



**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

FRIDAY, 21 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.

APPEARANCES

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Privilege statement

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.30 am.

Appearances:

Steel, Mr Chris, Minister for City Services, Minister for Community Services and Facilities, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Roads

Transport Canberra and City Services

Playford, Ms Alison, Acting Director-General

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

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

Haraldson, Mr Anthony, Acting Executive Branch Manager, ACT NoWaste, City Services

Alegria, Mr Stephen, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation, City Services

Little, Ms Vanessa, Executive Branch Manager, Libraries ACT, City Services

Marshall, Mr Ken, Executive Branch Manager, Roads ACT, City Services

Davidson, Mr Geoffrey, Executive Branch Manager, Place Coordination and Planning, City Services

Smith, Mr Jeremy, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery, Transport Canberra

ACT Public Cemeteries Authority

Bartos, Mr Stephen, Chair

THE CHAIR: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the sixth day of public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2019-2020. The proceedings today will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate in relation to budget statements H, the ACT Audit Office and the ACT Ombudsman.

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, could I also ask you to familiarise yourself with the privilege statement and confirm that you have read and understand the implications of the privilege statement.

As we are not accepting statements, we will proceed straight to questions this morning. Minister, table 37 on page 65 shows levels of matters by unsatisfied clients being resolved at 100 per cent. Who determines the resolved achievement results?

Mr Steel: Are you referring to budget statements H?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Steel: I will ask Jim Corrigan to provide some further information about that.

Mr Corrigan: The cemeteries authority undertake a survey every year, checking the range of questions asked about the services they offer in interments. That is how the results are reported back to us.

Mr Bartos: We provide an opportunity for all users of the services of the cemetery to fill in a survey and return it. If any matters are raised that are of concern, those are followed up. There is actually a fairly low rate of expressions of concern because people do not tend to do that at a time of bereavement. Nonetheless, anything that is raised is taken very seriously. There is an opportunity, if people have concerns, to raise it with staff over the counter. Again, that is extraordinarily rare, and I do not think it falls into this area for this reporting period.

THE CHAIR: How many responses do you generally receive?

Mr Bartos: I will have to take the exact number on notice. We will get back to you.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Does this mean that all clients are completely happy with services and that all matters are resolved?

Mr Bartos: Yes. It means that anything that has been raised as a problem has been followed up and resolved to the satisfaction of the client.

THE CHAIR: Does this include clients whose ashes have been lost?

Mr Bartos: It does not include clients whose ashes have been lost because no ashes have been lost by the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority. That has not ever been a complaint raised with the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority.

THE CHAIR: How does the declared four years supply chain of sites compare with industry standards?

Mr Bartos: It is in line with other cemeteries around the country. The ACT Public Cemeteries Authority is slightly different from the other major metropolitan cemeteries around the country in that it does not have a crematorium, therefore the pipeline is slightly different. Ours is only for burials, so it is not directly comparable but it is very much in line with industry standards. The way we know this is through the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority being a member of the Australasian Cemeteries and Crematoria Association. We keep on top of industry statistics through that industry body.

MS LE COUTEUR: On page 63 you have a list of risks. The bottom risk refers to inconsistency between the amounts of perpetual care trust funds being set aside and the amounts available. Can you talk some more about this risk?

Mr Bartos: Yes. The perpetual care trust provides for the maintenance of the cemeteries in perpetuity. The issue is that perpetuity, on which we have received advice, actually does mean forever, and it is very hard to make provision for. Making provision for an infinite period of time is mathematically not possible. The perpetual care trust arrangements try as best as possible to match up the maintenance

requirements with the actual costs of maintenance. The very nature of that provisioning means that it may not always be possible. That is at the heart of why that will always be a risk under the current perpetuity arrangements.

MS LE COUTEUR: Has the current low interest environment impacted on that, and the potential to get down to even a zero or negative interest rate?

Mr Bartos: No, in the sense that the way the moneys in the perpetual care trust works is that money goes in and then comes out to pay for the maintenance. It is that flow of cash between moneys received by the cemetery, as people pay their fees for their burials, and the maintenance requirement that is the biggest driver. Investments are a very small component of what drives that.

MRS JONES: I am looking at page 64 of BP H. What is the reason for the increase in staffing in 2019-20 on the back of a similar increase last year?

Mr Bartos: It is simply volume of business. The major bit of work that the cemeteries do is the maintenance of the cemeteries, there is ongoing work involved with burials. The volume of burials is not growing, but you would understand that the more sites are used, the more maintenance is needed. Essentially, you just expand the number of gravesites that need to be maintained every year.

MRS JONES: How many are we expanding by each year if the number is fairly steady?

Mr Bartos: Again, I will have to take the precise number on notice.

MRS JONES: Do you have a rough idea?

Mr Bartos: Yes; it is of the order of 600 to 700.

MRS JONES: Maybe you could take on notice what the levels of the new staff are. Also, it is probably not unexpected, but there is a much higher level of employment of men than women. I think it is 14 men to three women. Are any strategies deployed to expand the gender balance, for want of a better term?

Mr Bartos: It is something that cemetery staff do take into account when they are seeking to employ people. The reason for that is that the bulk of the staff are essentially for grounds maintenance, gardening, the operation of backhoes and so on.

MRS JONES: There are women who would like to work in that area sometimes.

Mr Bartos: There are. It is just that the pool of people they are drawing from has a lower proportion of women. Having said that, it is desirable, where possible, to seek to employ women in those areas of work.

MRS JONES: It seems that the women employed are at ASO4 to ASO6 level positions, and not entry or senior levels. That is another point I would not mind a bit of thought or explanation about.

Mr Bartos: At the senior level, it is partly because there are just so few positions. At the entry level, there is a sense in which at the ASO entry level, that ASO4 kind of level, the ground staff entry level is those staff employed in those kinds of maintenance and gardening jobs. I think, though, that is a fair point.

MRS JONES: It is something to consider.

Mr Bartos: It is probably something where greater effort to try to specifically attract people to that may well be desirable.

MRS JONES: Yes, to have a mix of people.

Mr Bartos: Yes.

MRS JONES: I wonder whether you might consider some plans to provide opportunities specifically to have more women in that workforce. Dot point six on page 66 says:

The Authority continues to adopt Human Resource Management practices in line with the ACT Public Service to provide a productive and satisfying work environment.

Is there anything that you have done to change or improve the satisfying nature of the employment that you offer?

Mr Bartos: A number of things. In particular, improving the training and development made available to staff, which is seen as fairly important. Another thing—this was a source of an additional but only on rotation basis female staff member—was making opportunities available in the authority for graduates to rotate through. The authority had not in the past been attracting graduates to come to the authority, but we, I am pleased to say, have. That is a plus.

There are other things in terms of standard workplace morale-boosting activities, such as staff meetings, staff social functions and so on. The overall environment is one where, as far as we can tell in looking at it from a board perspective, the staff are extremely happy. They like working in the authority.

At present, we have an issue with the CEO being on sick leave. This is, in any organisation—

MRS JONES: It is not something you can really help.

Mr Bartos: It is not something you can help, but it is also something which staff find a bit unsettling when their CEO is away on sick leave. I venture to say that right at this present moment staff are more unsettled than usual, but that is for reasons totally outside the authority's control.

MR PETTERSSON: I have a question about the tree planting initiative in the budget. That 17,000 trees is a lot of trees. How will the government prioritise which areas receive those trees?

Mr Steel: The ACT government is really stepping up the number of trees that we are going to be planting over the coming years. I would like to take the opportunity to table the *Better suburbs: making progress 2019-20* report. I refer you to page 3 of that document, which provides a graph of the projected tree planting increases under the four-year program announced in the budget.

