it was a matter of the processes by which we can help veterans explain their skills better and help employers hear their skills better.

MS LE COUTEUR: I notice there is improved resourcing for the seniors card program and also for Seniors Week. What are we going to get out of this increased funding?

Ms Evans: The funding is acknowledging an increase in the number of seniors more broadly in our community. It is very important that we recognise that our population is ageing. The needs of seniors are being recognised, as the minister has already referred to, through the age-friendly city vision. Looking at ways in which seniors can be included in their community and have good social connections is really key to that. We have had for quite a number of years now a contract with the Council on the Ageing, COTA, around seniors cards and Seniors Week events. This funding will go to supporting the increased numbers that are accessing both the seniors card and Seniors Week events. It is an increase in funding which will just make sure that we are covering off on that increase in the number of seniors.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the money is basically going to COTA?

Ms Evans: It is going to COTA.

MS LE COUTEUR: COTA ACT?

Ms Evans: Yes.

Mr Ramsay: While we are mentioning COTA, can we place on record our appreciation for the wonderful work that COTA do? They are a really great organisation. Their leadership, both with the seniors card and Seniors Week, should never be understated. They do a wonderful job.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am sure we can all agree with that. Given what you have said, I am surprised there is money for two years and then after that—I am on page 93—it is zero. To the extent that we can be sure about anything, it is that the number of seniors in the ACT will continue increasing.

Mr Ramsay: Indeed. The fact that the number of seniors will continue to increase—it is around 12½ per cent of the ACT population at the moment—means that we need to keep looking at it. The reason we have funded it for two years is that we want to have a chat with COTA about different ways of being able to do the seniors card or things like that that might change the model of operating. We thought it was important for us to provide those two years of additional funding to help them with that work, as part of that contract, and then we will continue to look at ways of being able to ensure the best support.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have an idea of how many people who are eligible for a seniors card actually have a seniors card? I am aware that it is far from 100 per cent.

Mr Ramsay: One of the things that we want to be looking at over the term of the COTA contract that we have at the moment is that at the moment the way the card is issued does not necessarily mean that we can easily trace the numbers of who is connected. In fact, we understand that at the moment there is every chance that there are more seniors cards out in circulation than people who are eligible for seniors cards. Part of that is in relation to people who die. Their seniors card is still out there. There is not a system at the moment of being able to track that and then address that in future. One of the things we want to do over this two-year period is to work with COTA to see how they can be best supported and we can have the best system.

MS LE COUTEUR: There does not seem to be any way to surrender your seniors card when you are no longer eligible. That was an issue for me when I got elected. Prior to that I had been very underemployed, so I had been eligible for a seniors card. I am now working full-time, so I am not. Budget paper No 3, page 189, has community service obligations and Transport Canberra operations. There is \$9 million for rebates on public transport. Does that include people who use seniors cards? You may have to take this on notice, given the slightly puzzled looks.

Mr Ramsay: It does, but that would be a good question for you to ask the Minister for Transport, rather than the minister for seniors, because it comes under—

MS LE COUTEUR: You are not sure if it does include that?

Mr Ramsay: It does, but if you want any further detail on that it would be a conversation with the Minister for Transport.

MS LE COUTEUR: I may well ask some more about it.

MS LAWDER: On page 93, the table that Ms Le Couteur referred to, it says “more Seniors Week events”. Do you have an expectation of the number of events, or is it catering to more people being able to attend the existing events?

Mr Ramsay: Given that Seniors Week is led by COTA, we want to provide that funding for COTA so that it can grow Seniors Week. I anticipate that, given the history of the way Seniors Week has developed each year, pretty much over the past couple of decades, there are likely to be both more people and more events.

Hearing suspended from 12.31 to 2.00 pm.

THE CHAIR: I remind witnesses, when taking a question on notice, to please be sure to say, “I will take that as a question on notice,” so that the committee and witnesses can identify questions on notice in the transcript. Could witnesses please confirm that they have read the privilege card in front of them and that they understand the implications of the privilege statement.

Mr Peffer: Yes.

Mr Ponton: Yes.

Dr Brady: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We will move straight to questions.

MR PARTON: Minister, can I start by thanking you and Michael from your office for the briefing last week on the building quality space. We genuinely welcome efforts in this area and acknowledge that improving construction quality and building regulation is a very, very complex area and a critical one, but I still have a number of questions in relation to building quality management.

I hate to harp on it, but I want to start by asking about the reforms that you are pursuing to create a more effective regime. I am referring to those 43 reforms that have been hanging around for a while. The briefing last week suggested that 15 of the 43 would be completed by the end of 2019 and a further 15 by the end of 2020, thus completing the program that was announced by Minister Gentleman in 2016. I think these expectations are probably a lot more realistic than those that were announced in 2016.

In regard to those promises, can I ask—and you may not be able to answer—what advice was given to the previous minister that gave him the confidence to assure the community and industry that these reforms would be largely completed by the end of 2017? We are not going to make that by a bull’s roar.

Mr Ramsay: It is not in my purview to be commenting on matters under a previous

minister. Certainly I have worked very closely with Minister Gentleman since my taking on this portfolio in August last year. We are certainly very keen to make sure that those reforms continue to roll through. There have been a number of matters which I know have been well aired publicly as to why there were delays beyond the original expectations. I think they have been well covered.

What we will do now is make sure that there are at least 15 of those reforms completed by the end of this financial year, which is the end of next week, and we are committed to following through on all of those. I think they are important reforms. I know you are aware of those reforms. I think the most recent steps in relation to the documentation guidelines and the codes of practice are strong demonstrations of not only the government's commitment to implementing those reforms but also the effect that they are likely to have on lifting the quality of building, and not only the quality of building but the quality of confidence that people have.

I think one of the important things for people in the ACT to have is a high level of confidence that buildings are high quality—and our buildings are generally very high quality. The way those reforms are going, I think, continues to build that confidence.

MR PARTON: I think we would all agree with you on the confidence, but can I say that you have spoken in recent months about the high level of activity in enforcement. There are a number of worksites that have been shut down. There is quite a lot of evidence that the directorate is very serious about enforcing, for the most part, regulations that have been in place for quite some time. I do not know if you want to rattle off some of the things that have gone on in that space. I am sure you have got a list there.

Mr Ramsay: I will invite Mr Green to talk to some of those. I think you are right. There has been a significant level of energy that has been well received and I think what is very clear is that that is part of the way of ensuring that we have that high level of confidence. One of the things is that we know, as you mentioned in your first question, it is a complex area that has multiple levers that need to be pulled simultaneously. That has been part of the government's commitment to drawing together both building policy and building regulatory oversight into one portfolio. That in itself is an important step in having those through. Mr Green, would you like to flesh out some of the things that have been going on?

Mr Green: Certainly we have had a significant increase in the regulatory action that we have been undertaking. I think part of this is about trying to get some cultural reform within parts of the industry where we would expect that most builders want to do the right thing. They want to be going home and watching *Teletubbies* with their kids, rather than worrying about whether their site is going to get shut down.

Frankly, there have been instances where builders have been reckless in their approach and we need to be using the enforcement tools that we have available to us. Certainly in the media over the last probably six months or so there has been increased commentary around those regulatory matters that we are undertaking. You may recall our blitz in a Gungahlin suburb, where we shut down 17 sites. That impacted 12 separate builders. An extension of that is the impact that has on the community.

If we can deal with building issues as they arise, prior to home owners having to fork out additional money to occupy their homes, that is a far better outcome than dealing with it at the back end, where we get complaints about poor quality building work. There has been an increase. There are quite a number of stop work notices, 28 in total, for the period since 1 July last year to 30 April this year. We have also issued a number of notices to direct building work to occur under the Building Act, and there have been nine instances in that scenario.

MR PARTON: That sounds like really good work. Mr Peffer, you stood at an owners corporation get-together in December last year, and when asked questions about the building quality changes you indicated that the principal accountability method would be the disciplinary register that appears online through Access Canberra. It is there. I was on it this afternoon. Mr Green has just highlighted an enormous number of breaches that have occurred this year.

Can I ask you, Mr Peffer, or the minister: why has there been no update on the disciplinary register since September last year? Nothing has changed on that. If this is the principal accountability method, if this is the way that people in Canberra are finding out who is doing the right thing, surely it is not really providing that function?

Mr Peffer: I think it is probably important to clarify the presentation that I gave. I do not think that at any point I said that that was the principal accountability tool that we use, as the regulator. Casting my mind back to the conversation I had with buyers, the folks from the Owners Corporation Network, I think what I talked about was the range of regulatory tools that we have available to us.

I talked about some of the data trends that we were beginning to see and some of the insights that we were gaining, and I also talked about some of the particular challenges that were emerging in the quality space, be that waterproofing or other things. But I think it is important to place this in some context.

As a regulator, our objective here is to ensure that there is a quality product at the end of the day. Part of that is to undertake a range of disciplinary activities, such as those Mr Green has outlined. Part of our role, and perhaps an equally important part of our role, is actually educating consumers in what to look for to ensure that they are purchasing quality.

A comment I made at that forum was that perhaps the most powerful lever we have as a regulator is that economic lever of what people buy. What I mean by that is that if we can guide people's decision-making in terms of what to buy and what not to buy then very quickly consumers will start to self-regulate poor quality builders out of the market. Part of that is our disciplinary register, which deals with the absolute pointy end of the regulatory tools that we exercise. It does not pick up everything.

With some of the actions that we may take, there is a natural justice process that needs to be followed. We cannot immediately move to put something up on the disciplinary register. The act itself—and I will get Ben to expand on this in a second—is prescriptive about what we can and cannot. We have taken some legal advice around that. We have had some discussions with the minister about what that might look like

in the future.

But, importantly, as part of this budget—and coming back to the purpose of the disciplinary register being to educate consumers about what they should be looking for in these very important purchases—part of the initiative that has been funded is four FTEs to join Mr Green’s team specifically to look at providing communication to industry and consumers about what quality looks like. Not everything is going to end up on the disciplinary register. We understand that. But we understand equally that we have an absolutely critical role to play as the regulator in ensuring that when people make these very large purchasing decisions they are well equipped to do so.

MRS JONES: Why has it not been updated since September last year? How often does it get updated?

Mr Green: It is important to make a distinction regarding what this register is about. This is about disciplinary action against a licensed entity, rather than a regulatory action taken, for example, to stop building work. Things that go on that register include rectification orders that either have been confirmed or the appeal period has lapsed. With almost every single rectification order that we issue, we end up in a tribunal, and we need to allow that process to be completed before it is updated. Apart from the register, there is a public narrative that we have been pushing out there. There are a lot more people that consume the public narrative than would visit the disciplinary register.

MRS JONES: How often does that register get updated?

Mr Green: It updates when a decision can be put on there.

MRS JONES: There has not been a decision since September last year?

Mr Green: Not a relevant decision that could have been put up on there. I would need to preface that in terms of the regulatory actions that we have underway and that are before the tribunal and subject to other appeal processes.

MR PARTON: I think some people would find that a little extraordinary when you consider what has gone on in the space. Does there need to be a review? You say there have been discussions about legal matters and what can and cannot go on.

Mr Peffer: Mr Parton, I think there is a distinction between what is put up on the register and the very clear focus that we have now as the regulator. Wherever possible, we are looking to intervene early—before, five years after someone moves in, something starts leaking or it has structural problems and we end up in a dispute around a rectification order. Where these sites are being shut down, this is mid-build. This is where our inspectors are being proactive. They are identifying problems early, before someone moves in and spends a whole lot of money on one of these premises. The sites are shut down until the matters are dealt with. I think there is a distinction there that is important to understand.

Mr Ramsay: One of the other important pieces of that is for the public to have a sense of confidence. Also, they need to know what it is that you are looking for, and

looking at, when you are looking to build or to purchase, either off the plan or an existing building. Part of that information process that has been keenly driven through Access Canberra has resulted in some easy guides for people. I will table those here today. There are four of them that I want to draw to the attention of the committee. One of them is: “Thinking of buying a unit or apartment in the ACT?” Another is: “Thinking of buying a unit or apartment off the plan in the ACT?” One is: “Multi-unit residential building maintenance guide”, and one is: “Unit titles management in the ACT: what you need to know”.

MRS JONES: They are publications you have recently put out?

Mr Ramsay: I will table those. They are available in hard copy and they are also available on the Access Canberra website.

MRS JONES: Have they just recently been—

Mr Peffer: Last year.

MS CODY: Are they available through Access Canberra?

Mr Ramsay: Through Access Canberra, including online. Again, it is important for people to have the information available to them that will help to guide them on such an important purchase. Those materials are one of the ways that the government is doing that. With the investment in this year’s budget of those four additional full-time equivalent staff, that will enable even further education of either the industry or the general public.

Mr Green: In addition to that piece of work that those individuals will be doing, they will be looking at our data. We are actually better targeting our resources and intervening earlier where we can—identifying if there are trends felt within the industry, in terms of a particular practice or a particular type of building that is causing concerns out there. Whilst we have that information at the moment, and we are utilising that to inform our proactive programs, this is really about capitalising on the information that is available.

MS CODY: I have a question about the building inspectors, Mr Peffer. Do the building inspectors have to assess buildings against the relevant codes and standards?

Mr Peffer: They do.

Mr Green: I am happy to answer that. The role of building inspectors, in terms of the way that the territory building regulatory system is set up, differs in comparison to New South Wales. There are inspectors in New South Wales who would be certifying buildings, to say, “Yes, they meet relevant planning, Building Code and building legislative requirements.”

In the ACT it is more of an audit function. We have private building certification where home owners have a building approval approved by a private building certifier. Inspection stages are undertaken by private building certifiers. Our building inspectors will interject at various points, and we will use our resources to target the areas where

there is greater risk to our community. We are not going out at the same point as building certifiers. Our inspectors go out and respond to complaints, for example. Also, they go out as part of our proactive compliance program.

One of the recent changes that we have made—and it has been funded as part of this year's budget—is the rapid regulatory response team. Their role is to get there, particularly when a complaint is raised, within the first five working days of receiving that complaint and to undertake the preliminary assessment to determine whether there is an issue there, and, if there is, how we can quickly resolve that. That is one of the big things coming out of the rapid team. It has certainly been a success since we implemented that back in May last year.

Mr Peffer: The team has been doing a terrific job in changing the response from the community, where they have raised a complaint with us. For some time we had a model where it could take some time for our inspectors to be on site. The team has done a terrific job in recrafting that and ensuring that we get out there as soon as we can to help manage expectations from both sides and to attempt to get to the crux of the issue very early. As Mr Green said, they then look at what is the most appropriate response.

MS CODY: Are they assessing both construction sites and residential or just construction?

Mr Green: That team has a pretty broad remit. Our inspectorate covers things that are building related, alleged breaches of planning legislation in terms of use of land and unclear leaseholds. There was a recent example a couple of weeks ago when we received five complaints about the construction of a single home. There were allegations that it did not meet the Territory Plan requirements and was not exempt, so it needed development approval. We were able to work quickly, undertake that assessment from our perspective and advise those five separate complainants about what the situation was.

It has a really good role to educate the community. It also gives us information that we can now feed into our new team that was funded to push better information out in terms of what citizens need to know about when a development goes on next door—what they should do and how they can find out more information.

MS CODY: Are you aware of any building inspectors who have not assessed buildings against relevant standards or codes, or any cases where relevant building standards have not been met when assessed?

Mr Green: Are you talking about private building certifiers undertaking that function or government building inspectors?

MS CODY: No, building inspectors.

Mr Green: I would suggest that my building inspectors have undertaken the assessments they need to, under either the planning laws or the Building Code, in undertaking their duties.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, I would like to get an update on the work that you are doing on the two energy efficiency rating schemes: disclosure at point of sale and minimum standards. First, what progress has there been on the minimum energy efficiency standards for rental properties?

Dr Brady: I might get Vanessa to go to the detail. It is one of the pieces of work that we are looking at in terms of a rating tool and how the standards relate to that.

Ms Morris: Thank you for the question, Ms Le Couteur. We have the two pieces of work, as you know. One is about the minimum rental options; the other is about the review of the actual scheme. We are working to review and we are also working to do not just some statistical analysis on the effects of the scheme but also some qualitative work in the community about people's attitudes to the scheme and how they feel it can be improved.

There was a 2011 study that was done under the national program for mandatory disclosure that we are looking to effectively update. One of the omissions in that study was that it did not cover rental, because it was looking at the ACT scheme and the Queensland scheme in place at the time, which only covered sales. We are looking to update that kind of information and get people's real understanding of the scheme, what information it gives them, and also what they would like to see out of the scheme, especially for the rental side of things.

On top of that, we are potentially extending some of the statistical analysis that has already been done that looked at house prices. It is also then looking at whether things have changed over time; what effect the disclosures had on ratings on particular properties over time; and the actual differences between the rental stock and the owner-occupied stock, what kinds of differences we are seeing in those properties. That will feed into the rental options work, which is looking at the viable options for upgrading the rental stock but also where those pressure points are.

There is a lot of work going on in the directorate that is feeding into this particular piece of work. The innovative financing work that our climate change team has been doing is helping to inform some of the options that we are looking at. We are also involved in national work, where there are some viable options, potentially, for replacement assessment software for the existing scheme. We are looking at how that would operate in the ACT environment.

MS LE COUTEUR: So you are looking at potentially different software for initially getting your rating, with BCA compliance, and then some other software for ratings after the initial rating? Is that correct?

Ms Morris: Potentially. Also, there may be some tools that can take the initial Building Code rating and import it—add to it, effectively. One of the issues with the current scheme is that if you get an assessment under one tool it is not really—

MS LE COUTEUR: It is not the same as the other.

Ms Morris: You cannot open it. With some you will get the same number, but you will not necessarily be able to use the software and open it on another piece of

software. It is really about the portability of the information. There is also work under the Building Codes Board to look at potentially changing the way the buildings are assessed under the Building Code to expand to, say, appliances and a range of other things. We are looking at both of those pieces of work and making sure that, where we can, the information that you collect at one point of the building life cycle can be used in another point in the life cycle, even if it is not using the exact same software.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you looked at something even simpler—potentially for rentals, in particular—the check box? With one type of evaluation of the major things, you could talk about if there is insulation, if it has recently been leaking and things like that. Cost has been suggested as one of the issues.

Ms Morris: It is certainly an option. There are also some tools that are out there in the real estate market that help people with those kinds of things that can complement the existing rating system.

What has come through all of the work that we have done so far is that people do not necessarily discount the rating but they want more information about what went into that rating and what they might need to look for: what are the things that could improve?

There are certain things that might be quite simple for a renter to request or do themselves that might improve their own comfort in that home, whereas another group of things might be very difficult for them to change. We are looking to expand the amount of information that people have. That could be either by a particular checklist or by a complementary piece of information with the rating.

MS LE COUTEUR: One of the issues at present with rental properties, as I understand it, is that you only have to disclose the EER if the EER has been obtained fairly recently. I have had different interpretations as to what “current” actually means. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Ms Morris: The law requires that you disclose an energy efficiency rating if you have it, but it also requires that you cannot disclose a false or misleading rating. Some of the older ratings are no longer accurate and do not represent the property. Disclosing one of those is not going to help people moving into that property, because they are not necessarily accurate. At this stage, we are looking at the potential for requiring people to update those ratings if they have them. One of the issues, as I mentioned, is that it is not always a simple thing to update that rating if you cannot find the original assessor with the rating file. As I mentioned, we are looking at the portability of the information so that it can be quickly updated.

MS LE COUTEUR: That would be very important, because the last thing you would want to have is a landlord having to spend a few hundred dollars to rent out a house. That just becomes a barrier. There needs to be some way. Certainly, with older houses you have no chance of finding the original information, so that would be particularly important to look at. Is there any other work you are doing on EER apart from these two, which were obviously specific items, that feeds into the general Australian work on EER, for instance?

Ms Morris: From an energy efficiency point of view, we are looking at the national standards and their applicability to the ACT, and also looking at the climate information that goes into those rating files. At the moment it is historical climate information; it has been updated, but it does not necessarily take into account what a projection or a possible future climate might include. You still get a generic kind of climate assessment. It may not include, say, peak times. We are looking at potentially what we could do to make the information that goes into those assessments a bit more relevant for the current and expected climate.

MR PARTON: In relation to the updated building reform targets that we spoke about a little earlier, I wonder, on a nuts and bolts basis, what precise outcomes are being sought from the implementation of these reforms. Some of them come into place in a week and others a bit down the track. In other words, what actual, on-the-ground changes can we expect to see in the construction industry as a consequence of those reforms?

Mr Ramsay: I will speak at a high level and will then be very happy to pass those on, depending on how granular an understanding of outcomes you are looking for.

MR PARTON: In two minutes.

Mr Ramsay: Yes. It will obviously depend on each of the various reforms. There are going to be different outcomes from each of the reforms. I said earlier that we have a threefold purpose: the highest quality building; a high level of confidence in the building sector by the general population; and a strong regulatory response for those increasingly few occasions where that is necessary.

MRS JONES: Increasingly few?

Mr Ramsay: A shrinking number. With some of the reforms—for example, the documentation guidelines—one of the key outcomes is that it will be very clear, everyone will know what documentation is required, the building will match the documentation and it will be easy to follow through. That obviously means a higher level of quality of the building and a level of confidence in that. Having introduced it at that high level, noting that across all of the 43 there are different outcomes that are likely, I am happy to hand over to my officials to give some more information about those.

Dr Brady: As the minister said earlier, I think, the 43 reforms all pretty much work together, so there is not just one reform that will improve the whole building system. They all fit together. Some of them have less visible outcomes than others. In the documentation guidelines it will be much clearer for designers through to certifiers that this is what is expected of all the documentation that accompanies any building and follows through in the inspections.

Another thing we are doing is a code of practice. The first one we will see is for certifiers, surveyors. That, again, clearly documents what is expected of them and what is required of them. A lot of these things are already in existence but we are making it very clear to people. We have done some work on licences and training programs. We are improving training for people as they go through to get their

licences as builders. We have modified exams. As I said, all these things are working together to make improvements.

Ms Morris: The codes of practice, in particular, are looking not just to improve the level of verification and oversight of what is actually happening on building sites by both the builder and the building surveyor but also to get better consistency. At the moment there is a lot of discretion in some of the provisions of our act and there are a lot of differences of interpretation about what is required at particular stages of work and what needs to be verified and certified. So we are looking for improved consistency and, where people are not doing what we think would be a minimum, to at least bring people up to that bar.

There are some reforms about fairer practices within the industry. Some relate to contracting: from a consumer side, people understanding their rights and obligations under the contract better; and from an industry side, reducing the impacts of, say, insolvencies and unfair payment terms. There is dispute resolution as well. A lot of the work that we are doing is to, firstly, prevent disputes and complaints coming through to Access Canberra. Access Canberra, as well, is looking to reduce things post occupancy rather than addressing them at the time. The dispute resolution processes that we are working on are to, where there is an issue, have alternative dispute resolution processes where people can resolve those more rapidly. Throughout the entire building process we are looking to see improvements and increased responses to problems in those particular areas.

Mr Peffer: From our perspective as a regulator, ultimately what we want to see is compliance, and the long-run impact that that will have will start to drive down the complaint numbers that we see coming through.

MR PARTON: That is the theory, is it not?

Mr Peffer: It is the theory and, hopefully, in practice we will see that as well. Given the significant exposure the regulator has had and the focus the government has placed on this particular aspect of regulation, we have seen an increase in complaints recently. Those complaints are not just for activity that is happening now. They are for problems people might have had for a while, but they now feel there is an avenue they can pursue to get them corrected. But through time we will expect to see the complaint numbers trending down. We recognise that this is a long-term indicator as well. Some of the complaints we might get on any given day might be for a building that was constructed eight years ago, for instance, but we are starting to see some of those quality impacts coming through. It will be a slow-moving indicator, but certainly we are focused on the impact from the reforms and also from the regulatory activities that we have underway.

THE CHAIR: We will wrap up there and move on to Access Canberra.

MR PETTERSSON: In recent times, overwhelmingly, a lot of the correspondence I get to my office has been about drones. Could you give me an update on how you have been working with the commonwealth government to address concerns about drones, especially in light of recent announcements?

Mr Ramsay: You are obviously aware that there has been a parliamentary inquiry into that. We mentioned at that stage the key limitations around the capacity of the ACT to be involved in regulatory oversight or any of the potential legislative matters on that. That is why we have been working very closely with the commonwealth on that. There have been some recent changes of perspective within the commonwealth that I think have vindicated the ACT's position that we were severely limited in that. I think there has been some very good, cooperative work there.

Mr Engele: In addition to what the minister mentioned, the committee work has highlighted those areas and drawn the attention of the commonwealth agencies to the issue, particularly around noise. CASA were quite clear that they had a role in safety. We have had a number of meetings, working through with them the best way to work with the community, given that the Wing project is at the forefront in Australia. They have revised their understanding about the current regulations. As a result of that, they issued Wing with a noise regulation approval for operation up to 31 July. I think that is the latest one. What that allows them to do is limited to the rollout work, and then they will be reviewing that allowance going into the future.

We have had good dealings in relation to taking noise complaints in the ACT. We are working with Access Canberra on the communication that goes back to the community so that they can see across levels of government a consistent message. Also, we have worked with Airservices to get what they call a deep linkage from Access Canberra's page directly to the noise complaints page, which was the agreed way of taking noise complaints from their perspective. There is still a bit of work across levels of government to work with Wing about how to get any noise and other complaints to the operator so that they can make the right responses. There were some privacy limitations on that, so there is a bit more work to be done.

They have indicated to us that they are going to think about the best way to regulate across Australia. They recognise that, as we have been advocating, local conditions need to be taken into account and so a single Australia-wide set of rights for drone operators is probably not feasible. So they will be looking to work with states and territories and also local governments on the best regulatory framework to do that. That is the sort of future work that will be happening. The good thing for the ACT is that, because we are at the forefront, we will be invited to work with them on that. We will be part of formulating that regulatory framework going forward.

MR PETTERSSON: One of the big gripes that I heard was that when they contacted Access Canberra they were told that there was no ACT government oversight. If someone were to contact Access Canberra now to complain about drone noise, what would happen?

Mr Peffer: We would point them in the right direction, I guess, along the lines that Mr Engele has just outlined, now that there is a bit more clarity around who has what responsibility and that it is not just a hyper-local issue but a territory or broader community issue.

MRS JONES: What do you mean by "point them in right direction" exactly?

Mr Peffer: We had a conversation about this with the inquiry committee a little while

ago and about clarity between websites where it was not particularly clear. Now that these meetings have been had and there is agreement between the responsibilities, we are in a position to ensure that our guys have the correct script to respond.

MRS JONES: There is a script?

Mr Peffer: That is right. That is how—

MRS JONES: Are you able to come back to the committee with the script, on notice?

Mr Peffer: A copy of the script?

MRS JONES: Yes: what is currently being told to people when they call Access Canberra.

Mr Peffer: We can provide that to the committee.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

Mr Ramsay: As I said, there has been a change of interpretation by the federal department of infrastructure, which previously took the view that drones were not captured by the Air Navigation (Aircraft Noise) Regulations. The commonwealth government point of view now is that it is captured and that it comes under section 17 of those regulations. I note that for Airservices Australia a specific phone number has been established.

MRS JONES: It might be in the script.

Mr Ramsay: It may well be in the script. That is pointing in the right direction. The responsibility truly sits with the commonwealth government, and the department has acknowledged that and is working cooperatively with us to follow it through.

MRS JONES: If it is not in the script, would you supply us with that number?

Mr Ramsay: I am very happy to supply you with that number as well. I will see if I can do that by the end of the hearing today.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I would like to talk about regulation. There has been a rollover in funding for smarter regulation red tape reduction from 2018-19 to 2019-20. What regulatory reform was supposed to be completed under this that has not been completed?

Mr Peffer: I ask Mr Rynehart to come forward.

Mr Rynehart: Sorry, could you repeat the second half?

THE CHAIR: What regulatory reform was supposed to be undertaken that has not been completed? Why has the funding been rolled over?

Mr Rynehart: That rollover is about the implementation of a project management intelligence regulatory system around the replacement of our liquor licensing system to enable an improved customer service and for us to be able to use our data more effectively. The rollover relates to a delay in the implementation. The project is underway and is expected to be completed in the next couple of months. It is just a move from this year to next for the completion.

THE CHAIR: Were there specific reasons for the delay in that?

Mr Rynehart: Some of the steps in the process took a bit longer than we had anticipated in our original assumptions. As we worked through the process it was important to get a good outcome and for us to deliver a good product, which meant that it moved a little bit beyond the end of this financial year.

Mr Pepper: I might add to that on the role of the tender evaluation committee. The responses that came back from a range of partnerships that were responding to that did not necessarily have apples with apples comparisons of cost. Some, for instance, had a much larger up-front capital cost and then a much lower ongoing recurrent cost. A straight comparison was not a simple process. The team had to go through quite a deliberate and methodical process of mapping that out and looking at what is the anticipated demand and use into the future and what will that look like to arrive at a recommendation.

THE CHAIR: I note that the controlled recurrent payments of Access Canberra have increased by over \$6 million but the perception in the business community on ease of engagement has remained static. What programs and policies are being implemented to improve perception in regard to ease of access to Access Canberra?

Mr Pepper: A lot of this activity is driven by our desire to constantly improve the experience that people have when they engage with the organisation as they are attempting to perhaps license a new business or achieve something, get something done. What we have is a very comprehensive process where following inspections, either for licensing-type arrangements or just general proactive inspections, we then have an officer who, independent of the inspectorate teams, has a program of work of contacting literally thousands of businesses to seek feedback on whether the information that our inspectors provided at the time was simple, whether there was a level of helpfulness from our team members to ensure that, where businesses were not compliant or were not sure what they needed to do, we were assisting them to achieve compliance.

It is probably fair to say that there will be some entities where our engagement is a less than pleasant one. That might be for reasons of enforcement activities that we are actually taking. For some businesses we accept that it is perhaps never going to be an engagement that you look back on and say, "Wasn't that amazing!" But for the vast majority we aim for having an experience where we constantly seek feedback to look at what is it that we need to do, what is it we need to improve in our activities to ensure that we drive towards that outcome of making this a good place to do business.

Mr Ramsay: Just before you get to the next question, the drones phone number is

listed on the Access Canberra website. If you have an issue that you would like to report, ring 1800802584.

Mr Peffer: If I might table a document? This is available on our website but also in hard copy.

MRS JONES: What is that?

Mr Peffer: It talks about dealing with noise within your neighbourhood. It has a range of contact details on the back, including for aircraft.