This will provide a long-term planting program in the ACT to renew and enhance our tree canopy. It will provide our public nursery in Yarralumla with a tree propagation program. They will be given significant lead-in time to be able to propagate the trees.

We are looking at this from a climate change perspective, in terms of supporting our adaptation to climate change, because we know that it is much cooler in areas where there is a significant tree canopy. Areas in Canberra that are more at risk as a result of climate change will be part of that focus. That will include the new areas of Gungahlin and Molonglo, I would imagine, as well as areas where the trees have come to the end of their life and need to be replaced.

This is a very significant increase in the number of trees that we are planting year on year. It does not include the trees that are being planted by the Suburban Land Agency; they also plant a significant number of trees in the new suburbs when they are established; and we are planting trees alongside other capital works projects as well; that is not included within the 17,000.

MR PETTERSSON: One of the very common questions I get from constituents is: how do we get more trees in Gungahlin? This is a great step towards it. If constituents of mine want to see trees planted in certain locations, is there a mechanism for them to have that considered?

Mr Steel: Yes, but we will be taking a strategic approach to the tree planting program. As part of the funding that has been delivered in the budget, we will be developing an urban forest strategy, and this will set the strategic pathway for tree planting across Canberra. It will set out a pathway to meet new canopy targets as well as looking at what tree species we need to be planting to make sure that we are planting trees that can thrive in a much hotter and drier climate.

We recently had the benefit of having Ian Shears from the City of Melbourne come to visit Canberra and talk to Transport Canberra and City Services staff about their urban forest strategy and the development of that document and what we can learn from them. They have far fewer trees and far fewer people in the City of Melbourne than we do, but we can learn a lot from them and other jurisdictions about how to better maintain and enhance our tree canopy. That will be part of that urban forest strategy work.

MS LE COUTEUR: You mentioned a tree canopy target. Can I confirm what that is?

Mr Steel: We have not established a target yet, but this process will allow us to set up a pathway to meet a target. In the better suburbs work, there was a recommendation for a target of 30 per cent by 2030, which is very ambitious. We will consider that in looking at a target. I am also mindful that Minister Rattenbury is working on the

living infrastructure plan, which we are hoping will come out before we go on with the work with the urban forest strategy.

MRS JONES: Urban forest: what is the definition of that term, as you use it?

Mr Steel: The team from TCCS might talk a bit about that. It does not refer to the trees that are in our nature reserves; it is really the street trees, the canopy in our parks that we all benefit from in our immediate neighbourhood.

Mr Alegria: The minister is correct. We do not include the nature reserve trees. In essence the urban forest consists of all of the trees in our public realm but also trees in the private realm as well, because they all contribute to our canopy and have a role to play.

MRS JONES: That is fantastic. Just to define that term as it is being used is good. You talked about species that last longer in drier climates. I think lots of people in Canberra will welcome that, because we have all watched new trees not cope. But is there the possibility of a new type of street tree in an older suburb? As you say, they typically had eucalyptus, which had their 30-year life, and then we watched the branches all fall off onto our hedges and our cars. What is the plan to change that?

Mr Alegria: We want to work with communities. As part of this tree-planting program, I am really excited that we will get out there and involve the community in the planting. We have got to work through what that looks like, because there are some risks around that as well that we will need to manage. That will be around the species selection as well. If there is a street where all the trees have come to the end of their life, do we retain the existing species or do we look at bringing in another species?

We have been working through the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate and with the ANU to get advice around what species will best suit Canberra's climate for the decades to come. We are actually looking at places like Wagga Wagga and how they have managed, because they have the climate of Canberra in the future, or Canberra will have the climate of Wagga Wagga in the future, so to speak. That might mean that we see some new species in Canberra that we perhaps have not seen in our streets before, one of those being the lemon scented gum, which apparently meets—

MRS JONES: That is quite hardy.

Mr Steel: It is quite hardy and meets a lot of the criteria that we would like to see in trees. It is endemic to Victoria and there are a large number in their urban forest. We are looking at those sorts of things and getting the expert advice, and we will take that forward as part of the strategy.

MRS JONES: Finally, with the 17,000, my understanding from memory from being on this committee before and so on is that around 6,000 a year were being replaced, street trees and that sort of thing. Is that the number that has increased to 17,000, or is this on top of that, or—

Mr Steel: The graph shows that it was just hovering around 1,000 for the tree-planting program per year. So this is a very significant increase and—

MRS JONES: Yes. I do not think 1,000 would go very far, and 17,000 in fact might still only do a bit. It is good; it is a big change.

Mr Steel: It is the largest tree planting program this century for renewing and enhancing our urban canopy. But, as I said, it does not take into account the trees the SLA have planted: 44,000, I understand, since around the year 2000.

MRS JONES: In the new areas.

Mr Steel: In new areas, as well as trees planted by Parks or—I was just out with Minister Gentleman—the ParkCare groups have just planted 50,000 trees around Barrer Hill. It is a significant number of trees but they were planted in a different environment.

MRS JONES: And there is some stuff being done below Tharwa, is there not, as well? Below Tharwa there is another forest being planted basically.

Mr Steel: Yes, and then we have got our major projects. Mr Pettersson and I were out at Horse Park Drive for the launch of the duplication. We are planting 400 trees as part of that project. That is not included within that.

MRS JONES: From memory, before your time and possibly before my time, the changes to the tree planting, which were more significant under Jon Stanhope many years ago, meant that there was quite a dip for a long time. It is very welcome to see it starting to go up again.

MS LAWDER: In the budget it talks about funding more trees and delivering more bins at local shops. What is the average cost per tree that you are expecting?

Mr Steel: I will pass on to Stephen Alegria. There will probably be an average cost but certainly we need to do the work around what trees we need to plant as part of a strategic approach. Depending on both the species of the tree and what maturity level they are at, the costs will differ.

Mr Alegria: That is exactly right. Obviously for the purpose of building a business case we have made some estimates about costs. We have estimated around \$325 per tree for a tree that is relatively well established, is planted under a contract arrangement and has a period of maintenance afterwards, right down to around about \$30 for some trees that we will use community volunteers to plant, which will generally be a smaller tree and probably planted in the urban open space area rather than on nature strips. We have a mix of both those categories in the budget and we are confident that that will allow us to deliver the 17,000.

MS LAWDER: Just to clarify, you said that it will not include the trees for new suburbs, which is under the SLA, is that correct?

Mr Steel: That is right. However, the trees may be planted in new suburbs as well. So

it might be in addition to what the SLA plants. But of course we would encourage them to plant more trees too.

MS LAWDER: I think you also reflected on the fact that you have not necessarily determined the exact species. Are you considering any mixture of deciduous versus native? What is the plan there?

MR STEEL: Where we are replacing trees that have come to the end of their life in an existing street where there is already a street tree, we potentially want to plant the same species. We will need to make sure, through Yarralumla Nursery, that there is a variety of different stock available as part of the tree planting program. Where we are going into planting in a new area where there is not an existing species, we may look at bringing in a brand-new species altogether. We will be getting species selection advice from experts like Cris Brack from the ANU, who has been doing a lot of work around this.

MS LAWDER: Is that a firm principle, like with like, or will it vary?

Mr Steel: We will work with communities. We want to work with communities to understand what they would like to see in their own street. It might differ. It might be a native species—a eucalypt, for example, or a casuarina—or it might be that we go and look at a deciduous species. Some of the deciduous species obviously provide not only shade during summer but also sun during winter, which is great. But also some of the non-native species, often some of the weed species, will grow quite well in Canberra in our hotter and drier climate. Things like the Chinese pistachio, for example, grow really well in Canberra. We have got to take all of that into account, and the location of those. If you are going to plant a weed-like species, you do not want to have it too close to a nature reserve and those sorts of things. So there is a lot of complexity to this program. That is why, through the Urban Forest Strategy, we want to take a strategic approach to it and get the best advice we can.