MRS JONES: While we are in this interrupted moment, I have a question for clarification, which is not just for you but maybe Minister Ramsay can help. I have noticed over the past few days that there have been some title changes in people's roles across ACT government. Is that correct? Has there been a major change in how people are referred to?

Mr Peffer: That is correct. Within the past couple of months a decision has been taken—

MRS JONES: To streamline across?

Mr Peffer: That is right; to try to provide some consistency in different senior executive levels across the ACT public service. My understanding is that some of the motivation behind that thinking is also looking at what are the equivalent titles used in the commonwealth or in other states and territories.

MRS JONES: I do not want to take up too much time but do you have a copy or are you able to supply information on who is in charge of the process and can supply us with the new guidelines?

Mr Peffer: That, I believe, was run out of Ms Whitten's area in CMTEDD but we can ask that something is provided to the committee.

MS CODY: Minister, it has been a bit of a theme over the past couple of days. You may have heard these questions before. There has been a government initiative to move—and I asked you in an earlier session—away from insecure work. I know Access Canberra had a high number of contractors. I am wondering what the staffing profile looks like now and what you are going to be moving to. Are you going to be also looking at your staffing profile within Access Canberra?

Mr Rynehart: We have a process underway at the moment which is a broad-based process in our contact centre and service centres to move to a permanent employment arrangement as the dominant model. The numbers—

MS CODY: I am happy for you to provide them on notice if it is easier, to try to get a picture of where you are actually heading, how you are going to help to support a more secure work environment.

Mr Rynehart: We have already advertised—I believe it closes this week—positions

or a permanent arrangement where our external contractors exist, and that process is underway. Our expectation is to move away from labour hire as the employment model to a more secure and permanent arrangement.

Mr Peffer: We have had some very productive discussions with the CPSU in looking at how we support our business model—we are not a 9 to 5 business; we have activities that sit outside those hours—how to ensure that we are able to provide the expected level of service to the community and meet those expectations at the same time as we can give people certainty and we do not require the sort of labour hire-type arrangements. Those discussions have been very constructive and I think that we have come a long way already. But there is just a little bit left to go.

Mr Rynehart: Currently we have 685 people in Access Canberra; 623 are permanent or temporary and 62 are external contract. They are predominantly in the contact centre and service centres.

MS CODY: They are the ones that you will gradually try to—

Mr Rynehart: Yes.

MS CODY: Obviously moving to permanent employment is fabulous but there will still be opportunities for people who have caring arrangements and who need to work part time and those sorts of things?

Mr Rynehart: Absolutely. We certainly have flexible work arrangements. For example, in our contact centre about 18 months ago we moved everybody onto a laptop rather than a desk-based computer. That enabled people to be able to work a bit more flexibly within the building. For some time we have also run tests for people to be able to work at home, which has given much more flexibility. We have trialled some models where we have run the contact centre at multiple sites to give people options about where they would like to work. There is a negotiation process about the schedule that people work and there is an option for people to come back and identify their preferred working hours so that we can work together to be as flexible as we can.

Mr Peffer: I add to that just to say that we have recently launched a return to work initiative in Access Canberra as well. It is a pilot at this stage. What it looks to do is ensure that we are providing as much support as we can to people who are returning to work after a sustained absence. That could be because they have taken 12 months off to look after a newborn child or something like that.

What we thought is that as we brought graduates or new people into the organisation we had this big apparatus that sort of wraps around them to induct them, train them up, make sure that they are comfortable with the business systems, that everything works and all that sort of thing. But for our existing employees, if they took 12 months off there are a lot changes in 12 months in terms of systems that you use, how things look and feel, where you sit and how your team works. They were really just stepping back in cold without the necessary support to achieve that flexible working arrangement, not feeling guilty about it, ensuring that they were well supported, having a network of peers. We kicked that initiative off just recently. I think 10 people have just started that.

MS CODY: I have some follow-up questions. Did I hear you say that you have been liaising with or working with the CPSU on ensuring there is a model that works for both employer and employee?

Mr Pepper: Correct. That is right. The CPSU has been very helpful in figuring out how we can make this shift and not leave ourselves exposed in not being able to provide the services that we have to for the community. They have been instrumental in helping us work through that.

MS CODY: I also have a follow-up on the return to work program. I was lucky enough to be involved in the launch of a palliative care tool kit to help support workplaces, support people that are diagnosed with a terminal illness but who still want to continue work. Are you aware of that program? Do you have programs and policies around supporting people who want to stay at work when it may not be normal? I use the word “normal” in inverted commas. I am talking grand scheme type of thing.

Mr Pepper: I was not aware specifically of that particular initiative but we have approached this from a viewpoint of saying: what we can do as an employer to be as flexible and supportive as we can to our workforce? For example we have folk who, because they are now set up with the right technology and tools, are able to have dialysis treatment while working; so it no longer is an impact on their personal time. It is something that they can undergo while they are still tapping away at the computer, being a part of the team and that sort of thing.

I think some of the changes that we have made as an organisation, the technology we have been able to adopt and the support we have been given to do that have really helped drive us forward in being an inclusive and supportive workplace.

MR PETTERSSON: I have supplementary on that. In dealing with the CPSU, was the main point of contention with labour hire the hours of work or was it managing surges in demand for labour?

Mr Rynehart: I am not sure there was a point of contention. The conversation was around ensuring that we could balance the need to deliver our services across a broader time frame than a general nine to five, Monday to Friday. Some of the service centres operate 8 am to 6 pm and the contact centre is 7 am to 8 pm during the week and has Saturday and Sunday. It was a conversation around what the scheduling arrangements would be, how to ensure that everyone was protected and that there was a fair and equitable process for establishing that. That was the main conversation.

MR PETTERSSON: So was it mainly to do with hours of work?

Mr Rynehart: Yes, it was about the scheduling, the scheduling and the availability of work.

MR PETTERSSON: Now that there is a transition away from labour hire to direct employment, is there a change in the hours that these individuals are working?

Mr Rynehart: There was an attachment to the enterprise agreement which was specific for the service centre and the contact centre which moves into a scheduled hours environment. It establishes that the hours worked are the same but it does establish a rostered day off or a day off each month for people to schedule that in. There are negotiation points, a process to work through to establish the schedule.

MS LE COUTEUR: I hope I am asking this question at the right time. I saw Mr Simmons earlier.

THE CHAIR: No.

MS LE COUTEUR: I will start anyway.

Mr Ramsay: Ask the question and we will see.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is a parking enforcement question. The reason I mention Mr Simmons is because a couple of years ago, I think at estimates, I asked a question about parking. Mr Simmons told us that the government was about to trial cars that can drive along and automatically pick up the number plates of illegally parked cars.

Mr Ramsay: Licence plate recognition.

MS LE COUTEUR: You got it; so my question is: how is that trial going, assuming it is you, not Transport Canberra.

Mr Peffer: No, that sits within our responsibility. I might get Ms Potter to talk about some further details but at a higher level, that trial has been quite successful. I have spent some time in these vans myself just to understand how they work. They have a high definition camera that is mounted on the side. You drive around and people are very excited to see you thinking that you are with Google. Then as you pull up closer and it says “mobile parking inspector” the blood drains from the face.

In terms of the technology that is used, basically what it does is that it is able to detect where a licence plate exists within its field of vision. It can take a photo of the vehicle that registers the licence plate. If it is, let us say, an hour long on-road parking area, if that van then returns to that area an hour and 10 minutes later, basically what it can do is drive along and give us with absolute certainty, within a millimetre, whether or not that vehicle has moved. It will essentially register that these are the vehicles that have not.

MRS JONES: It is a brave new world.

Mr Peffer: It is a brave new world. It has done a couple of things. First is that it has improved some of the accuracy. We are actually capturing people’s parking behaviour. It has allowed us to move to a model where the parking inspectors are inside a vehicle where there may be a higher risk environment and—

MS CODY: Which makes them safer because they are—

Mr Peffer: Which makes our own team safer. I guess that some of the highest risk

areas that they patrol are around schools.

MRS JONES: Is it a more efficient form of revenue raising?

Mr Peffer: It is a more efficient method for us to be able to respond particularly to complaints. Think about the distance that a parking inspector can travel. One of the challenges that used to give us is that on any given day we would receive a number of complaints through our contact centre about suburban parking, that this particular vehicle is parked on the verge, it is here or it is there. Because of the workforce we had, it simply was not feasible that we could actually get out and respond to a lot of these complaints. Now we have this improved productivity through the technology that is being used in these vans we are able to actually respond to a lot more complaints, get out there and enforce them.

THE CHAIR: On the accuracy, we heard—I think it might have been annual reports last year; I cannot recall—that there were some teething problems. For example, if a person had parked in a two-hour spot in the morning, gone and done something else for the day and come back to the same spot in the afternoon at their local shops, they were getting fined because the vehicle thought they had been there the whole day. Have those problems been worked through?

Mr Peffer: Unless—if the driver is able to park, to the millimetre, in the same spot—

MRS JONES: There are some very clever people in Canberra, let me tell you.

Mr Peffer: that they had parked at—

MRS JONES: And we all have our preferred parking spots.

Mr Peffer: That certainly should not be happening.

THE CHAIR: I note that there is an increase in estimated revenue from traffic infringements for the next financial year. Is that because of the vehicles?

Ms Potter: I have read the privilege statement and understand the responsibilities to the committee. Thank you for the question about the trial itself. It has now formed part of business as usual within Access Canberra to have these vehicles on the roads. We also have an additional two vehicles set up with four cameras so we have the capacity with the new vehicles to do both sides of the street at the same time. We are in the process of rolling that out.

We had a situation where the vehicles and cameras were only able to map one side, so you can imagine the route they would take would be much longer. It is good for things like carbon emissions and also workplace health and safety that we can now plan those routes differently for the new vehicles. That forms part of the calculations, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: How many of these vehicles have you got?

Ms Potter: There are four vehicles in operation with six cameras across them, and that accounts for the two that have the additional cameras on board.

MS LE COUTEUR: Does this mean that you are managing to do some enforcement of people who park under trees? I have had a lot of complaints about people parking under trees, and generally the response has been that they are not really a problem from a parking point of view and so they are very low profile.

Ms Potter: There is a distinction we make between a road and a road-related area and urban open space. In forums like this I tend to be pretty careful to describe how those rules might be applied and how they might be used in terms of propagating worse parking behaviour. There is a distinction between the activity that parking operations would enforce versus the parking rangers. Does that make sense?

MS LE COUTEUR: That does make sense. Your people have your four cars and that is good, but the parking rangers are not so fortunate.

Ms Potter: That is right. And we have the added complication in some areas in terms of the National Capital Authority land. When you just say “parking under trees” there would be a range of relevant distinctions. There are many trees, so it depends on what area we are enforcing.

The way we use LPRs is largely in overstays and parallel parking or parking on nature strips directly, so a road-related area, that passage directly next to the road. As Dave said, in terms of our workplace health and safety requirements it allows people to go incognito to areas where we have had reports particularly of people who are working overtime shifts late at night and so forth that they can go and infringe people and there is that delay where they will receive the infringement in the mail at a later time as opposed to having a parking inspector on site at a vehicle.

Mr Ramsay: I note that there is the classic tension between some level of concern as to whether this is revenue-raising and the fact that many people ask us, “Can you come out and enforce more parking fines?” It is the case that I receive equal number of ministerial requests regarding why we are fining people and why we are not fining people.

MRS JONES: But they are not saying, “Can you fine people higher amounts of money,” are they?

Mr Ramsay: The LPR cameras make it so that we can be more efficient in making sure—

MRS JONES: With the same fines, I understand that.

Mr Ramsay: That is right, and that is the purpose of the LPR cameras.

MRS JONES: But when you make the comparison between people wanting more inspections versus people who are stressed about the revenue-raising side of things, there is also a question in that comparison about the amount of money people are asked to pay, which is part of that tension.

Mr Ramsay: Which does not sit within this portfolio, so I would not be answering

those questions.

MRS JONES: But it is a part of the very same calculation. It is not as simple as whether we inspect or not.

Mr Ramsay: As I say, the two very common letters I get are, “Please don’t fine me,” and, “Please fine more people.” And we see that in the conversation today. I have received on a number of occasions requests from the same person asking for both things.

MRS JONES: I think some of the tension is about the very high cost of such fines.

Mr Ramsay: As I say, the purpose of the LPR cameras is to make sure that the rules can be well enforced. There is a range of other business and economic reasons as to why it is important to be able to enforce those parking situations.

MS CODY: I will use Manuka as an example in this question because I was there this morning. Some parts of Manuka have two-hour parking. If I was there for lunch and was going over my 2 hours and I put more money in the metre to pay for an extra 2 hours, is that not how parking is supposed to work? Are you supposed to move?

Ms Potter: That is right. The Parkmobile app, which is the way to deal with your parking online, bars you from renewing.

MS CODY: Yes, but what about just putting money in the meter?

Mr Pepper: The licence plate recognition technology cannot detect if you have a paid parking slip on your dash. So it is used in areas where the parking is free but time limited.

Ms Potter: In answer to your question as to best parking practice and not infringing our laws, yes, you are required to move your car. On the question in relation to the amounts of money, something that is relevant in that space is that there is obviously a range of infringements from parking incorrectly within the bay—taking too much space, parking too close to the line—which have lower amount infringements. I think it is \$120 off the top of my head.

The focus for us in Access Canberra generally in the compliance and enforcement phase is risk harm. The car that is parked on a nature strip blocking vision of oncoming traffic out of a turn is much more concerning to our officers and the mandate to infringe, and the fine is higher related to that risk-harm ratio.

Another classic example is misuse of a disability parking permit. Again, that is a very high fine, up around the \$600 mark. But in terms of the equality of access for our disabled community members—

MRS JONES: Sure, but there are people in this city who can pay a \$600 fine or a \$400 fine—it is annoying but it does not ruin them—and then there are people for whom even a \$100 fine is very difficult for them to pay. Across the whole of government services this is just a tension that is ongoing.

Mr Ramsay: Indeed. It is not my experience that I have heard calls from the Canberra Liberals to bring in fines that are proportionate to incomes; that is actually a broader policy area.

MRS JONES: Mr Ramsay, a very important point to make is that this is an estimates process, not a place for Minister Ramsay or any other minister to come in here with a critique of what may or may not be Liberal Party policy.

MS LAWDER: I have a supplementary about your cars. Have some of your parking inspectors been retrained to use the cars, or do you have the cars plus all of your existing parking inspectors? What has happened? Have you sacked all your parking inspectors?

Mr Peffer: We certainly have not sacked our parking inspectors. I can attest to that. Some of our team members have been retrained to use that technology, so they are now driving.

MR PETTERSSON: I am aware of instances where these parking vans have gone out to areas and there have been mass tickets issued, but then there were also waivers granted to large numbers of those users. Do you have information on how many parking infringements are waived, both with the vans and with the inspectors?

Ms Potter: We do have a range of data available related to how infringements are issued and which ones are appealed and so forth. I think what is relevant in answering the concern that is the basis of your question is that we have targeted programs that we have undertaken, particularly around school zones and including sporting events on the weekend, where we have worked quite closely with the Education Directorate and our media and comms teams to try to educate the community around expectations on parking on green areas in our suburbs.

A classic example would be where you have afternoon sport on at some of our high schools. People park willy-nilly all over the verges and nature strips, sometimes blocking the vision of drivers who are driving around those suburbs. In those instances where we have gone out and tried to bring the community with us on fixing that behaviour, we have done programs where inspectors go out and infringe the vehicles that are parked illegally in spite of the efforts that we have made to educate and engage them.

MR PETTERSSON: I take from that that the mass issuing of fines and the waivers associated with that have been reduced as part of an educational campaign? Are those waivers still ongoing?

Ms Potter: Fines are withdrawn for a range of reasons. A classic example is a good history with parking and compliance dating back for a period of time. It would be on an individual basis. If somebody who was infringed as part of one of our programs applied for a withdrawal, the basis upon which they may or may not succeed will be down to that individual and the application they have made for that withdrawal.

MR PETTERSSON: I am aware of a circumstance in Palmerston at the school where

one of the vans went past and pinged everyone, but then those fines were retracted.

Mr Peffer: There was a case early on when we introduced the new technology where, as we came to terms with how that functioned in practice, we had a van that patrolled a school area on a number of occasions but because there is a time delay in actually receiving the infringement it did not provide the necessary time for individuals to actually adjust their behaviour. When you receive the yellow envelope on your vehicle when you come out of a premise, there is that immediate signal that what you are doing is illegal. When it arrives in the mail a week later and the next day another one arrives and the next day another one arrives, that to us did not seem to be a reasonable application of the technology. On that particular occasion, we worked with the school and with those affected to remove quite a number of those infringements.

Positively, though, at that school we have seen a real improvement in parking behaviour. The risks at the time we started the patrolling activity were significant for young people crossing the road where there was no visibility for drivers or for children. Now the patrol will go past and it is rare if we get one infringement. The community has really responded and shaped behaviour to support safety.

MR PETTERSSON: That is good to hear. Could you provide the information on the number of tickets that are waived from inspectors versus vans?

Ms Potter: Could I ask for more specifics in terms of the time frame or the area.

MR PETTERSSON: In the past year across the ACT.

Mr Peffer: We can take that on notice.

Mr Ramsay: I have one last thing, Mrs Jones. In terms of the impact on low income earners, it is also good for the community to be aware that we have introduced and made more accessible the time to pay option. For people who are on low incomes, not only has the ability to enter into a low fortnightly pay rather than requiring the fine to be paid in one lump sum been introduced by this government, but within the past 12 months it has been made even more accessible for people for to be able to do that very simply online.

MRS JONES: The stress that people experience, though, when they are already at pains to survive in this city is significant, so I am glad to hear of that.

Minister, improvements have been made to ensure that users are able to track their case through Access Canberra following up on outcomes since last year. Are users notified when their action is no longer occurring?

Mr Peffer: Do you mean through fix my street?

MRS JONES: Yes. And what is the average time frame cases are completed in?

Mr Rynehart: As the committee may be aware, fix my street is a system that we host within Access Canberra for people to lodge requests for larger municipal type fixes: complaints about potholes, trees, streetlights, et cetera. We accept those and we pass

them through to the business units, which are generally within TCCS, for resolution. I can talk to the Access Canberra part and where we are up to.

MRS JONES: Yes, of course.

Mr Rynehart: There have been a number of activities in the last year about closing that loop with customers to ensure that people are kept aware of what is occurring. One of the activities recently has been to refer calls when people are calling to follow up where their job is straight through to the business unit responsible for the piece of work rather than chasing it up second-hand.

MRS JONES: So once they get through to Access Canberra, they get put through?

Mr Rynehart: Yes. We will transfer them directly through to the business unit rather than taking a message and attempting to get back to them. There is also a project underway, which is in the TCCS system, which is about joining fix my street and the asset management system together. That will improve the automation and the way that the feedback goes straight back to the customers. That is expected to be delivered this year. The project is ongoing but that will very much close the loop automatically rather than it being what is often a manual process.

One of the other improvements that we have put in in the last year has been a call-back functionality for people. When they call us and they have to wait, through the contact centre, there is an option for people to leave a message for us to call back the same day so they do not necessarily have to wait for the message.

With regard to the average time for Access Canberra action requests, it is 4.23 days.

MRS JONES: Is there a time frame indicator that active and closed cases are benchmarked against? Your current outcome is about 4½ days, but do you benchmark that? Are you trying to get to a certain place?

Mr Rynehart: That will come more with the implementation of the new system with the closure of the loop. We have standards for our general complaint time frames. I am just looking for the specific numbers.

MRS JONES: Are there surveys done of those whose complaints are completely closed and finished, about the process, in order to identify improvements for the future?

Mr Rynehart: Yes, certainly. The improvements to the fix my street platform over the past 24 months or so have included speaking with customers. Sometimes it has been to reach out to people who have recently logged a job; sometimes it has been to receive some feedback when we have made an amendment and a usability change to the system to just see how it is working for them. We also run an annual customer service satisfaction survey about the general satisfaction of customers.

MRS JONES: Have people who have had this service been targeted with that?

Mr Rynehart: That is a general spread across the population in a general sense.

THE CHAIR: One of the things we spoke about at length last year was that, with that closing of the loop, people were receiving an email saying that their case had been completed when the “completion” was a decision to take no action, but they did not know that. Has that happened yet, or is that still part of closing the loop?

Mr Rynehart: That is part of that final—

THE CHAIR: So that is still on its way.

Mr Rynehart: delivery of the project. There has certainly been a lot of work between the directorates over the past 12 months to improve that information flow. The automation of that information will be delivered by the new system, which will then give a more definitive answer regarding all cases. At the moment it is working effectively, from our perspective, but there are always improvements that we can make to our services.

MS LAWDER: With the satisfaction rate in the report regarding the percentage of customers satisfied with Access Canberra, do you break that down between fix my street and calling Access Canberra generally? Are you able to provide the figures in the satisfaction rate in separate—

Mr Rynehart: We publish our satisfaction survey on our website. Fix my street is not a specific indicator; however, it would be included under our digital services satisfaction rate. Fix my street is not a specific indicator but it is captured with our general approach.

MS LAWDER: Related to that, is the length of time taken to complete a request or a complaint linked to the satisfaction survey and analysed in that way?

Mr Rynehart: We receive feedback from our customers in lots of ways. One of them is the general survey; one is that we have a touchscreen in each of our service centres where people can provide feedback immediately, on the spot. We also have a feedback mechanism through our complaint management team, and there is the service where we reach out to businesses from the compliance end.

Customer satisfaction remains high when we focus on delivering the outcome for the customer. When we get for the customer the service that they are after or the outcome that they are after the satisfaction remains high. Time is an element of that but it is not the only element. One of the pressures or tensions for us is that we always attempt to get something resolved as quickly as we can. It is equally important for us to get the customer the right answer, so that they do not have to make multiple attempts or multiple visits to get the outcome that they are after. So we balance both of those against each other.

MS LAWDER: I did not see it in here; I presume it will be in the annual report: do you have any targets about call abandonment or dropout, and trying to reduce the number of calls abandoned?

Mr Rynehart: It is not a specific measure. Our target this year was to have a less than

four minute wait time, which we were certainly under, at the contact centre.

THE CHAIR: You do not know, of that, how many calls are just dropping out before they get—

Mr Rynehart: Yes, I do have that.

MS LAWDER: For example, if you are ringing about a dog attack, a four-minute wait time is probably—

Mr Rynehart: We prioritise some of our calls. Dog attacks are one of those specific priority calls and those are generally dealt with within around 30 seconds of the first contact being made. We prioritise those sorts of calls very much above—

MS LAWDER: What are some of the others that you might prioritise?

Mr Rynehart: Work safety environment calls are the other primary ones. We are not an emergency line. If anybody has an emergency, they should call triple zero, particularly when, if you are talking about a dog attack, a person feels that they are in immediate and urgent danger. They should be talking to the emergency services. But we do prioritise in order to get to those calls as quickly as we can, so that we can deal with it through our process or pass it on to the appropriate unit for resolution.

MRS JONES: When you say “first contact”, does that mean the first conversation with someone, after which they are put on hold?

Mr Rynehart: That would be the first person that they speak to with us.

MRS JONES: So within 30 seconds they get a first contact, but how do you know if it is a dog attack call at the first contact?

Mr Rynehart: We have what is called an integrated voice recognition system on our main line.

MRS JONES: So people are choosing an area?

Mr Rynehart: They choose a button. If you pick one then it takes you through. We can filter the calls according to a number of options and we know that this is a dog attack one.

MR PARTON: How many of the large number of building projects underway at the moment do you discover are actually under construction or have just commenced construction without approval or without all the necessary approvals? The example that comes to mind is the unnamed Belconnen construction site that was reported in the *Canberra Times* on 28 May. The question was: how many do you discover actually under construction or have just commenced construction without approval or without all the necessary approvals?

Mr Pepper: The high level response to that is: probably a reasonably small share of the general construction activity that is going on. That is not something that we

discover every day. That would be more a one-off case. I will get Mr Green to talk about some of the specific examples that we have. Often the insights that lead us to discovering a construction project that has commenced without the necessary approvals come from those who live in the surrounding region. They see an excavation or something going up where there has been no DA. The government provides a range of mechanisms that are quite simple to discover the DAs and the approvals that have been issued in that region. Then often we will have people call that through to us.

Mr Green: I think there is a difference in scale. Certainly the matter that we provided some public commentary about in the Belconnen area, at that scale, is quite unusual, and I think I was quoted as saying it is quite unusual. We are generally dealing with people in the industry who know that they need a development approval and know that they need to appoint a building certifier and go through that process.

MR PARTON: You would hope so, wouldn't you?

Mr Green: You would hope so. On the other side, where we see members of our community erecting sheds, for example, or wanting to put a pergola on, I do not necessarily think that is something that they are wilfully doing without approval. It is about understanding.

Some of the figures that we have, in terms of some better understanding: since 1 July last year to 17 May this year we have received 322 complaints about unapproved structures. In addition, we had complaints about sheds, and that was 97 complaints. There are a lot in the single-residential sector where people are either not understanding the process, think they may have met the exemption criteria under the planning and building laws and then not be able to get it or not require any sort of approval. In the majority of circumstances, where building is happening without the approval, I think that is occurring in that sort of space, as opposed to the larger commercial end of town whom you would expect to understand what the requirements are.

MR PARTON: What sequence of actions does Access Canberra take when it becomes apparent that there is an unapproved or a partially approved construction that is actually underway?

Mr Green: Our regulatory response varies, depending on the circumstances. We have got a number of tools in our regulatory tool kit. I think in the circumstance of that large site in Belconnen, where you made it pretty clear that that was not acceptable and it was still in the process of being built, the action we took was to stop work effectively. They have now got to go through a process of getting development approval and getting building approval. That is the first step. Generally speaking there are other actions that could follow after that which could include requiring people to bring it back into compliance, ie, not to have built in those circumstances.

MR PARTON: Which would mean knock it down?

Mr Green: Return the site back to the way it was, in some circumstances.

MS LAWDER: Has that ever happened?

Mr Green: There have been occasions certainly in the past. I recall one in a Gungahlin suburb where a building was erected not in accordance with the approval and they had to knock the whole frame of the house down. Certainly with some of the stop-work notices that we issued recently in Gungahlin they were required to bring those back into order. In some circumstances that requires partial demolition and rebuilding. There is a cost to industry in doing that and a cost to community in terms of time and being able to get into their home. On that side of things, where things are still under construction, the levers that we have are to stop work. Generally speaking, most people will get on and fix what they need to fix to get back into compliance.

There are processes in terms of prosecution that we can go through under the Planning and Development Act where people have built something without a planning and development approval in place. But I think, for the majority of cases, we want to work with people. That has been our philosophy at Access Canberra; we want to engage with people, we want to educate them about what their obligations are and get these issues resolved.

As an example, of those 322 unapproved structures, we have got 37 that remain active. And we were just talking about from 1 July last year to 17 May this year. The majority of the time we can get good outcomes by working with people, advising them of what their obligations are.

That then feeds into, again, the funding that we are receiving about educating and the data that we have. If we have got circumstances where we have got 322 complaints about unimproved structures, we can look to improve our public face and information so that people understand, “This is the type of approval you need to get, these are the people you need to start thinking about engaging with to get that approval.” We are not coming out in the back end.

Mr Peffer: Some of that education as well occurs for those who have actually lodged a complaint. In some cases we will get a complaint through where someone believes that a DA was required. But in some cases it is not. It is just a building approval that is required and people are well within their rights to be constructing what they are doing.

MS LAWDER: Would seniors cards be included in the new online services? You are talking about increasing the percentage of services completed online.

Mr Ramsay: In regard to the seniors card, as we talked about at a previous time, at this stage there are no specific plans to be doing that as part of the online process. We are funding COTA for the next two years to continue to develop its seniors card work.

MS LAWDER: What is the increase in the percentage of services to be completed online? Where will that increase come from?

Mr Rynehart: With regard to the number of digital services we have increased over the past four years, we had 110 services available online in 2014. We now have more than 380 available. We have implemented a range of improvements including commencing an online birth registration in the past 12 months, giving people the

ability to dispute or withdraw their infringement notice online, to view the parking or speeding fines that they have received and the online drivers licence. They are some of the key things that we have already delivered.

We have two measures about continuing to improve our digital services. One is the growth and the availability. That is about the total available number of services. We have an indication there to increase the breadth. We also have an indicator to increase the volume of transactions. We are focusing both on continuing to build on those services that have not yet become digital and at the same time we are also looking at those that are already digital and improving that service at the same time.

We have traditionally focused on client volume first. Now we are getting into some of the more complex processes and it takes a little longer for us to identify the most appropriate one to do first. But there is a two-fold approach. One is to continue to grow, and the second is to improve what we already have.

MS CODY: I moved a motion in the Assembly looking at how we can make incremental payments on things, including car registration. Is that something that will also be included to look at over the coming digital reform agenda?

Mr Peffer: That is certainly something that we have turned our mind to. That one is not a simple one, and the reason for that is—

MS CODY: It does not have to be a long answer. If you are thinking about it and you are looking into it that is great. That is really all I was asking about.

Mr Peffer: It is certainly something that is being discussed.

If I may, can I close out the question, which we were to take on notice from Mr Pettersson, with the numbers that he requested. Since 1 July 2018 approximately 169,000 infringements have been issued, of which 28,172 are from licence plate recognition vehicles. Of those, 11,203 in total have been withdrawn, of which 2,146 relate to licence plate recognition vehicles.

THE CHAIR: We will suspend and resume at 3.45 pm.

Hearing suspended from 3.34 to 3.45pm.

THE CHAIR: I welcome our new witnesses. Before you speak, could you confirm that you have read the privilege card and understand the implications of the privilege statement.

MR PARTON: There has been a lot of discussion about changes to community contributions over the past 12 months. Minister, can you explain to us why you left it until less than a month before the changes were due to come into force to define what would and would not be eligible as a community contribution?

Mr Ramsay: Sure. I will allow my officials to talk about the details of the process, but I remind you that the whole intention of this is to make sure that the issues raised in the Auditor-General's report are addressed, to make sure that there is a clear sense

of confidence from the community that the community contributions scheme is living up to its intent.

As part of that, there has been very strong consultation across the community and also some very specific consultation with the industry. The changes have been flagged for quite some time now. In terms of the finalisation of the detail, Mr Glenn will talk us through where things are up to. It is a matter of making sure that the consultation happens, that the definitions and what is allowed are very clear, and that there are no unintended consequences from the drafting of any of the regulations. I think that is the short answer.