MS LAWDER: On the same sort of basis on which we asked about the number of trees, how many bins are you expecting? Will they mostly be recycling and waste, or just the round bins that collect everything?

Mr Steel: There will be 150 new bins: 50 will be garbage bins and there will be 100 recycling bins. Curtin, for example, which is close to where I live, is a group centre that has garbage bins but does not have any recycling bins, so we will be looking at those.

MR PETTERSSON: It is the same in Gungahlin.

Mr Steel: Yes, there are quite a few group centres around Canberra that are in a similar situation. We will make sure that there are recycling bins available in those locations and hopefully increase the level of recycling we are seeing in the community.

THE CHAIR: On this page 3 that you have referred us to here, \$7.5 million is referenced. It also says that there is a new targeted compliance team. Is that included in the \$7.5 million or is that additional?

Mr Steel: That is a separate measure in the budget, yes.

THE CHAIR: Where can I find both of those measures in the budget papers? I note that the measure Ms Lawder just referenced was \$600,000. It was not \$7.5 million.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think it is at page 128 in the printed version of BP3. It is the top one.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: I had a few more questions on the trees part. You make reference to a new targeted compliance team with six dedicated resources. Can I confirm this, because there is a compliance team with six dedicated resources mentioned in a few places in the budget documents, in the glossy—

MRS JONES: They are not glossy, actually. They are matte.

MS LE COUTEUR: The document does not have a technical term like BP3; so I am trying to find the correct technical term. Are they the same six people all the way through? At first I thought, “Wow, we have six people looking after the trees,” but then I found there are a lot of references to six people. Is it the same six people?

Mr Steel: Yes, this is the new compliance team, which I think is on page 129 of the printed budget paper 3, the measure there for the new compliance team. They will be in addition to domestic animal services staff, which already has a compliance focus and in addition to the licensing compliance team within TCCS that, I guess, handles higher level investigations as well.

They will be focusing on the pieces of legislation that city services has responsibility for, including the Domestic Animals Act, the Public Unleashed Land Act, Tree Protection Act compliance and the Litter Act. They will have a remit across all of those, mainly focusing on some of the lower level offences there so the rest of the licensing compliance team can focus on the higher level offences. They will be going out and educating the community. They will then be issuing warnings. Then they will be going out where necessary and issuing infringement notices as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: You talked about Yarralumla nursery having to gear up because unfortunately we are—

MRS JONES: Pretty low on stock.

MS LE COUTEUR: Very low at present. It is 17,000 over four years. Are you doing this in a way that it gets up to 8,500, nearly 9,000, by year four? Are you doing this gear-up so it can continue at that rate into the future?

Mr Steel: We would like to see an ongoing tree planting program. We know that as a result of plantings that occurred several decades ago there is sort of a wave of trees that is coming to the end of its life. We need to plant a lot more trees just to maintain the tree canopy, but we also want to enhance the tree canopy.

MS LE COUTEUR: Does the tree planting initiative include ongoing funding for care and maintenance and community consultation to tell the community how they can look after their favourite tree?

Mr Steel: Yes, we want to encourage the community to get involved and really care about the trees that are in their street. It may be just giving them a drink of water in summer. So we will be putting some messaging out about that at certain times of the year as well. It will include engagement with the community to be involved in the tree planting exercises. It will include the development of the urban forest strategy, which will include community engagement in the development of that strategy over the next 12 months as well. I will pass over to Jim Corrigan and Stephen Alegria to talk a little more about the community engagement.

Mr Alegria: Yes, obviously we recognise that it is a really important part of a successful program. For example, if we do not have residents supportive of a tree on their nature strip, obviously it is very difficult to have it be successful. We know there is a lot of community interest and a lot of commitment to the urban forest out there. We are going to leverage on that and use our champions in the community.

We know there are people who probably do not have a great understanding of the value of an urban forest and a tree. Obviously we want to take steps to try to bring them into the fold as well. That is going to be a focus in the coming year as we move towards the actual on-ground works the following financial year.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will you do anything to make it easier for people who want to plant trees to plant trees? I get a continual small stream of inquiries from people saying, “I live reasonably close to this bit of utterly barren-looking public land. For various reasons I would like to plant something there but there does not appear to be a methodology to do this.”

Mr Steel: I think that is something we can consider under the urban forest strategy—how to work with community. I know that there are regulations and some of those regulations are there for good reason because of the utilities that often exist underneath. We want to make sure that when trees are planted they are planted properly. As part of the strategy, we will draw on the piece of work that is being done through the ANU to make sure that when trees are planted, they have enough room for the roots to develop to make sure that we get the benefit.

MRS JONES: That they are stable.

Mr Steel: That they are stable, but that we actually get the maximum benefit out of the tree and that it grows to its full potential. That is why the selection is so important, to make sure that we are selecting trees for the right areas of the city so that we are not getting large tree roots in an area where there is not enough room for the tree to grow.

I am happy to consider those ideas as part of that and work with the community, for the government and the community to work together to actually decide, “Is there a space where we can be planting more trees?” I think that is certainly going to be part of that urban forest strategy discussion.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can you take on notice the cost per tree planted and a breakdown of what post-costs are? I assume you do not have it—

Mr Steel: Per tree planted?

MS LE COUTEUR: Per tree planted, and a breakdown of what—

MRS JONES: As part of the 17,000.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, as part of the 17,000, and a breakdown of what those costs are.

Mr Steel: I think we answered that earlier, sorry.

MS LE COUTEUR: But could you do the breakdown of what is in it?

MRS JONES: Is included.

Mr Steel: In terms of maintenance and so forth?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, how much is—

THE CHAIR: The cost of the tree and the planting and when they are growing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, how much is—

MRS JONES: Nursery.

MS LE COUTEUR: Nursery, yes—all those in the breakdown.

MS LAWDER: Going back to the six people per area, how are they allocated? With the staff, the six additional rangers, is that one per area and one centrally? Where do they work and how will they work?

Mr Steel: Firstly, this is a new team. With the work they are doing, we have been going through the recruitment and training process for the staff. They will be very visible in the community from this month. But it is a new team, and the methodology for compliance, as part of this pilot, is something that we will learn from. No doubt that will change over time regarding how we use the team to undertake the compliance activities in a way that is effective. I will pass over to Stephen Alegria to give a little more background on what the initial thinking is.

Mr Alegria: Thank you, minister. You are exactly right. It is a new team. However, because it is being added to an existing experienced team of city rangers, there are a couple of key points to make. We will make sure that the newer staff are mentored. They will be paired up with a more experienced person, particularly in the first month or two, to make sure that they are on top of things. We will have focus areas each month, a theme or a target for what kinds of compliance we might look at.

As the minister mentioned, we have a whole range of legislation that we can enforce,

so we will be targeting that around, for example, seasonal aspects. In spring, the level of dog walking will increase, potentially, so we may look at increasing our focus on that aspect.

In terms of the locations, again we are targeted. We have reasonably good data about where there are hotspots for illegal dumping, uncontrolled dogs, any of those kinds of issues. We know that, if we put our resources into a particular area, we will get good value for money in terms of being able to engage with a large number of people. As we build our intelligence and our data, we can target further to make sure that we are targeting the areas where there is the most need. They are the kinds of principles that we have, going forward.

MS LAWDER: When you recruited, what skills were you looking for when you filled those positions?

Mr Alegria: The recruitment was a really interesting process because rather than doing the traditional process where we seek applications and go through an interview, with every single person who applied—they were all internal people—they were put through a three-day training course, which served to assess their skills, abilities and interest, as well as their aptitude for the work. It also allowed them to get a sense of what the job might be. That was a really good exercise because every one of those people, even if they were not successful, is now back in our depots with those skills. That can add to the value of the compliance regime.

In terms of the ones who were successful, they were the ones who had to have the really good people skills. Ultimately, these are not police officer-type people. They are very much educators, and the first port of call. Most of the time that is the approach that is the most effective: letting people know what the rules are so that they can obey them. They need people skills, and obviously they need to have reasonable literacy skills. They need to have the ability to understand and learn quickly because there is a lot of legislation and a lot of requirements for them to learn. We put all of that into the mix and we think we have achieved a great result. In fact one further initiative is that we will allow one of those roles to be rotated. We will have a couple of months with one person; then a new person can come in. We are trying to build the capacity of the entire workforce in this regard.

As you would be aware, the illegal dumping, for example, impacts on all of the city services workers out there who have to clean it up. They have a really strong vested interest in preventing that from happening. There is a really strong appetite out there in the workforce to assist with the compliance and prevent the problems so that they do not have to be out there cleaning it up.

MRS JONES: A better way of doing things, yes.

MS LAWDER: With the urban forest, have you looked at the urban food forest? Are you considering anything associated with that? I know that in some particular areas, residents—I hope I am not getting them in trouble—have planted fruit trees on green space near their homes. How does the directorate look at that?

Mr Steel: We have not specifically considered that at the moment. We need to work

that out. The other suggestion that has been made is that we should look at bee corridors, as part of this. We have to be clear about what the scope is, but we are not at that point yet. There is some fantastic work being done on introducing bee corridors. The fruit trees may have some implications in terms of maintenance, if they are dropping fruit, and the need for regular—

MS LAWDER: I think in those areas the residents are trying to prune them, so that they get the benefit of the fruit.

Mr Steel: Yes. There are probably already some fruit species around that we could talk about.

Mr Alegria: As a principle, you are right. If the community are prepared to put more of their own energy into helping us to maintain things, that makes things easier. With the species selection, again, a tree has many benefits, as you know. Food production may be an additional benefit, but the primary driver that we have at the moment is the canopy cover, mitigating climate change impacts and, of course, the general amenity of the city.

Anything is possible and we are open to community feedback, as the minister said. We have an “adopt a park” initiative that is about to start in the new financial year, which will give us a few more resources with which to engage the community, leverage their energy and help us to support all of our ParkCare and urban Landcare groups. We are building up. Through better suburbs, we have heard from people who want to be engaged. We have deliberately put more of a focus internally on supporting that community engagement, because obviously it is of benefit to the community and to us as land managers.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will you be looking at the past? If you go back to the middle of the last century, the federal government employed people to help to rear their own fruit trees. One of them was one of my neighbours. We used to do this, and we have stopped.

Mr Alegria: I have not specifically thought of that initiative, but it sounds like it is worth having a look at.

MRS JONES: I had a conversation with Mr Rattenbury, when he was more involved in this area, about community gardens at the shops. There are blocks in some of the older shops with garden spaces that could be used more by the community. I think there would be huge appeal and community benefit in doing some of that, as long as you can get one or two key people committed to it.

Mr Alegria: There is a great example of that at Blaxland Park, where the local community have come to us. It is a former neighbourhood oval that is an open space. They have wanted to plant trees, shrubs, mulch and so on. We said, “Great, let’s get a plan that we agree on, so that we’re working towards an outcome,” and they are—

MRS JONES: We were told no by Minister Rattenbury. Duffy could not do that, and it was a real shame because there were interested people.

There is money in the budget for the design of southern memorial park. Is that the name of the Woden cemetery or is that the Tuggeranong cemetery?

Mr Steel: This is funding that was provided through budget review which is reflected in the budget appropriation of \$900,000 to further the planning for southern memorial park. We envisage that will be located adjacent to Long Gully Road, so I guess it could be in the Hume/Tuggeranong area. This will be a future cemetery for the ACT.

MRS JONES: So that is the next plot we are planning to open up?

Mr Steel: Yes. We know Woden is closed for new burials. There are some plots which people have pre-purchased where burials will still be undertaken at Woden and there are some plots for specific religious groups at Woden which still have spaces. However, this will provide the future cemetery needs for the south side in particular.

MRS JONES: Is there consideration in the planning of the recycling of graves?

Mr Steel: We have been undertaking consultation on cemeteries and crematoria in the ACT and as part of that sought community feedback on renewable tenure. I am not proposing to bring forward anything and certainly not as part of the changes we have flagged we will be bringing later in the year to the cemeteries act.

MRS JONES: So at this stage we are still looking at perpetuity?

Mr Steel: At the moment burial is in perpetuity in the ACT. Other jurisdictions have renewable tenure, but there are a range of burial options in the ACT. I will pass to Stephen to explain what they are.

Mr Bartos: At present burial is interment in the ground but there is an option now of natural burial as opposed to burial in a traditional-style coffin. Renewable tenure was something considered by the Assembly when it had an inquiry into cemeteries. I think the position back then is the same as now it is certainly an idea that has some important reasons why it should be considered but it is also one that is sensitive and needs considerable community consultation. In line with the recommendations of the Assembly inquiry that is something worth considering, but worth considering very carefully.

MRS JONES: Is the Hall cemetery open for burials?

Mr Bartos: No.

MRS JONES: Is there a plan to have it reopened?

Mr Bartos: Again the answer is no, largely for environmental reasons. Expansion of the space for burials at the Hall cemetery will not get support environmentally because of the orchids present on that site.

MRS JONES: The Southern Memorial Park, a commencement date or completion date? If we already have closed the sale of new burial plots in Woden, is Gungahlin the only place at the moment with burial plots for purchase?

Mr Steel: Yes, however there is significant room at Gungahlin. We estimate it currently has capacity for 2070.

MRS JONES: But you will not necessarily want to fill it up; you might want to open the new one?

Mr Steel: That is why we are starting the planning work. I will turn to Jim Corrigan to explain how that planning work is progressing.

Mr Corrigan: The \$900,000 is identified in the budget and our capital works team has commenced some early planning based on the master plan work the cemeteries authority undertook in 2011. There are various stages because to go ahead with the southern memorial park on the southern side of Canberra we want it ultimately to be a very good facility with memorial halls and the like with good gardens and a range of burial options and internment of ashes and all these sorts of things.

The preliminary planning work is undertaken and we will look at a staged approach. There is further consultation to go on with the cemeteries authority. Ultimately I imagine the minister will appoint an authority to run it. So there is a fair bit of work to go.

We are working through design work at the moment. The other part is that there is box gum woodland on the identified site, so we need to work through any environmental approvals that may be necessary. Ultimately we will come back to government for further capital works funding and further consultation with the community.

MRS JONES: What would be the fastest likely time frame for that to be open? Some people would be fascinated to know that we have filled up Woden but we have not opened another south side option.

Mr Steel: As a bit of history here, the government was looking at extending Woden Cemetery but as a result of community feedback a decision was made not to do so. There was a plan in place to extend but we listened to the community and as a result we are now undertaking planning work for the SMP.

MRS JONES: So when do you hope it will be—

Mr Steel: We do not have a date for that, but we are starting the work and the money is there to do that planning.

MRS JONES: The planning work goes out to 2020 in the budget. Presumably there is a possibility of something being built by 2021-22 or something like that if it were agreed to?

Mr Steel: That is just a hypothetical. We are doing the work now.

MRS JONES: I am not asking hypothetically; I am asking you for an opinion of what you hope or what you expect.