Mr Glenn: Mr Parton, I will expand a bit on the attorney's answer around the consultation process. At the end of last year we provided a draft regulation which provides a lot of the detail around what the community contributions scheme would look like and some of the critical definitions that go around that. We have been having some very active and productive conversations on that with representatives of clubs, through that period and through the first half of this year. Into this year, we also provided some fact sheets, which were another attempt to unpack what was being proposed in the draft regulation for discussion. That has been a useful vehicle for engaging in discussions with the clubs.

We have been very active. We have been having a positive level of engagement. We are now reaching a point where progressively we have been providing advice to government about what we have been hearing from industry. We are about to do so again with a view to being able to finalise the regulation in anticipation of the start date of the new scheme on 1 July.

MR PARTON: Minister, you spoke of doing your best to avoid unintended consequences, which is obviously admirable, and I hope that it is always the case when it comes to setting up schemes like this. Would you consider the potential disbanding of the Canberra Demons and them leaving the NEAFL competition as the sort of unintended consequence that should be avoided by these changes?

Mr Ramsay: The potential hyperbole around this debate is something that I think is important to avoid.

MR PARTON: I think this one is very real, though, minister.

Mr Ramsay: I believe that we are working very well with the clubs to make sure that the particular area that you are looking at there—which is one part of the community contributions matter, that being the definition of professional sport—is part of the policy intent, as we have made clear. What we now do, and are continuing to do, including over the past 24 hours, is to follow through on ways of ensuring that the community contributions scheme can support the community rather than going into some of the areas that have in the past been identified as weaknesses of the scheme.

MR PARTON: Are you open to potential nuanced changes that may avoid—

Mr Ramsay: That is precisely what we are doing at the moment. The nuanced changes around the definition of professional sport are exactly what my officials have

been working on with clubs right across the clubs industry to make sure that, when there is a definition that is chosen and agreed on, it flows through with the intent of maximising the benefit for the community. We have said all the way through that these changes to the community contributions scheme are there to make sure that more money gets to the community and to community purposes. That has always been the intent. As part of that, there has been some very effective consultation.

Going to your first question, on why things are still being worked through, that is one of the reasons why things are still being working through: so we can make sure that that definition achieves the intent of government policy without having unintended consequences for the community as a whole.

MR PARTON: Why is it that only women's sport is deemed to make a contribution to the community? When we look at these changes, that is the message that is sent: that only women's sport makes a contribution to the community.

Mr Ramsay: I would disagree quite substantially with that interpretation of what is happening with the community contributions scheme.

MR PARTON: But that is what it is, minister. The scheme basically says that we can pay. The Canberra Demons, for argument's sake, if they were a women's team, would not be under threat at all.

Mr Ramsay: What we have said with the community contributions scheme is that, in the context of what has happened previously as well, there has been an incentivised rate that is able to be claimed in terms of some areas. One of those was a contribution to women's sport. That is trying to ensure that there is good investment in women's sport, which has traditionally been under-invested in across the community.

In terms of answering your question, it is not true to say—it is not an accurate representation of government policy or of the work that we have done to date—that we suggest that men's sport does not contribute to the community. We are saying that with the community contributions scheme, which sits alongside a whole range of other things that clubs are able to do and invest in as part of their purposes, we want to be able to ensure that there is effectively an incentivised way of investing in female sport.

MRS JONES: As an unintended consequence, is it possible that vulnerable groups of men who might have been engaged through sport, with the changes and readjustments that might be made, may end up less advantaged through this system? Clubs are making last-minute changes because of the time frame they have. I am just asking if that has been thought through.

Mr Ramsay: All of the time frames have been thought through.

MRS JONES: No, not the time frames: the accidental impact perhaps.

Mr Ramsay: Again, I note that the community contributions scheme sits separately from what clubs may choose to do as the way that they live out their purposes. Community contributions are a small percentage of one element of the income of the

club.

MRS JONES: Sure, but if clubs were using that to support, say, vulnerable men in sport—I do not think any of us would sit here and say there are no groups that cannot be engaged through sport and improve their lot in life—is it possible that you are doing an accidental injustice to that group whilst trying to do something very good? That is really the only point.

Mr Ramsay: We have no intention of doing any disservice to any vulnerable group.

MRS JONES: But what if you have?

Mr Ramsay: Again, remember that this is around the definition of professional sport, not of vulnerable members of the community.

MRS JONES: There are examples where \$50 a game is considered professional sport now under this new code. That was not the case before.

Mr Ramsay: Under this new code, the regulation has not been finalised, so it is difficult to say.

MRS JONES: That is a good point, isn't it?

Mr Ramsay: Yes, that is right.

MRS JONES: Maybe this feedback can actually feed into the decisions that are being made. We are not necessarily talking about people on \$600 a game. They might just be on \$50 a game. That is like a payment for them to cover costs or something.

Mr Ramsay: Again, it has been clear from the beginning that it is reimbursing expenses. If it is covering the costs, that is part of the definition that sits outside—

MRS JONES: But if it was structured to cover costs, but as a payment to the player—it is a small payment—it is now potentially going to be covered—

Mr Glenn: Mrs Jones, perhaps I can assist there. There are essentially two thresholds in the definition that is being proposed at the moment. First, is the payment over and above reimbursement? There is a tax office ruling that goes to some of that. So \$50, probably not. Reimbursement for the cost of attending the game, travel, those sorts of things would not put someone into the professional payment space. Then the second threshold is that the majority of players on that team need to be going over that first threshold. You need to have payment at a professional rate—

MRS JONES: So what is the dollar figure? Do you know what the dollar figure is?

Mr Glenn: and then the majority of players on that team receiving that before that team is characterised as being professional—

MRS JONES: Sure, and do you know what the dollar figure is for payment through that tax ruling, or can you get us that on notice?

Mr Glenn: I do not think there is a specific figure because it goes to what the—

MRS JONES: The purpose.

Mr Glenn: expenses are related to the particular sport. There are some clear examples where a person is receiving more than a year's reimbursement and they are making a gain—that is, sort of, the tax concept behind it—but there are—

MRS JONES: Or can you—

Mr Glenn: What would it cost for a particular player to attend a particular match?

MRS JONES: Yes, can you, on notice, point us to the tax rule that you are relying on to make that judgement, or for others to make that judgement?

Mr Glenn: Yes, certainly.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

MR PARTON: Further to that, why, when it comes to ground maintenance, have you chosen to punish clubs with high level men's teams by making clubs discount times spent on infrastructure by those players? It strikes me as being counterproductive to the purpose for which those clubs were originally established.

Mr Ramsay: Again, the language that you use is certainly not the language that either sits in the policy or is the government's intent. There is not a punishment that is happening. What we are doing is—

MR PARTON: But they are being punished, minister.

Mr Ramsay: I disagree. I do not believe that clubs are being punished.

MRS JONES: But they will have to change how they do things.

Mr Ramsay: There is nothing for them to be punished about and there is no action that is being taken that is punishment. That is a particular concept. What we are working with is ensuring that the funding that is used through the community contributions scheme is there for the benefit of the community. Therefore, when we are looking at the way that facilities—ovals or whatever—are maintained, it is from the perspective of, "What is the benefit for the community."

I am happy to provide some more of the details but there is your underlying principle. The question for the community contributions scheme is: how does this benefit the community? It is not: how does it benefit a particular person? Once we take that perspective, I think the questions around what should or should not be in sit very cohesively and very coherently with good community policy.

MRS JONES: I have a supplementary to that. I think the point that is being made is that while the intent is one thing, in the process of the change there are people who are

winners and losers. That may not be an intended consequence but it does not mean that it is not real.

Mr Glenn: Perhaps some examples of how the proposal might work would assist.

MS CODY: Perhaps my supplementary might help, actually.

MRS JONES: I think I would like to hear the end of Mr Glenn's answer.

MS CODY: Sure, I have just been waiting for a while; that is all.

MRS JONES: You will be next, I am sure.

Mr Glenn: At one end of the spectrum is a closed oval which no member of the public can access on any basis. It is available only to a club and for that club's purposes. Expenditure on that facility is not going to be considered capable of being claimed as a community contribution in that situation because there is no member of the community, other than a member of the club or player for that club, who is able to access it.

At the other end of the spectrum you might have an oval that is maintained by the club but it is not enclosed. It is available for any person to walk across at any time of day. It happens that the club also trains there but anyone could go on at the same time. That would be entirely claimable as a community contribution. Between those two extremes, there are gradations of facilities that a member of the public may use by booking but there might be times when people cannot book. So there is a proportionality there as to what can be claimed as a community contribution.

MR PARTON: Mr Glenn, I guess that one of the problems there is that those facilities that are behind gates are important facilities. If the clubs did not maintain them I am not sure that the government could. I guess that goes back to you, Mr Ramsay. Surely that must have been considered somewhat a conflict when considering this policy. If Ainslie Football Club decided they were just not going to run that oval, who would? Would you?

Mr Ramsay: The hypotheticals and speculation around those negative impacts or potential negative impacts I do not think are appropriate within the context of the community contributions scheme, remembering that, as I said before, clubs have a constitution and a purpose and they are required to live that out. As a small element of the way that the clubs work and expend money, there is a small element of one proportion of their income which the government requires as a community contribution. We are only talking about that, that percentage, that eight per cent, with the two additional elements in this year.

MR PARTON: They are all doing it tough, though. The margins are very small at the moment.

Mr Ramsay: But it still remains that clubs that are drawing income from poker machines, from electronic gaming machines, have a privilege in that area. The government understands and believes, as we believe very clearly the broader

community supports, that with that privilege we have a model which is called the community clubs model. That particular model says that with all the privilege of being able to have electronic gaming machines there will be a community contribution that is needed. What has happened in recent years is that it has been clear that some of the ways historically that the community contributions scheme has been used in a small number of cases has not met the public acceptance test.

MR PARTON: Agreed.

Mr Ramsay: We are looking to refine that and make sure that the focus is on the community contributions from that particular area and for the benefit to the broader community.

MS CODY: Minister, can you clarify this for me? Are clubs still able to contribute as much as they want to community groups?

Mr Ramsay: Absolutely.

MS CODY: Are community groups that currently receive contributions from clubs excluded from this?

Mr Ramsay: No, there are no contributions that are made to organisations that cannot continue to be made. What we are doing is refining what can be counted as a community contribution. They are not the same thing. So in respect of any organisation that has been receiving money or in kind assistance from a club in the past, there is nothing in our legislation, nothing in our regulations, that says to clubs that they cannot continue that happening.

MRS JONES: But I think it is the process of change that we are referring to—how they have been running their clubs up until now, what they can and cannot afford into the future and how it will affect the current situation.

Mr Ramsay: Which is exactly why we have been engaged in many months of consultations with the clubs.

MRS JONES: I think that the questions lead to whether there are unintended consequences that are bad, essentially.

Mr Ramsay: That is why the consultation has been happening and that is why we did not rush into a regulation on the announcement on the policy.

MRS JONES: Just as well—

Mr Ramsay: Yes.

MRS JONES: because if this is what we get with consultation, I cannot imagine what we would have had without it.

Mr Ramsay: Again, I am not sure that that comment stands because you cannot say this is what we get with consultation. What you get with consultation is an agreement

with the clubs about what is an appropriate definition. I think actually what you get with consultation in this process at the moment is a good, clear outcome that is working well with the clubs.

MRS JONES: We will let the clubs speak for themselves.

Mr Ramsay: I think if that is what we are aiming for, I am pretty happy that that is where we are getting.

MS CODY: Minister, in regard to EGMs, and talking about gaming harm, there have been some changes around identifying and responding to problem gambling. Can you give us a little bit of background, and can you also identify how the changes to the code of practice can help to prevent gambling harm?

Mr Ng: A range of reforms have been proposed to the code of practice which were discussed at a harm minimisation round table last year. More recently there was a summary of the proposed reforms coming out of the consultation and feedback we received at the round table.

In relation to what the reforms would do to support people to deal with gambling harm, one of the most significant things was the legislating and prescription of signs of gambling harm. There is a body of academic work that sits behind that, developed by an academic from the University of Adelaide, Paul Delfabbro. After some empirical study, he developed a list of signs regarding people suffering gambling harm.

The framework, on which we are working with industry, and we are continuing to work with industry to develop, is one where clubs provide more clear guidance about what those signs of gambling harm are, to better empower their gambling contact officers to make interventions where necessary.

It also has a sliding scale of intervention. Not every sign of gambling harm necessarily shows a severe level of gambling harm being suffered by a patron. With some of the ones higher up the scale, the academic research has shown that people who are exhibiting those signs are much more likely to be suffering more severe signs of gambling harm. In those circumstances the code of practice is proposing to legislate for direct intervention by someone in the club to provide a level of support or intervention, hopefully to address the potential impact of the gambling harm being suffered.

Mr Ramsay: The reforms around the code of conduct also sit with the broader work by the GRC in relation to seeing gambling from a public health approach. The importance of that is that it sees the impact of gambling not specifically on the person who may happen to be or has historically been named as a problem gambler. We are moving well away from that terminology. The reason is that, apart from the stigma that comes with that terminology, and therefore potential reluctance of both the person involved and others around them to name the person as a problem gambler, that suggests that it is their fault and the impact is more likely to be just on them.

A public health approach sees that there is an impact not only on the person who may

be gambling but also on people in their family, their immediate community and the broader community. It is changing the way of understanding the need to address the issue around gambling and its negative impact on the community.

That means different training is needed for gambling contact officers, because you are seeing it from a broader, whole-of-life perspective. There needs to be a different sort of relationship established. That is one of the reasons why, as part of the reforms, we are rolling out and making available training not only to gambling contact officers but also to members of management and governance boards within the clubs. That training for governance bodies in clubs has already taken place a number of times. That has been very well picked up. It is part of the way of establishing a culture whereby people can choose particular behaviour but do so in a way that is upholding the overall health of the community. It is a broad way of dealing with it, as well as having specific things that flow through into the code of conduct.

MS CODY: Who runs those training sessions for boards and identified staff members in clubs?

Mr Ramsay: I will allow Ms Chan to talk about it in further detail. There is training available for gambling contact officers as well as for staff management and the governance bodies.

Ms Chan: My branch at Access Canberra supports the Gambling and Racing Commission. Training is something that gambling contact officers are required to do. The commission have commissioned a provider to design that training and deliver it for us. In that training we are very mindful that we want to be supportive of industry to do their roles. In the training we outline what the roles are and we outline the signs of gambling harm.

Feedback from the training shows that people feel a lot more comfortable, having done the training, in actually being able to recognise what the signs of gambling harm are, how to record that and what to do about it, as well as the human elements. We have had a lot of positive feedback that says, "Having done the training, I feel more comfortable to go and approach a patron." Often you are asking somebody quite personal questions. It can be a difficult conversation to have. The feedback we have had from participants is that they feel much more comfortable to be able to do that role after they have done our training.

MS CODY: Did you say that the commission delivers the training?

Ms Chan: We engaged a provider to deliver it.

MS CODY: You commissioned someone.

Ms Chan: A professional trainer.

MS CODY: I misheard what you said.

Mr Ramsay: The commission commissions it.

MS CODY: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Minister, how does the public health approach apply to other sectors, for example, alcohol and licensing?

MS CODY: And mental health?