Mr Steel: Again, speculation, opinion. We are doing the work now and that will inform the process we take. As Mr Corrigan has mentioned, we are looking at a staged approach. It may be that we start one stage earlier than another. But the planning work is necessary for us to work out what the construction costs might be and what the time lines might be for a project.

MRS JONES: But is there any urgency, Mr Steel? If you were, say, the wife of someone who died in Lanyon this week, you might not want your loved one buried in Gungahlin. You might like to know that you will be able to buy a plot at some stage in this new one. There is no criticism of the fact that we are doing the planning, but it is not unreasonable for the community to want to know when that will be available.

Mr Steel: We would not want to provide the community with a speculative date. We need to do this detailed planning work now in order to provide the community with a time frame for a new cemetery. We are starting that work at the moment.

MS LAWDER: On page 129, under “Improving compliance for better animal management, healthier trees and a cleaner city”, you have got “Offset—associated revenue”. Can you explain in what areas you believe the associated revenue is? Is it about dumping fines, is it registration of dogs? What is that associated revenue made up of?

Mr Alegria: Most of the revenue is actually made up of fees and charges through the Public Unleased Land Act. You would be aware that when private individuals or companies use public land for private purposes such as construction they are required to pay a fee per square metre per day for that land. The idea is that the additional compliance resources can actually be proactive in this regard. There are many hundreds of such sites across the city. We have not always been able to find all those sites and make sure that the companies are paying for that land, for example.

With this extra team and the proactive ability we will actually be able to go out to make sure that all those using public land are appropriately paying their fees and charges. That, in itself, will generate a reasonable amount of revenue. With the model that we have got, that effectively pays for itself, which is the ideal sustainable model.

MS LAWDER: It is always good to have something that pays for itself but it is not kind of a fun police, is it?

Mr Steel: No, it is not. It is about hopefully reducing dog attacks in our community. This compliance team will have an ongoing focus on particularly enforcing the Domestic Animals Act. We believe that that hopefully will have an effect on reducing dog attacks in our community. A big part of the Canberra dog model, which we have now released, is to make sure that we have got clear rules that are enforced and that is what this team will be doing.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said it is basically user-pays. Where do you think the revenue from the domestic animals is going to come from to pay for the compliance officers? We are not doing annual registrations?

MRS JONES: Or are we?

MS LE COUTEUR: I thought you said we were not doing annual registrations.

Mr Steel: We do.

MS LE COUTEUR: We are but they are at no cost?

Mr Steel: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Where is the extra revenue that you are expecting from the animal point of view coming from?

Mr Steel: It is across all the different acts that we are administering. There may be infringement, which Mr Alegria has addressed

MS LAWDER: Which I think was my original question. He did not really talk about the dog component of it that you—

Mr Steel: That is one component of all the work that they are doing.

MS LAWDER: Can I confirm that it does not include annual registration of dogs or is that somewhere else in the budget?

Mr Steel: That is not associated with this specific measure. I think it was after the budget that we released the Canberra dog model where we are looking at bringing in annual registration. That has not occurred yet. It is likely to occur next year. And that will be at no extra cost to the community.

MRS JONES: Free registration of dogs?

Mr Steel: No. There is currently a registration fee that is paid for the lifetime of the dog but what we are going to be requiring dog owners to do is update their registration on a yearly basis. And that will be at no extra cost.

THE CHAIR: Updating it with no fee associated?

Mr Steel: That is right. We are doing that for three reasons. It is because we want to make sure that we rehome dogs to their owners if the dogs are lost. We need updated details in order to do that. We have seen some circumstances like Izzy the dog case. I think there was a previous discussion in estimates where the details were wrong and we could not locate the owner.

The second reason is that we want to make sure that we can enforce the domestic animal laws that we have. Again, to do that, we need to make sure that more dogs are registered.

The third reason is to get a picture of how many dogs we actually have in the ACT. At the moment, with lifetime registration, if a dog dies we do not actually know that it has died. It will give us a much better sense of how many dogs there are and that will

help us to better target our compliance education activities. Also it will enable us to better educate the community about responsible dog ownership.

MRS JONES: Will that updating be able to be done online or on people's phones or something?

Mr Steel: That is what we have got to work through in the implementation phase but I would imagine yes, we would want to do it online to make it as easy as possible but also to reduce administrative costs for government.

MRS JONES: To go back to user pays that Ms Le Couteur and Ms Lawder were talking about, is it fines that will fund that when you were saying across the board?

Mr Steel: That may be part of the offset there, yes.

MRS JONES: Can you explain to us how you have done that calculation essentially? We do not want to guess at what you have done. How have you done it?

MS LE COUTEUR: What is your model?

Mr Steel: It is a pilot program and we will see, I suppose, in next year's budget what the end result is.

THE CHAIR: But there are obviously assumptions underpinning the revenue estimates?

MS LE COUTEUR: You have got a fairly clear statement here.

MRS JONES: What are the assumptions?

THE CHAIR: What is the breakdown?

MS LE COUTEUR: You must have done something?

Mr Steel: Yes. I will pass it onto Stephen but I want to be clear that we are not setting targets for the number of infringements that we are putting out there and that sort of thing.

THE CHAIR: But you are estimating revenue?

Mr Steel: Enforcement is an incredibly important part of making sure that we are properly administering the acts that we have in city services. Stephen Alegria will provide some further detail.

Mr Alegria: The nuance is that infringements do not actually come into our revenue. Obviously it is a revenue for government. But it is central revenue, not revenue. Whereas the fees that we receive for the land use come in—

MRS JONES: Fees for land use?

Mr Alegria: That is how we built the revenue model. We anticipated what extra revenue we could generate through these extra resources, and we have enabled that to pay for it.

THE CHAIR: Can you take on notice to provide us with a breakdown of that revenue?

Mr Alegria: That is the breakdown.

MRS JONES: What fees for what land use?

MS LE COUTEUR: I am sorry; we are a bit confused as to what land use TCCS is getting fees for directly.

Mr Alegria: I can tell you that. Under the Public Unleased Land Act there is a disallowable instrument that allows us to charge a per square metre per day rate for private use of land. Let us imagine that a construction company in the city requires the verge to be fenced off so that it is safe. They pay us a square metre rate per day for the duration of their use of that land.

MRS JONES: During their building project?

Mr Alegria: Correct. And the rates vary depending on where the land is. In the city, it is the primary rate; it is a higher rate. Out in the suburbs, it is a lower rate.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that also all the cafes who have tables and chairs outside?

Mr Alegria: They also pay a fee, which goes to Access Canberra under the outdoor dining regime. That does not get collected by us.

MRS JONES: That is separate.—

MS LE COUTEUR: It is no use to you, though?

Mr Alegria: No. But particularly the construction use of land is a significant source of revenue for us. It is really designed to recognise that that land is no longer available to the community and they rightly should pay a fee. And it is a disincentive for companies to take a lot of land out of the system.

MRS JONES: Yes, and to use it for longer than necessary.

Mr Alegria: If they need it, great; they can pay for it. And they have to reinstate it as well at the end of the day. That is the primary source of the revenue.

MS LE COUTEUR: That means that if the current construction boom slows down, you are going to have a problem with your revenue.

Mr Alegria: I would suggest not, because we know that we are only grabbing a certain proportion of what is out there. There is also a requirement for people using land for temporary traffic management, for example, to pay.

MS LAWDER: Sorry, what was that?

Mr Alegria: For temporary traffic management purposes. There are a whole lot of small things out there that we have never really been able to tackle in a systematic way. They are the kinds of things that we are going to be trialling in this next six-month period to see exactly what is out there that we could better tackle and where we could generate more revenue and, as the minister said, make a better city, because we are going to be holding people to account for what they do out in the public realm.