Mr Ramsay: There is a long history of there being a public health approach to matters. There has been a strong history in terms of HIV education with the public health approach. There has been a strong approach, by way of a public health approach, in relation to tobacco. Again there has been that shift across: rather than seeing a particular deficit that exists in a particular person—and aiming it at the area of alcohol is another effective one—how can we engage in community education as much as personal intervention? It is not an either/or; it is actually an approach that involves both ends.

THE CHAIR: Do you regard gambling as having more harm than alcohol or mental health—

MS CODY: No. I meant: are we looking at it from a mental health perspective as well as a public health perspective?

Mr Ramsay: Understanding it from a mental health approach allows you to look at the entire system. I do not think that it is a valid comparison to try to work out whether gambling has more harm than this particular behaviour or this particular addiction. A public health approach says that, when dealing with any area that has some level of negative impact on the community, you need to understand it from that broader sense rather than from an individual pathology point of view.

MS LE COUTEUR: How many gaming machines have been surrendered to date?

Mr Ramsay: Lots. We have a target of reaching 4,000 electronic gaming machine authorisations by the end of this parliamentary term. At this point in time we stand at 4,001.

MS LE COUTEUR: I was going to ask if you saw a need for compulsory surrenders, but based on that I assume the answer is no.

Mr Ramsay: If we are still sitting at 4,001 at the legislated time at the beginning of next year there will be the compulsory surrender of that one. We have made it very clear that we will be reaching 4,000 and we will not be backing down from that. That is all legislated. But the obvious reality is that with the trading scheme remaining in place, effectively any trading between now and then will reduce it from 4,001 to 4,000 in which case there will not need to be a second round of compulsory surrender.

The way the surrenders have taken place and the way each and every club has been involved with that is testament to the strong cooperation across the club sector. The government was very clear in its intention to try to assist clubs to move away from a reliance on electronic gaming machine revenue and to enable them to build a different sustainable form of income. That has been part of the agenda across the past couple of

years and it has been particularly successful in getting down to 4,001. Around 980 have been surrendered to date.

MS LE COUTEUR: For those that have been surrendered, how much has been provided in terms of compensation to the clubs? How much was cash incentives and how much was in concessions?

MS CODY: And how many clubs have undertaken the surrender?

Mr Ramsay: Every single club that sits above that threshold of authorisation for more than 20 electronic gaming machines has participated in the surrender.

Mr Glenn: The total amount of incentives available to clubs that voluntarily surrendered authorisations is \$14,390,500. That comprises \$648,000 in cash incentives and \$13,742,500 in offset incentives that are available for land-related payments, fees and charges in the future.

MS LE COUTEUR: But my question was, what have you actually used? Have you spent the whole \$14 million or?

Mr Glenn: No, so \$648,000 in cash has been spent. That other larger figure is available as offsets to be accessed by clubs. I understand that the amount of offsets accessed to date is \$765,000. The clubs that have offsets available to access have until April 2026 to avail themselves of that. Over time as they engage in development activities or other reinvestments in their club, they will be able to access those offsets for land-related charges.

Mr Ramsay: That was done deliberately to allow the clubs time to work through a good solid business plan as to how they would diversify and move away from a reliance on electronic gaming machines.

MR PARTON: And the government is satisfied with that number of 4,000? Can you as minister give an assurance to the industry that they will not be required to shed more machines in the near future?

Mr Ramsay: We have already said to industry publicly that, other than the trading scheme continuing so the numbers may come down, we are not looking to reduce beyond that 4,000.

MR PARTON: You do not think that there might be some influence from your governing partners on that policy?

Mr Ramsay: I was encouraged earlier today in this hearing not to engage in party commentary. I will heed that and not engage in party commentary.

MR PARTON: Specifically, though, that question refers to government policy. Opposition policy is opposition policy. The Greens are your governing partners. If the Greens make the call that they want to reduce gaming machines to 3,500, it will have an impact, will it not?

Mr Ramsay: You have asked for government policy; I have explained what government policy is. That is very clear and we have provided that to industry. It is not my place to engage in party commentary at this stage; I have heard that that is not what the committee or the committee chair, would be looking for today. I am happy to respect that.

Mr Glenn: May I add, chair, that we were asked about a tax ruling that informed the policy development around community contributions. The reference to that is TR1999/17 and, in particular, example 7, which is about pastime receipts. We will email to the secretary a link to that so you can have that available.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Appearances:

Fitzharris, Ms Meegan, Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Minister for Higher Education, Minister for Medical and Health Research, Minister for Transport and Minister for Vocational Education and Skills

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority
Service, Mr James, Chair
Carter, Mr Glenn, Chief Executive Officer

Canberra Institute of Technology
Sloan, Mr Craig, Chair
Cover, Ms Leanne, Chief Executive Officer

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate
Arthy, Ms Kareena, Deputy Director-General, Economic Development
Andersen, Ms Josephine, Executive Branch Manager, Skills Canberra
Balaretnaraja, Mr Ash, Senior Director, Tertiary Education, Training and Research

THE CHAIR: Can you confirm that you have read and understood the privilege card in front of you? A reminder: if you are taking questions on notice please state that you are taking the question on notice.

Mr Service: I have read the terms many times.

Mr Carter: I have read the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: We will go straight to questions. In the financial statements on page 11 there is a slight variation in training program expenses. Does this correlate with the levy income fluctuations or is there another reason for that?

Mr Service: I think that the variance is based on the demand. We provide in the training plan in the budget funds to make training available, and the expenditure of those funds is based on demand.

THE CHAIR: How many placements were made this year?

Mr Carter: In the financial year to last year there were 11,800 rebates paid for people completing training programs by the authority. Again based on industry demand as to which programs they choose to undertake, their training is something that industry makes those choices against. But that has been a steady increase over the past four to five years based, I think, on demand and activity.

THE CHAIR: Have any requests for training funding been rejected?

Mr Carter: Often applications are declined for applicants who are not eligible for the rebate.

THE CHAIR: Do you know how many?

Mr Carter: Ten in a year.

THE CHAIR: Are there any changes to the training courses on offer?

Mr Service: No. I should clarify that the training courses are those put forward by the registered training organisations through the survey that the Construction Industry Training Council and other organisations undertake. Certainly changes to those programs are based on demand. To give you an example, if in carpentry there were more demand for an increase in safety using nail guns then that would be a change to the course.

THE CHAIR: But there have not been any changes?

Mr Service: No, and any that there were would be demand driven. They would be minor to the underlying course outcomes.

Ms Fitzharris: Over time you will add new courses that are available. I think you have done a lot of work around asbestos.

Mr Service: Yes. Asbestos awareness has probably been the biggest single growth, and that was a natural growth and a very sensible program that the government pushed through, in the sense that it made sure that everyone that needed to be trained was trained. There is a continual up-skilling and cross-skilling opportunity. We do not in any sense regulate the number of placements available for that.

MR PETTERSSON: You mentioned asbestos as a growth area in training. Are there any others that are noteworthy?

Mr Carter: Certainly in February this year a new training program was mandated called working safely with asbestos-containing materials. An amendment was made to the Work Health and Safety Act which requires specific trades to undertake additional training, and that commences on 1 July this year. But already we have probably seen around 500 to 600 industry participants come and complete training programs in that area, and rebates have been provided accordingly. Again, that is a sensible addition to an area of training that will help to make people operate more safely.

MS CODY: Do you look at the components of the courses offered? Is that something that you review as part of the authority?

Mr Service: Yes. The authority has a contract of service in place with the Construction Industry Training Council who do a series of audits on training in the course quality and the course delivery and in the course completion.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Service: The pleasure is mine.

THE CHAIR: We will swap over to CIT.

MS CODY: I remind witnesses who are appearing for the first time today to acknowledge the privilege statement. Ms Arthy, you already have. I am pretty sure you have already done that too, have you, minister?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, but for the record, I acknowledge the privilege statement.

Mr Sloan: I, too, acknowledge the privilege statement.

Ms Cover: I acknowledge the privilege statement.

MS CODY: I know that the government this year has a mandate to move away from insecure work—contractors and labour hire firms—to try to decrease those and increase permanent staff. I was wondering what the staffing levels are for contract work across CIT and what the CIT will be doing to start to move towards a more permanent workforce.

Ms Cover: I think that the committee will appreciate that the workforce at CIT is a mixture of both permanent and temporary contract work. That is primarily because the training packages that we deliver, which are dictated by industry, mandate particular qualifications, and those qualifications are required to have industry currency. So there is a combination of different contractual arrangements and permanent arrangements within the staff.

At the moment we are sitting at around 45 per cent of our staff being contract staff. We are constantly—every year, every semester—looking at the training needs; how long the courses are that students are enrolling into; the trend data, to see whether we can project and see whether an industry is likely to change; and what sort of projection there is for the time to change. Wherever possible, we are moving staff onto a more permanent basis away from contracts.

But we always need to maintain diversity in those contracts, so that we can respond to what industry needs. As the training packages change, we can supplement those skills with our staff with casuals and contracts, in addition to our very strong and outstanding permanent staff.

MS CODY: Do you use labour hire firms to fill those contracts or do you approach the market?

Ms Cover: A variety of ways. We go through standard ACT government arrangements in terms of filling permanent roles. They are advertised mainly with ACT jobs, depending on the nature of the work. We know that in the trades area over recent years, it is becoming more difficult to get tradespeople to move into the vocational education and training space because there is a lot of work in industry at the moment. We have used a few novel ways recently to try to attract particularly younger staff who perhaps have enhanced digital skills and technology to complement the existing workforce that we have. We use a variety of mechanisms but ACT jobs is our main one. Then we go through a full merit selection process.

We do not tend to use labour hire companies in terms of consultancy firms to do that hire. We have extensive industry connections. As you know, many of our staff are still

working in the industry. The industry is a great source of intelligence about potential markets that we can tap into to attract the best workforce. Then we work really hard to retain the really great outstanding workforce that we have. It is mainly just through the standard ACT public service arrangements.

THE CHAIR: Last year the Woden campus was deemed by you to be surplus to needs. We were informed that the campus only accommodated 125 students and eight staff. What has prompted the rethinking regarding the relocation of the Reid campus to Woden?

Ms Fitzharris: I might start off with that. In terms of the existing CIT site on Hindmarsh Drive, that was deemed surplus to needs a number of years ago. In relation to the recent announcement, the government has been looking at campus modernisation for CIT for a number of years, probably since 2012, some seven years ago. In that process, the CIT Woden campus was deemed surplus. There was a process for moving the existing courses there to other campuses. The government has been working with CIT over that period of time, reflecting the strategic vision of CIT and the board. There was the establishment of the board just prior to that as well.

The government has looked at working very closely with CIT about their centres of excellence and where they are located across the city, particularly in the main campuses of Bruce, Fyshwick and Reid. I think it is fair to say that the main campus is currently located in Reid. But as we have been talking with CIT about the government's intention to make a major investment in and renewal of that main campus, we have decided to look at two options for that, whether that be in Reid or in a Woden town centre site, which would be quite different from the current CIT Woden site, along Hindmarsh Drive.

THE CHAIR: What course outline will Woden potentially offer, and what are the projected enrolment and staff numbers there?

Ms Fitzharris: It is probably worth taking a step back and having CIT outline to you the strategic compass, the work that has been underway and the expertise and centres of excellence that currently exist across all the campuses as well as the changing nature of service delivery for both industry and new students.

Mr Sloan: The minister is right; this is part of our broader strategic framework that we have put in place and our *Evolving together* document. I am not sure whether you have all read it, but we have referred to it before. *Evolving together*, our strategic 2020 strategy paper, outlined nine key projects to make sure the CIT was going to be viable and relevant going into the future. That was everything from the courses we were offering to the skills that our staff have, the digital platforms which we will need to operate on, and the physical infrastructure which we operate out of.

The campus modernisation strategy was a key element of that, so there was no new thinking on that. With our Reid campus that we have at the moment, we have always thought that we do not need that big parcel of land, that in any development we could shrink into a smaller piece of land, which is what our initial planning on our campus modernisation was all about.

The government approached us with options about other pieces of land to consider, some of those being in Woden. As a board, we are delighted with the opportunity to explore other sites for CIT to operate on.

It will not be a simple case of just picking up Reid and plonking it in Woden town centre. It will be an opportunity for the board, and certainly the executive, to really explore what we are actually teaching, particularly across our Bruce campus and our Reid site at the moment, to see the best fit for Woden town centre to really capitalise on all the opportunities that the industry in Woden provides. That may mean some slight shifting of some courses out of some of our other centres to a potential Woden site if Woden is deemed the appropriate site by government at the time. It will not be vastly different to what we have in Reid now, I would think.

MS CODY: The Reid campus is ageing, parts of it.

Mr Sloan: Yes. The Reid campus has served CIT and the territory very well from its initial investment.

MS LE COUTEUR: How is the decision going to be made as to whether you go to Woden or not?

Ms Fitzharris: There is currently some work underway between Kareena Arthy's area in CMTEDD and CIT to develop terms of reference for the work that will determine the options between Reid and Woden. That is currently being developed and is very close to being finalised. Following that, there will be a process that weighs up those two options for government later this year.

MS LE COUTEUR: What criteria will you weigh them on?

Ms Fitzharris: That is exactly the work that is underway at the moment on the terms of reference for the consultancy. I do not know if Kareena wants to speak about that.

Ms Arthy: The minister is correct that we are working on the terms of reference at the moment. We are looking at what the criteria might be. There will be a range of economic drivers in terms of particularly the students and staff that will be going into Woden and what that means for local businesses and also around the long-term impact on transport, for example. There is also a range of environmental factors that we will be looking at, as well as social factors in terms of vibrancy for Woden. The specifics of those are still being worked out. We are literally probably a week or two away from having that agreed amongst the officials and with the CIT board before it gets presented to the minister for endorsement.

MS LE COUTEUR: With environmental factors, I was wondering what you might be considering there. Are you thinking that you might be moving into a contaminated site or are you looking at the greenhouse gas implications of transport? I am interested in what it would encompass.

Ms Arthy: Predominantly, it will be around contamination. We have now done quite a few of these investigations and there is quite often contamination. We need to make sure that, with the sites we are looking at, we are fully aware of potential

contamination issues. Anything to do with the design of the actual buildings and the environmental credentials of that would be part of a much later phase, once a decision has been made to move.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would you need to do these sorts of environmental investigations potentially only for moving to Woden, or do you have some issues with the existing Reid site?

Ms Fitzharris: We need to do it for any site.

Ms Arthy: Yes, it is part of our due diligence. When we do due diligence over any site that we are looking to work with, we do a whole lot of work around contamination and potential contamination site servicing—a whole heap of things. It is a fairly standard process.

MS LE COUTEUR: It was suggested yesterday, by one of the many people we talked to, that it would be possible that effectively CIT would become a tenant of UNSW in the redevelopment.

Ms Arthy: That was part of the discussion with the Chief Minister yesterday, as part of our investment. The Chief Minister was talking about the work that we are doing with UNSW about how CIT and UNSW can work together. Even if the main campus moves to Woden, it does not preclude the ability for CIT and Woden to still collaborate in some areas at Reid. But that is still to be worked through with both UNSW and CIT.

MS LE COUTEUR: What is the time frame for this decision to be made and then made public?

Ms Fitzharris: Late this year or very early next year.

MS CODY: Could I confirm that CIT is involved in coming up with the terms of reference for the study? It probably has a major impact on them.