MS LAWDER: How much money, on average, over the past five years has come in under that use of public land?

Mr Alegria: It has grown significantly over the past few years. From memory, the budget that we have is something like \$2.5 million in the coming financial year.

MS LAWDER: You have that in 2019-20, but you are not expecting it in future years? Is this a trial?

Mr Steel: We are, but this is a pilot program. At the point that the pilot ends, we will evaluate how the pilot has gone and then work out whether that should continue.

MS LAWDER: What does that mean for those six staff?

Mr Alegria: They all have jobs already in city presentation; they will return to the positions that they have left.

MS LAWDER: To go back to the dogs, you are looking at a proposal to annually register dogs. Do you have any idea of how many dogs you know are registered versus how many dogs there might be? Do you have a feel for the difference, an estimate?

Mr Steel: We are currently undertaking a pet census. That will give us a sense about what the gap might be, but that process has not been finalised so we do not have the final numbers. That work is going to be important to give us an initial sense, but ultimately moving to registration will be the best way to really understand how many dogs we have in the community.

MS LAWDER: We currently have the once-off lifetime registration. Are you able to provide to the committee the numbers registered per year over the past 10 years?

Mr Alegria: I think we would probably take that on notice.

Mr Steel: We can check. I would not want to commit to providing the full 10 years if we do not have the data, but we check to what extent we do.

MS LAWDER: Why wouldn't you have that data available?

Mr Steel: We will have to check and find out how much work needs to go into getting that data.

MS LAWDER: So you do not collate that every year? You must know the revenue.

Mr Steel: We would in the immediate years, but 10 years is a long time. We will have to go back. There are obviously administrative resources that go into providing this sort of information for the committee, and we will need to work out to what extent that needs to be—

MS LAWDER: Perhaps there is another way. Perhaps you could let the committee know—

MRS JONES: Just a minute. On that point, Mr Steel, in my experience it has never occurred that an answer to a question asked here has been determined by administrative resources. It is a very unusual response. Please consider very carefully whether that is used here, because otherwise the committee—

Mr Steel: It is a very common response to questions on notice.

MRS JONES: It is a very common response to questions on notice, and that is a very different process from the estimates process, where we are meant to get full and frank openness about what is going on in government departments. That is why this process has been set up.

Mr Steel: We will just have a look at what is possible, Mrs Jones. It is 10 years. We will have a look. We may have that data on hand and available.

MRS JONES: If the data is there, then we would love to have it; if it is not there, then fine. But I do not think the administrative resources—

Mr Steel: That is all I am suggesting, that we go back and have a look.

MRS JONES: They are two quite different arguments. One is used for questions on notice, and understandably that has been publicly discussed, but not in the estimates process.

Mr Steel: I am sure you would not want the department using all of its resources to run around—

MRS JONES: If it is not there, it is not there, but I would like the department answering the question.

MS LAWDER: And if it is not there, it would be also good to understand that it is not there and why it is not there.

Mr Steel: We will have a look to see what is available.

THE CHAIR: So you will take that on notice.

MS LAWDER: With regard to the lifetime registration and/or annual registration, will there be any change in what might happen if you are found to have an

unregistered dog?

Mr Steel: That is currently provided for under the Domestic Animals Act.

Mr Alegria: Yes, that is right.

MS LAWDER: And you are not proposing to change that?

Mr Alegria: No. It would be a change in regime for the community, obviously, because they will need to do this every year. We want to encourage people to register their dogs. We are not going to be saying, "Oh, you have not had your dog registered. You are going to get a fine." It is going to be very much an engage and educate approach, particularly for the first period when people get used to it. We want to encourage people to do the right thing; that is the main message. Part of that is making it as easy as possible, not just administratively but having that customer-focused front end that means that it is easy for people to update their details, they do not have to spend a lot of time, and the process is smooth.

MS LAWDER: Finally, minister, to clarify, I think you referred to an earlier case from last year's estimates. My understanding of that case was that the sister of the owner was registered, not that the information was necessarily wrong, and they were unable to get hold of the sister, who was out of town on that weekend. I think it was that rather than wrong information.

Mr Steel: I will pass to Stephen to provide some details.

Mr Alegria: I have not read that report for some time but from memory, I believe that is correct.

MS LAWDER: Just to clarify.

Mr Alegria: I guess it goes to show that the keeper of the dog needs to have their details up to date and we need to make it as easy for people to be compliant.

THE CHAIR: I move on to the measure, "Managing waste better." On page 130 of budget paper 3, there is \$10.4 million for this item in expenses. Can you tell us what this is for and how much of that money is for food waste management versus the planning to upgrade the Hume facility?

Mr Steel: There is a range of different components to this. I will pass over to our NoWaste team to talk further about that.

Mr Corrigan: What page are we referring to, Miss Burch?

THE CHAIR: Page 130 in budget paper 3.

Mr Corrigan: There is a number of initiatives coming forward. First is the MRF, the materials recycling facility at Hume. We are appraising upgrades there. That is actually a territory asset. The company Re.Group has all of the plant inside the shed there to manage all the recycling and those sorts of things, but it is a territory asset.

You may be aware that in Australia at the moment there is quite an issue with managing recycling, particularly plastics. The plastics market internationally is challenging. It is certainly a challenge for Australia and the Australian market to move soft plastics.

Part of it is to assist Re.Group. We have allowed them to add some additional temporary storage. They bale up the material. A significant part of this capital funding is to put in a large hard stand—a concrete area—so it is managed significantly better. Obviously, it is easier to move the bales around and environmentally it is better. We can catch the run-off and those sorts of things. This is a significant component of that. The other important issue of this is that the government asked us to further explore in detail the whole food organics, green organics, garden organics: FOGO.

We have the green bins out. They are a great success. We are looking at a 50 per cent household take-up, which is terrific. FOGO means going to a situation that is actually quite a significant change in how we manage waste in the territory domestically. This is possibly going to once a week where everyone's food organics and kitchen scraps—all those sorts of things—get collected. Then for some of the other bins—the non-organic waste—it drops off; they are not collected as regularly. This is to explore what is involved in doing that and capturing that material.

We estimate that we are talking about around 40,000 tonnes of organic material. It is a significant amount. It is an exercise in working on how to collect it, where we take it, how it is processed. An important issue for this program to be a success is to actually have markets in Australia.

If we turn it into fertiliser-type products, it has to be able to be sold into these markets. Another important part of this initiative is to do that planning work now. Potentially, it is fantastic. If we could do this and achieve a really good sustainable business model we would be one of the biggest cities in the world to do this. But it is not an easy thing to pull together.

THE CHAIR: What is the cost breakdown there between the plastics and the infrastructure upgrades that you talked about versus the planning for the organic waste service?

Mr Corrigan: We can get it for you. It is broken down.

THE CHAIR: Take that on notice.

Mr Corrigan: It is broken down in the budget actually but I have not—

Mr Haraldson: It is approximately \$900,000. Around \$900,000 is allocated to the FOGO works. A portion of that will be towards the waste avoidance program and also a portion towards the planning for siting—how are we going to process material, where are we going to do it? I think an important thing that Jim mentioned is the markets, the products and markets. It is being able to capture that material, potentially 20,000 or 40,000 tonnes; 20,000 is your household and then another 20,000 or 15,000 is commercial. But it is, yes, really dependent on the market. Do you want to make this product and then find out that either no-one can take it or it has a high

contamination? Another thing to look at is multi-unit developments and unit complexes to ensure that there are no contaminants or very low contaminants in those sites.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a green bins question but I think that it is part of the questioning here. I have received advice from your office, Minister Steel, that tenants of Housing ACT and Defence Housing are eligible for green bins. However, we have heard from tenants of both ACT Housing and Defence Housing that they have difficulties applying. The advice your office has given is that such tenants need to ask their property manager to apply on their behalf. This has to be done over the phone rather than online. Basically, my question is: why cannot these tenants be treated like the rest of Canberra? It just seems to be more—

Mr Steel: Surely it is up to the body corporates of private unit title properties to get the green bins as well. It is not just public housing tenants. It is also tenants in those unit title properties.

MS LE COUTEUR: That statement is not 100 per cent true. I can say that with authority as I live in a unit title property where we can just apply for green bins if we want to. We can go to your website and—

Mr Steel: Okay; that is not my understanding, but I will pass on to—

MS LE COUTEUR: Regardless, my question was not actually about unit title properties, although that is an interesting question. Most ACT Housing and defence housing people who want a green bin are probably not in multi-unit developments, although—

Mr Steel: Yes, sure.

MS LE COUTEUR: I do not know that. Certainly ACT Housing has a lot of stand-alone places. Why cannot these tenants get green bins in the same way other people can? They have come to me because they are failing to get them.

Mr Steel: Yes, okay.

Mr Haraldson: I can elaborate. The issue is around privacy as well. Those locations are not on our register of addresses; so we cannot confirm that that actually is an address. That is to do with housing and defence. We have asked Defence Housing or the other housing areas to look for that address. We do not have access to their address information to confirm that they actually are a SUD—a single unit development—to be able to get the facility.

MS LE COUTEUR: Could you look at getting the information? ACTPLA almost certainly knows where these are.

Mr Haraldson: We have been working with ACT Housing and Defence and we have been unable to get that information. We have been working quite extensively with them; so it is—

MRS JONES: Can people not be trusted to know where they live?

Mr Haraldson: It is actually that we have not been able to get that access to the addresses.

MRS JONES: No, I am just saying—

MS LE COUTEUR: No, Mrs Jones's point is that people know their addresses.

MRS JONES: If people say to you, "I live at this address," it is not likely, is it, that they will be buying a green bin or paying for a green bin for someone who does not exist?

Mr Steel: That is not a question I think we can answer; that is something for housing.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, it is not a question for housing.

MRS JONES: No, absolutely not. For your processes here, can you not just believe what people tell you when they are registering?

THE CHAIR: You can look up the Google app to see whether it exists.

MS LE COUTEUR: To the extent that it is a question for Housing, I would also point out that—

Mr Steel: In relation to the release of data it is, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: ACT Housing appears to be a significantly under-resourced part of the ACT government. Putting on them all the paperwork required for garbage collection seems not what I would do; let us put it that way. You provide normal bins. You provide the red and yellow bins for people in ACT Housing and Defence Housing; so you clearly have these locations somehow—

MRS JONES: Perhaps that could be one of our recommendations.

THE CHAIR: To Mrs Jones's point as well, why do you need, as part of that process, to confirm that whoever is registering for the bin is who they say they are and that they live at that address?

MRS JONES: It could be a great party trick to register a friend for green waste bin but I am not sure it would be terribly popular.

MS LE COUTEUR: Particularly as you have to pay \$50.

MRS JONES: That is what I mean.

MS LE COUTEUR: I assume that you have some sort of database about where you put the red and yellow bins, because even ACT Housing tenants are allowed to get them. Why don't you use that same database?

Mr Corrigan: To elaborate, we are working with public housing and the defence housing authority; what you are suggesting, we want to solve. That is exactly what we are looking to do. The issue is that we do not have access to all the databases that we need but we are working through that with them to solve it. The short answer is that if a public housing tenant wants a green bin we can resolve it and get them a green bin. It can be done. But it is not—

MRS JONES: But I think the problem that Ms Le Couteur is finding is that that is not the case for some residents.

Mr Corrigan: At the moment it is not simple; that is all.

MS LE COUTEUR: Could you at least put that on your website?

Mr Corrigan: We can do that, yes. We want everyone to have a green bin ultimately. That would be fantastic, so we agree.

THE CHAIR: The projections of waste to landfill on page 16 of budget statements H, why is Mr Fluffy landfill not included in the waste projection?

Mr Haraldson: Mr Fluffy is included in previous years. That year a lesser amount of Mr Fluffy material went in there. When we talk about the percentage of resource recovery we put that down as an asterisk so if you remove Mr Fluffy we are tracking at 74 per cent resource recovery.

THE CHAIR: But the projections do not include the potential impact of increased tonnage going to landfill as a result of Mr Fluffy. So why is that not included in the projections?

Mr Haraldson: I will have to take that on notice.

Mr Corrigan: The Mr Fluffy program has mainly come to a conclusion. Only a few houses are left that would impact on our landfill. It is really to enable consistency of data and tracking. You can see that table and you can see a dip will occur, so it is just going forward. The program is winding up, which is good, and it is just so we can try to estimate properly what resource recovery targets we are trying to get to and how we are going to go about that.

Mr Haraldson: There are around 1,027 houses in the Mr Fluffy program. We have hit around 950-970 houses. With that wind down and the program going out to 2020 it is hard to predict when these are going to be coming in. We are working with the asbestos response taskforce on scheduling those, but those buildings are now going to Mugga Lane landfill. Previously they were going to west Belconnen but as of 1 April they have been going to Mugga Lane.

MS LAWDER: I want to ask about the table of accountability indicators for output 2.3. The increased annual cost, what makes up the projected increase for both household and recycling?

Mr Haraldson: It is a combination of wage increases and contract costs but also the

number of new houses coming online. Every year we have a high proportion of houses coming online.

MS LAWDER: But why does that increase the annual cost per household per head of population?

Mr Haraldson: The CPI is probably the main reason for that. Each year it is between 2½ and three per cent.

MS LAWDER: Also in the same table there are some minor examples of not meeting targets, annual total resource recover tonnage per head of population has an estimated outcome of 1.5 and a target of 1.7. Why that is the case?

Mr Haraldson: We are looking at actuals coming in. It has gone from 1.6 to 1.5 and then in 2016-2017 it was 1.2. So it fluctuates each year with the amount of waste that comes in. For the past five years the resource recovery rate per capita has averaged around 1.5. So 1.7 was last year's. We have been tracking on 1.5, so we have adjusted it to 1.5.

MS LAWDER: Do you have a feel for why it is the case? Is it companies dumping a whole lot of stuff? Why is it getting lower?

Mr Haraldson: There is some waste that goes out of the ACT and that could be a contributing factor. But each year the amount of waste that goes to landfill can range between 230,000-240,000 tonnes, up to 270,000 tonnes. So that variation—

MS LAWDER: Per head of population. So how do you factor in the waste that goes out of the ACT if you are looking at the resource recovery tonnage?

Mr Haraldson: Roughly a million tonnes of waste is produced in the ACT. From our estimates through the waste feasibility study, a portion of that goes over the border. We run the landfills in the ACT obviously so around 250,000 tonnes is accounted for there. Then we also have the green bins, resource recovery and also the self-haul of green waste for drop-off. All those things contribute to that 74 per cent resource recovery rate.

MS LAWDER: The container deposit scheme is certainly not as high as had been hoped for. What measures are you undertaking to improve the results?

Mr Steel: We are increasing the number of drop-off points. Yesterday I announced that four extra spots will be available: at the IGAs in Evatt and Farrer, at Anglicare in Phillip and we have been piloting a container pod which is a drop-off point available at the RDOC in Gungahlin. We are hoping that the new increased return points will be more convenient for the community to use, particularly after work hours, and that we will see an increased rate.