Mr Sloan: We certainly can confirm that we are definitely part of the team that is putting together those terms of reference. Leanne Cover, our CEO, is a member of that committee.

Ms Fitzharris: That has been the case. With the proposal that the government is working on with UNSW over on the Reid site, the government has been clear from day one, when UNSW approached the government, that our primary consideration was to meet CIT's needs. There are huge opportunities from both options. CIT, in what it has done over the past few years, has really upped its game in terms of collaboration with the universities. It has really put CIT on the map for the universities here. In the higher education sector, if you look around the country, you do not often see such significant collaboration between a public TAFE and the university sector as what we have here.

CIT is very much on the minds of ANU, UC and UNSW in terms of collaboration, and genuine collaboration. That would be the case on the Reid site, in terms of both

services and courses that are being offered and the actual facility. The collaboration would continue with UNSW, and ANU and UC, irrespective of whether the main campus is redeveloped.

The opportunities that exist in the Woden town centre, with significant investment and growth in that region of Canberra—not just Woden but Weston Creek and Molonglo Valley—present an opportunity that the government feels we really should look at, in terms of making a major investment in renewing the main campus of CIT and where that should be located.

MS LE COUTEUR: It was good to hear that the CIT board would be involved in the decision. I must admit I assumed that you were going to be.

MS CODY: So did I, but I thought it was nice to double-check.

MS LE COUTEUR: Staff and students: will they also be involved in some way? They are the people most impacted.

Ms Fitzharris: There is a staff and student representative on the board.

MS LE COUTEUR: Two? One staff and one student?

Mr Sloan: The current board has one staff member and one student representative as permanent members of the CIT board. In terms of our broader thinking and consultation as we look to explore both sites, and certainly Reid, we have certainly been down this road, and we will do it for Woden as well. We will certainly be consulting broadly across a spectrum of staff, students and community groups.

MS LE COUTEUR: If there is a decision to move to Woden, would the students who were located in south Canberra basically tend to go there, or would Woden be the place for a particular area such as hospitality or something like that?

Ms Cover: As you know, we have a variety of campuses across Canberra. As the minister said earlier, we are really looking to try to promote those centres of excellence. You can imagine the infrastructure that goes into the world-class facilities, say, in the health link that we have with the University of Canberra, in terms of the allied health work at Bruce and the significant infrastructure that is there, which is absolutely world class.

If you think about hospitality and tourism, commercial kitchens, massage clinics, and trades at the Fyshwick campus, we tend to focus the quality, the infrastructure and the workforce around those centres of excellence. With the way that transport routes are developing across Canberra and the connections that the minister spoke about that we already have between ourselves and other higher education providers, and particularly our industry partners, those connections will continue to grow, regardless of location, for us.

Students tend to go to where the courses that they are particularly interested in are located. As you know, they are not generic courses. They are very technical courses with highly specialised equipment, and teachers to match. Students tend to go to

where the courses are offered.

MR COE: What is the future of the Tuggeranong campus?

Ms Cover: As you know, the Tuggeranong campus is one of our newer facilities at CIT. It has been a fantastic opportunity for us to engage with the community again—not just Tuggeranong residents, because students travel to where the courses are being offered.

The interesting thing about Tuggeranong is that it has given us great insight into the changing nature of work, in terms of the way teaching and learning happens with digital infrastructure. The Tuggeranong campus has certainly set us up to use a variety of technology, equipment and resources in that teaching and learning.

We will continue to work primarily with the Tuggeranong community on the courses that are of need in the community there. We have done a lot of work with local retail outlets in Tuggeranong to try to make sure that what we are offering in Tuggeranong reflects the immediate surrounding areas there. As I said earlier, students obviously will travel for those courses. It is well used.

MR COE: It will remain if Woden—

Ms Cover: Yes.

Mr Sloan: It certainly will remain. One of the great things about having the Tuggeranong campus is that it gives us flexibility across a different type of facility, and particularly with the federal government departments that are out there, about how we can leverage the training and development skills for those big departments that are housed out there.

We are always exploring ways to utilise the facility. One of those is potentially moving our company, CIT Solutions, and basing that in Tuggeranong as well, because of the training and skill development they do, particularly in the government space. That would allow them to be right on the doorstep of major employers in the region.

MR COE: What are the changes proposed for the Bruce campus?

Ms Fitzharris: Are there any particular ones that you are referencing?

MR COE: In terms of the offering there and where there is anything that is either related to the Woden move or independent?

Mr Sloan: We are not proposing any major changes to the Bruce campus at all. As we have said previously, we will use this opportunity when we are exploring if Woden is a viable option to see if parts of Bruce potentially could go to Woden. Similarly, that would mean the parts of Reid currently that could go to Bruce. We are not looking to downsize Bruce at all. In fact, we are looking at how do we grow and maintain some of the infrastructure.

Some of our newer courses are being invested in the Bruce campus. As we said, our

health facilities out there are world class. There has been a lot of investment in those. Moving the company potentially out of Bruce and putting it in Tuggeranong frees up space for us to grow our footprint in that health area and work closely with the hospitals in the vicinity.

Ms Fitzharris: Bruce really has a specialisation in health and the growing area of allied health and social services. Certainly at a national level one of the key areas where we see significant growth and training demand, particularly with NDIS and a variety of allied health and nursing courses, will be in the health and social services sector.

We expect that demand to grow and CIT is one of the most well-regarded providers of that in the region. Because they are geographically located really smack between the Calvary campus and the UC campus that trains nursing and allied health staff and the UC Hospital, that health precinct I expect is only going to grow. We certainly see demand starting to increase. As Leanne said, we have dedicated facilities there for training, nursing and allied health staff, and fitness. What else is there?

Ms Cover: We have a fantastic high-risk construction set-up at the Bruce campus and our numbers in that space continue to grow. Freeing up a little bit of space at the Bruce campus, it will be well utilised by the growing number of courses, particularly, as the minister said, in health, but high-risk areas, sport, fit and rec—the allied related health area—the new dental course and facilities in the health simulator buildings. So we see Bruce continuing to expand.

MS CODY: I note that the allied health and the health infrastructure at Bruce are quite state of the art, as is the high-risk area you have just spoken about.

Ms Fitzharris: It is great to see that there are student-led programs offered there as well. A couple of programs are offered to community groups and sport and fitness is offered to community groups as well.

Mr Sloan: It is also how we maximise our facilities we have there. While we have a big parcel of land, a lot of that land is contaminated and we cannot build on it. So it is about maximising our current infrastructure. And whether it is Reid or Woden it gives us the opportunity to make sure we are maximising every facility we have.

Ms Fitzharris: Overall CIT is growing and modernising. There was funding in the budget to grow and upgrade Fyshwick to provide more and better training space and a pretty significant investment in the digital backbone of CIT as a whole across all the campuses.

MR PETTERSSON: Can you give me an update on the women in trades program?

Ms Fitzharris: There is an element of CIT doing that, but the broader program is under Skills Canberra.

Ms Anderson: The women in trades grants program was funded in the 2017-18 budget. It is an election commitment over four years combined with our mature workers grants program that was allocated \$1 million. We launched the

program on 29 March last year. So far we have had two rounds of the grants program. In the first round we spent \$204,285 for three projects.

The first of those grants was won by the Australian Training Company which was allocated \$70,900. That project was to engage 15 Australian school-based apprentices. They commenced their training on 19 November last year and they have completed pre-employment training and commenced work placements. They were supported by mentors from the Australian Training Company, and the outcome of that program is that those young people are still in training.

MS CODY: What sorts of skill sets are they in training for?

Ms Anderson: They are doing a variety of different ASBAs across all different areas. We have a program for 100 ASBAs in government, so a good number of those young people would be working in those programs too.

The second program was with Master Builders Association and that program was awarded \$64,485. Seven women completed a four week pre-apprenticeship program. The youngest of those women was 14 years and the oldest was 44 years. They also completed their white card, asbestos awareness training and additional training in workplace health and safety and the use power tools.

Each of those participants had two work placements over the course of the program and they also received support from AusHealth and life coaches that were embedded in the pre-apprenticeship program. Outcomes are that those women were enabled to build their confidence to go on to further education and training and to develop networks.

The third project funded in round one was the National Electrical and Communications Association project that was funded for \$68,900. Some 32 women have participated across all cohorts of that program, which exceeded our target of 30 participants, and the fourth cohort is currently in training.

During that program the women also completed white card, asbestos awareness training, CPR and first aid and also received training towards some additional units of competency that can be recognised towards other qualifications in the electrotechnology industry. They also were able to access personal development support through AusHealth. The outcomes of that course are that one of the program graduates has commenced an apprenticeship with the National Electrical and Communications Association and another has commenced an apprenticeship with a business in Newcastle.

Round two of the women in trades grants program has just commenced. Five projects were selected for funding with the total amount of funding being approximately \$560,000. Those projects are expected to commence this month. The second round focused on improving advocacy, engagement and information sharing. One of the projects is a pre-apprenticeship program run by LJS Constructions, which will support 20 women to enter the construction industry. The remainder of the projects are looking at reducing the barriers faced by women wanting to enter trades.

Another project was supporting and linking tradeswomen, undertaking over 20 workshops at schools and community expos to encourage and support the attraction and retention of women in male-dominated trades. The National Electrical and Communications Association will engage with ACT colleges to increase the understanding of female students of the electrotechnology industry and provide them with try-a-trade-like activities.

The Canberra Institute of Technology was the recipient of a grant and they are looking at print and other social media advertising to attract and retain women in trades. The Unions ACT project is looking at the ongoing need for women in trades to understand their rights and workplace safety et cetera. That program will include four internships. That second round was also eligible for match funding under the skilling Australians fund.

MR COE: Can you please advise how you determine who is appropriate for the UC council?

Ms Fitzharris: The Chief Minister appoints some members of the UC council. There is a process that is done in consultation with the government around the skills required on the UC council. That has been an ongoing process with the UC council. I do not have the precise details in front of me about the more recent appointments and some upcoming ones but certainly it is the usual process of appointments to boards undertaken throughout the ACT government, using the diversity register and working with the UC council and the vice-chancellor about the skills required on the UC council.

MR COE: There was an appointment that you made—

Ms Fitzharris: The Chief Minister makes the appointments.

MR COE: There is an appointment that you made on the legislation register. What is the background to this one?

Ms Fitzharris: Which one are you referring to?

MR COE: The one made on 9 April this year. I will not say the person's name, because I do not want to tarnish that person. It says that it was made under section 11 of the UC act. It has your name, yet the legislation says that the Chief Minister makes these appointments.

Ms Fitzharris: That is right. Are you interested in the background to that process?

MR COE: Yes. How can you as minister make that appointment?

Ms Fitzharris: I make a recommendation to the Chief Minister, who brings it to cabinet, then I sign the instrument. I believe it is from the act itself, but I can take that question on notice and provide you the detail.

MR COE: Yes. All the other appointments are clearly, as per the legislation register, "Chief Minister, Andrew Barr" on 9 November—there were three last year. There

was another one on 19 January last year. Then this year, 9 April, it has “Meegan Fitzharris, Minister for Higher Education”. The legislation clearly says it is people appointed by the Chief Minister. I am wondering what the standing of that appointment is.

Ms Fitzharris: We will take that on notice and get back to the committee. We will check that.

MR COE: Sure. Has it been brought to your attention before?

Ms Fitzharris: No.

MR COE: In the event that the appointment does not stand, would that influence any decisions the council has made in the past two or three months?

Ms Fitzharris: I do not believe so and I believe that they are referred to the relevant standing committee as well, but I will check. The usual process has correspondence with the committee before an instrument would normally be signed. I believe that that occurred. That is my recollection.

MR COE: That is right but usually committees are not actually asked for approval; they are asked for comment.

Ms Fitzharris: That is right but there is a process there. There are a number of processes. If you are implying that the process is not correct at this point, we will certainly follow that up.

MR COE: I am not necessarily implying that but I am certainly asking that question.

Ms Fitzharris: We will certainly take that on notice.

MR COE: Is it your understanding that the Chief Minister has to make the appointments?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MR COE: Can you recall making this appointment?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MR COE: Did you sign it?

Ms Fitzharris: I remember signing. I will take these questions on notice and check that process for you.

MR COE: But you did sign it?

Ms Fitzharris: I will go back and make sure that it is correctly referred to on the legislation register. I do not have that in front of me at the moment.

MR COE: Sure. Does the advice come from UC, or from the directorate?

Ms Fitzharris: There is consultation with UC and advice from UC but the final process is done by the directorate and through cabinet.

THE CHAIR: Higher education was one of our main exports but in budget statements B you are predicting slower growth in the sector. Why is that?

Ms Fitzharris: There has actually been significant growth in the sector. In fact there is some recent ABS data, which we were able to showcase this morning, for the first time showing higher education exports from the ACT reach over \$1 billion. Could you reference the page number?

THE CHAIR: It is page 12, I believe.

Ms Fitzharris: In budget statements B?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: Page 12 is ease of dealing with Access Canberra.

THE CHAIR: Sorry—it is okay. How is the international education strategy operating, and what is the overall strategy in attracting international students?

Mr Balaretnaraja: The international education strategy is also linked to the study Canberra program. There are a number of broad areas of focus. There is the marketing and promoting of Canberra as a centre for high quality education and a destination of choice for students. There is enhancing student experience. There is broadly growing the international education sector through a collaborative approach with institutions. There are also goals to strengthen partnerships and collaborations locally, nationally and internationally.

THE CHAIR: How are we tracking in relation to other jurisdictions in terms of international students?

Mr Balaretnaraja: Obviously we are a smaller jurisdiction, but in terms of ratio we do quite well. Recently the ABS released some export data information. For the first time ever we have hit over a billion dollars in terms of tertiary education exports. As a percentage and as a ratio of our population to states of similar size like Tasmania, we are doing quite well.

THE CHAIR: How are we attracting more regional domestic students?

Mr Balaretnaraja: The study Canberra program is not just focused on international education; it is focused on new students to Canberra from the regions and from other states and territories. Let me give an example of how we go about doing that. Just last week we met collaboratively with UC, ANU and CIT to deliver a workshop to agents in Melbourne. The agents are the people who go out to work with students to promote Canberra as a destination. In working with those agents, one of the key objectives is destination marketing.

THE CHAIR: In terms of those agents in Melbourne, is there anything you track between students from other capital cities versus regional students, particularly, and how we are attracting them to Canberra?

Mr Balaretnaraja: In terms of the students themselves, we do qualitative surveys. It is very difficult to understand. We survey the students through a couple of programs that we have running. We have not got those results for this year yet. We also run a survey with the agents to understand the sort of impact that those workshops have: whether it influences the sorts of conversations they have with students and also, importantly, whether it affected their knowledge of Canberra. If you look at international students, a lot of them have not really heard about Canberra necessarily. A lot of it is branding Canberra as a great destination and a safe destination for students.

Ms Fitzharris: In terms of domestic and regional students, the universities themselves, CIT included, have their own programs as well. I have spoken at a number of events involving each of the institutions—for example, one recently with ANU—with high school careers advisers from around the country, particularly from regional areas. I have done that especially for ANU, as they have slightly shifted their requirements or their assessment of incoming students to ANU. That has been quite a significant shift from ANU's point of view in terms of their future enrolments. But it has been UC, CIT, ACU and UNSW as well, and certainly in terms of domestic and regional students.

We work very closely with all the institutions. Obviously, in some instances each of the universities might be trying to attract the same student. We work with them to maximise the understanding of Canberra: how safe it is; how many opportunities there can be to study here; and, particularly with the two large universities, how they look at providing accommodation on campus. We have worked very closely with the universities on facilitating their access to that accommodation on campus so they can provide those other support services and so that the universities could tell us where we could assist in marking Canberra as a destination, also understanding very much the student experience in the city and really highlighting what a great student experience it can be.

We are talking with the universities about job opportunities while you are studying and after you are studying, and supporting the universities with a variety of different programs to facilitate both employment while you are studying and employment after your study.

THE CHAIR: On your point on student accommodation, how do we compete in terms of living affordability?

Ms Fitzharris: ANU's objective is to have all their accommodation on campus. UC are similarly looking to provide all their accommodation on campus. That is a question for the universities, who are looking to house their students on campus. We have worked closely with them over a number of years to facilitate their development of on-campus accommodation.

MS CODY: I have some more questions for CIT. I was wondering if you could tell me what some of the emerging industries in the ACT are from a CIT perspective.

Ms Cover: We have spoken already this afternoon around health. That is definitely going to be a sector where we can see the trend data increase. There is the NDIS and jobs associated with the NDIS. The minister mentioned the community service sector; we are seeing strong demand there.

The minister also mentioned the national profile for services such as aged care and child care. Particularly, we are interested in the outcomes of the royal commission on aged care at the moment. We think that, depending on what the commission does, there are potentially mandating qualifications or changing some of the ratios in those service areas. We think that that will be a growth area as well.

We are also finding that the data side of things is growing, with digital technology coming into every job. It is not just interpreting the data; the storage of the data in terms of cybersecurity is a growth area for us as well.

We are seeing our numbers continue to grow in the renewable energy space, with solar and battery storage. Pleasingly, we are also seeing the traditional trades, such as electricians, continuing to have really strong growth.

The minister mentioned the strong economy in the ACT that is being driven by the services area. A lot of courses at CIT service the ACT service industry, with hospitality, tourism, accommodation facilities and retail in both the public and the private sector. This year we are also seeing growth in the media music area. The creative industries are growing in that space as well.

We are not really seeing any let-up across the board in terms of demand for the courses that CIT has. We are certainly seeing changes within the courses that we are offering in terms of digital disruption and employability skills. More and more employers are looking for their students to hit the ground running with teamwork, decision-making and problem-solving skills and be able to pick up those jobs very quickly. That is where CIT can offer that unique experience for students, because the training that we are doing is so connected to industry whilst the students are training.

I would say that there is growth in all sectors, but obviously there is health, with an ageing population and the NDIS growth. In allied health, with the large push nationally around wellbeing, we are seeing the allied health sector probably being the area of the highest increase, if you like, in recent years.

MS CODY: You mentioned digital stuff. Does that include different ways of study such as being able to access course outlines and course materials online via portals and that sort of thing?

Ms Cover: Yes. The minister mentioned that this year we have received additional funding to work on the backbone of our digital technology that underpins the ability for students to access online courses in different formats. It also assists staff in the delivery and development of those courses.

Because our courses are so practically based, as you know, there is always going to be a very strong element of a face-to-face, hands-on practical sort of nature that cannot be simulated through technology, but we are seeing more and more technology augment the training and learning opportunities that students are getting.

We are seeing the data in terms of the devices that students are using, both in the classroom and, more and more, in the workplace, to monitor, record and track every aspect of business. We are seeing that data come into play. Interestingly, we are also seeing the design industries change, with digital technology coming into those creative industry areas. I think every one of our courses will see more and more introduction of digital literacy and competency in that space.

MS CODY: Including through the trade courses?

Ms Cover: Yes. We have already seen in recent years the use of augmented technology or reality in terms of lenses that allow students to capture the real-time assessment tasks that they are doing. They load them up onto the e-learn system and their teacher can assess them as they load them up and complete their competencies in that space. We are seeing gamification used in the hospitality area at CIT, which is quite a new area for us. We are using technology to retain and engage students.

Learners of today are more and more au fait with technology and they are expecting the technology that they are using in their private lives to be able to be used and utilised both in their study and also in the workplace. So it is in all our courses. The trades have seen a shift in that space as well.

MS CODY: I have been lucky enough to come along to CIT on many occasions. What sorts of programs, incentives and support are on offer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and students?

Ms Cover: I am sure the committee will be very familiar with the very successful Yurauna Centre that CIT has. It works very closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community here in Canberra. It has some outstanding services in terms of not only cultural awareness but some arts courses. But it is particularly about cultural awareness. It is attracting students from all across Australia into that space.

We have a lot of students who are identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students but are not necessarily directly connected with the Yurauna Centre. Those students are dispersed through all courses and all areas. We have seen in recent years increases in the number of students who are engaging at higher level qualifications across the different courses.

In addition to the very specialised support services that the Yurauna Centre offers, it is not only cultural, safety and awareness inclusiveness, helping them around identity and support in terms of family connections and connections to community, all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, have specific access to counselling and referral services, literacy and numeracy support, and library learning services. The student association has a very big program focusing on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as well.

There is a range of scholarships that the institute offers. They come from various sources. They might come from other institutions for higher education pathways; they might come from community associations like the Rotary club.

This morning we met with our member of the elected body to talk about the ways that we can keep connecting up with students who are coming through from the school sector, to make sure that that transition from the school sector into courses like the ones we offer at CIT are seamless and we are supportive. We are looking for different ways to connect up and support those students and to make more visible and promote services that all students sometimes do not have the confidence to go looking for. We have been talking this morning about how we can make those services more visible and accessible to students.

MS CODY: What about other at-risk students? Do you have a program of support to assist students that are at risk?

Ms Cover: Yes. It is interesting. I was looking at the stats this morning. We just talked about our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which are 4.6 per cent of our total student population. Ten per cent of our students have identified with a disability as well, and we have also got highly specialised customised programs of support on individual basis in the classroom to support students who perhaps are needing some support with a disability. The Chief Minister's directorate touched on the programs we are doing around women and trades and trying to promote that. We have also got programs, as you know, for women returning to work.

We are connected up with other organisations across Canberra, other community groups or perhaps at the youth detention centres and the Alexander Maconochie Centre, looking at providing seamless transition pathways and support mechanisms so that students can engage or re-engage in education and be successful with those support services. In terms of wraparound services, CIT has outstanding services to support students no matter whether it is referring them to other agencies that are able to assist in the community or bringing those resources into the classroom to assist with literacy skills, numeracy skills, counselling skills, research and support skills, depending on what the course is. It is quite tailored to student needs.

THE CHAIR: Returning to my previous question, that page reference is page 12 of budget paper No 3. It says:

The higher education sector is expected to see continued growth ... but at a steadier pace ...

What is the reason for that?

Ms Arthy: I suspect that that is mainly due to the ANU openly talking about the fact that they are looking to cap their numbers. They have made a decision that they will not expand their international student market, that they are going to be looking at consolidating what they are doing and looking at their offerings.

MS LE COUTEUR: I may be asking too-detailed questions. This is basically going to be a continuation of a QoN that you signed off on to me in December last year

about client-based food courses at CIT. So stop me if it is getting too deep into the stew, or whatever analogy I should use, and I will ask them as more QoNs, but—

MR COE: Too deep—too soon?

MS LE COUTEUR: You can tune out for a bit, Mr Coe. You said that all students are instructed in the preparation of vegan and vegetarian meals. How much of their courses would that normally be? Is it going to be a quarter of an hour, a few lessons or—

Ms Cover: I will take that on notice in terms of specifics of the breakdown that you are looking for.

MS LE COUTEUR: You specifically said that as part of the learning outcomes for commercial cookery qualifications they have to have skills to do all special diets and Australian contemporary eating regimes. Would all of your cooking students be taking commercial cooking qualifications, or is that just a subset of them?

Ms Cover: There are specific subsets around the technical qualifications. The units of competency prescribe the actual course requirements. The training packages—the equivalent of the curriculum in the VET sector—have a number of units of competency that describe what competency the student must have at the completion of the course. They describe the sort of environment that those assessments need to be made under. It is at that level of detail that some of the information you are asking about would be found, specifically relating to qualifications.

MS LE COUTEUR: Basically, though, this is an Australia-wide curriculum? You deliver someone else's curriculum; you do not set up your own?

Ms Cover: The training packages that are made up of these units of competency that the students get assessed against are developed by industry. Then there is a national body that sits through a ministerial council sort of mechanism that endorses those training packages. Then TAFEs across Australia, and other registered training organisations in both the public and the private sector, register and have an accreditation to run those particular courses. The courses are developed and prescribed by industry. That way we are meeting what industry needs. The courses are the same. If you like, they are a national curriculum.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is what I have worked out. Do you do any courses that are not the national industry courses? In the past, I know, CIT Solutions has done all manner of things.

Ms Cover: Yes. CIT Solutions has a very strong program of accredited courses. But we also have around 6,000 students every year doing non-accredited courses that are not government funded; they are fee for service that the individual pays for. They might be pure recreation courses. They might be how to use your camera more effectively or update your IT skills for doing PowerPoint presentations or some sort of presentation for a slide show. They also could be courses around the home in building and construction that do not require accreditation, licensing and full qualifications. Often the students have a taster within the CIT Solutions environment, trying the

course, and then that engages them. Often the students will then come into the more formal environment as well. So there is a mixture of unaccredited courses.

MS LE COUTEUR: In the cooking part of the unaccredited courses, do you offer any that specialise in plant-based foods or at least have a reasonable component of them?

Ms Fitzharris: You may be asking whether there is a nationally accredited course in either vegetarian or vegan or plant-based foods.

MS LE COUTEUR: That would be great, yes.

Ms Cover: I will take that on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: Great, thank you.

Ms Fitzharris: I do not know whether there is. One of the features of this system is that the qualification development for accredited courses is cumbersome and probably could be sped up. The recent federal review said that, and I would agree. If there is not, that might be something worth pursuing at the national level.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think there is not. The question you signed off to me said that there are no specific subjects in training packages that CIT work on that are focused specifically on vegan or vegetarian meals; however, you can do it in other things. So I think the answer must be no. Hopefully that might change in the future.

MR PETTERSSON: I have a question about enrolment numbers and completion rates. Enrolments seemingly stay at the current level; the completion rates go down. Why is that?

Ms Cover: Enrolments, students and completion rates do vary, as you have indicated there. We are finding in terms of the VET sector that, although at CIT our student numbers are increasing, the training packages that we just spoke about in terms of the national curriculum that is dictated by industry is changing constantly. We are seeing shorter courses, which reflect the needs of industry to have different skill mixes and shorter courses in terms of the amount of time that students are taking to do some courses; other courses a little bit longer. That is the hours bit that is changing. You will know that a lot of our students, the majority of our students, are part-time students. They already have jobs, so they are looking for shorter courses because they have other work as well.

In terms of completions, we tend to find that it is a bit of a trade-off. The lower the unemployment is, the less people are studying at any particular time, in terms of completing their courses. That does also impact there.

We are working closely and in different ways with the industry. If I can use cyber as an example, we are finding now that students are able to gain work with our partners that are sponsoring our students in the workplace to do assessment on the job. They may not complete the courses in the traditional way that they used to. Perhaps they came in and did a course with us for 18 weeks or a year and then went into

employment. We are finding now that having completed a few modules students may go into the industry and work and then come back, and in and out of that study routine as well. That is what is impacting on some of that completion data that you are seeing there.

MR PETTERSSON: In terms of the accountability indicators, you seem to be doing quite well this year. You have exceeded your expectations. Why is it that the 2019-20 targets are the same as the 2018-19 targets if you have done such a good job?

Ms Cover: I think what you are referring to there are the satisfaction rates, for instance, in terms of those outstanding results. I draw your attention in particular to the employer satisfaction, which is the second highest in the country behind Western Australia, which I would argue has quite specialised industry. I think we are doing very well in that space.

That reflects the work that we are putting into the Australian apprenticeship program with those completions and the satisfaction of employers. The reason why we have not adjusted those is because it is a national dataset that is used to compare states and territories and institutions across Australia. We are trying to keep it within the range of comparison year on year. It is pretty high lifting already, in terms of the outcomes there, and we think the targets are right. We are really pleased to see that we have exceeded them. We do look at them every year to see whether we need to increase them. We also look at the national data in that space.

MR PETTERSSON: Are the targets actually derived from a national standard?

Ms Cover: No. It is a national currency, if you like, in terms of using benchmarking data for the sector on student satisfaction and employment.

MR PETTERSSON: I am still a bit confused.

Ms Cover: I draw your attention to note 3 on page 161, in terms of the datasets that are there.

MR PETTERSSON: Why don't we set the targets in ACT budget papers higher?

Ms Cover: We try to reflect a stretch, if we can, but we also try to look at a target that is within that stretch factor. If we see year on year exceeding that level, we do look to try to recalibrate that target. But we think that these targets are appropriate for where the sector is at and where our directions are heading in that space.

Ms Fitzharris: What you are saying is that CIT is doing so well that it should—

MR PETTERSSON: How much better can it do?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. It is an “aim high” sort of issue.

MR COE: What are the feedback mechanisms for UC and CIT to feed into the Education Directorate about how students are coming out of year 12 and whether they are ready for UC and CIT courses?

Ms Fitzharris: Do you mean for higher education, not just UC or CIT? Do you mean any higher education?

MR COE: I am using CIT because they are within government control, but more broadly if need be.

Ms Cover: Certainly, from CIT's perspective, there are a number of mechanisms. One of the pilots that we have had funded this year from government is an industry pathways course that we are doing within the schools sector. That is to give greater exposure to students around the transition to vocational education and training courses.

If you mean the actual assessment, when our students come into CIT courses they undertake a literacy and numeracy assessment. We work really closely to counsel students around alignment of interest and capability in skills of courses. Is that what you mean?

MR COE: Yes, it is particularly about that aspect. If, for instance, there are trends, especially at university level but also at CIT, that the level of maths is not really up to standard or the level of English could be better et cetera, how does that feed into the college system so that you can actually improve it in the future?

Ms Cover: There are a couple more things to add in that space. Our careers advisers work very closely with the schools careers advisers. That is one mechanism. There is an exchange of feedback in that space. It should be remembered that the vocational education and training qualification requirements in the schools sector are the same as they are in CIT. They are getting the same feedback from industry, as they shape those courses, on whether they need to intensify literacy, numeracy, digital skills et cetera.

MR COE: Is that testing that you are doing being fed into the directorate as well—the results?

Ms Cover: No, it is to assess the suitability for match to the CIT courses.

MR COE: What about at UC? Is there a formal way that UC can actually give advice to the Education Directorate about the standard of education that ACT graduates have?

Ms Fitzharris: The Education Directorate would be best placed to answer that specific question next week. Certainly, I know that there is some work under future of education around the pathways to higher education. That is twofold: preparing students for education beyond the schooling system and post-secondary education awareness amongst students. That is a particular issue around VET because VET has a presence in schools in a much more extensive way than the universities tend to. There is some work done there. But that is probably a great question for the Education Directorate next week.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the ministers and officials who have appeared today. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the

proof transcript of today's hearing when it is available. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice, could you please get those answers to the committee support office within five working days of receipt of the uncorrected proof? If members wish to lodge questions on notice, please get those to the committee support office within five working days of the hearing, day one being the next working day after the hearing. The committee's hearing today is now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 5.32 pm.