We are also working with the CDS scheme operator to increase awareness about the scheme. We will be looking to do that over the next 12 months with a new education campaign. We are looking at further drop-off points; there will 18 by the end of this financial year and then we will work with the scheme operator to see whether even

more points can be rolled out to make it more convenient.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to do any research about why people are not doing it? It is not just the drop-off points; it is about registering and bags and—

Mr Steel: You do not need to register if you go into one of the depots where you can literally just get cash over the table for exchanging the cans. But you need to register for the express return points that are around the place and mainly operated by charities. It is quite a simple process; I did it myself yesterday. You just need to get your account online at returnit.com.au and then drop off your containers in a bag and put a label on it at the shopfront.

MS LAWDER: Have you looked at the age groupings of the people who register?

Mr Steel: The original scheme was based on experience in South Australia, which has been operating the scheme for several decades. We looked at providing face-to-face return points. We are obviously mindful of what is happening in other jurisdictions like New South Wales across the border where they have reverse vending machines where there is not necessarily a person there. We are looking at the variety of different return options that could be provided to make it as easy as possible to drop off containers. As far as the demographic, we will find out.

MS LAWDER: I am wondering whether older people may be less likely to register online.

Mr Corrigan: That is a very good point, Ms Lawder. The network operator is the company Return-It and we work with them. The scheme has been going for less than 12 months so it is very early days still and we are still going through teething issues. The operator is keeping an eye on those things. In terms of how precise the data they collect is in terms of demographics, that is something that we will keep working with them on.

What we have learnt is that it is really about access. Convenience and access are the key driving points. We are working with Return-It to increase those points and make it more convenient and more accessible.

If people want to do it quickly—they have a bunch of containers and want to go in and get some cash—they should go to the depots. But the depots are in Fyshwick, Phillip and Mitchell, so they are not the most accessible and we understand not everyone is going to go to Fyshwick.

As the minister mentioned, it is quite easy. Do not be spooked by these easier drop-off points. We are working with Return-It on other sites the minister alluded to. Sites in the group centres are convenient; you might go to Woolies or Coles and the pods may be there.

The other determining issue around demographics is where the 10c means something. The New South Wales scheme has been going for longer than ours and Queensland's for not as long, but they have shown this really interesting bit of data that we are trying to get our heads around.

MS LAWDER: 10c is worth more to some people than to others.

Mr Corrigan: It is. If you look at the Queensland scheme, interestingly, the company Return-It are also one of the operators in Queensland. Some of their return rates are incredible; they are huge return rates. But they are in areas where that 10c means a lot to those people. We are working with those things as well.

With respect to convenience, some of the group centres near some of the supermarket locations will help. With the 36 per cent that we have achieved now, from a target of 60 per cent, the network operator sets that target for themselves. We are reporting on their targets. We work with them. They are very conscious of it.

With other groups, they are talking to clubs, sporting clubs and some of the major commercial clubs. The opportunities for sporting clubs are terrific. Some of the larger soccer clubs on a Saturday morning produce a lot of containers. With some of the points that Return-It are looking at, they include possibly looking at return points at some of the major oval areas, the really big, district-scale playing fields. These are some of the things they are exploring. But there is more to come.

THE CHAIR: I understand that the committee would like to cover off on libraries and playgrounds before we take a break.

MRS JONES: In budget paper 3, page 167 notes that \$500,000 is going into Woden library.

Mr Steel: Yes.

MRS JONES: What is that going to purchase? How will the space that is now vacated be used?

Mr Steel: The heritage library moved. They were located on the mezzanine level in Woden library. They have moved out to 255 Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick, into new premises which are much more suitable for their operations. As a result that has freed up community meeting space. That funding will be used to refurbish that space for the community so that programs can be run on that level. I will let Vanessa explain a little bit more about that.

The community meeting space on the ground floor will also be upgraded to provide after-hours access. That was a recommendation of the recent Assembly inquiry. Community groups that have booked in there to use it after hours will be able to do so through swipe card access. As part of the work that we have to do, we have to make sure that we are separating that room from the rest of the library. That includes making sure they have access to toilets. So there is some construction work that needs to go on. I will pass over to Vanessa to explain a bit more.

Ms Little: Yes, the minister is correct. That money will be used, first and foremost, to make that ground floor room accessible. The very strong feedback that we received from the community was that they wanted to be able to use that room after hours. As the minister said there will be some building work to be able to gain access. We are

probably going to put in a glass wall, so that you can get from that meeting room. If you know the access point into the library, there will be a glass wall around it, so that people can access the toilets. The toilets that are part of the Access Canberra facility are not up to standard and are not accessible at all to people with disabilities. We are going to make the ones in the library available. Of course, we have to put in some security systems so that people can access it after hours. There is some negotiation that will need to go on with the cafe proprietor, because people will be walking through the spot that is part of his lease.

With the area upstairs, we are looking at refurbishing that. At the moment it is full of very empty shelves. Those shelves will be sent off for recycling and resale. We will then look at that space. We have had informal discussions with the Woden Valley Community Council on a couple of occasions. I met with the president, Fiona, just recently. We had a walk-through, and we have opened up discussions about what we might use that space for.

There are some things that are arriving as we speak that we have been able to fund out of our current budget. Starting on Monday, there will be some new shelving arriving. There is certainly some new children's furniture there already. So Woden is getting a lovely revamp.

MRS JONES: On the stats that we have in the accountability indicators, the target for library visits per capita has not quite been met. With the items borrowed, I imagine that is part of being a library in the modern era as well. For a fourth year in a row, we have not met the targets. Do we know how many items have been borrowed in total?

Ms Little: I will have to take that on notice. Obviously, this financial year has not finished, and we do it on a financial year basis. I can certainly take it on notice until the end of—

MRS JONES: Maybe last year and this year, where we are up to.

Ms Little: Last year was in the vicinity of 2.6 million loans. I will have to take it on notice for this year.

MRS JONES: Is the reason that those visits per capita and items borrowed are not getting up to what we projected because there is a change in use of library services?

Ms Little: There is certainly a change of use in terms of loans. Back in my day, you went to the library and borrowed a whole lot of books to do your school projects, for example. These days a lot of that is online. Teachers do insist that young people still go and use a book in their studies, but nowhere near as much. If you needed to do some ready reference work, you often borrowed a book; these days you look it up on the internet.

The visits per capita are actually staying quite strong. There is a slight dip there, but it should be remembered that Dickson library was closed, and partially closed, for a number of months—

MRS JONES: Yes, that would be why.

Ms Little: at the beginning of the current financial year. We are seeing great strength in people coming to our library programs—the regular giggle and wiggle that we often talk about. We run somewhere in the vicinity of 160 different programs every two months. People are using us as a community space, and that is very strong growth.

THE CHAIR: With items borrowed, does that include digital borrowing?

Ms Little: It does. Interestingly, our digital loans are increasing. While our hard copy loans are decreasing, the digital loans are increasing. If you called our digital loans a branch, it is our busiest branch now.

MRS JONES: Finally, the target for additions to the heritage library was not met. Was that because of the move?

Ms Little: A little bit because of the move. You will note that we are recommending that that come out as an accountability indicator. It is so very dependent on people donating their papers and material to us. Our heritage librarian can wax lyrical about how long it takes her to negotiate some of those donations. Sometimes it is years of working with someone to donate those.

MRS JONES: I wonder whether an accountability indicator in that space might be better off being about the experience that people have when they donate or something like that.

Ms Little: Yes. It is interesting that you ask that question. We are in conversation at the moment with the heritage staff around that very topic, around how we engage more with the donors and seek their feedback. But you will notice that we are adding one in for the future which is about how much time we spend in assisting people to use the collection and to conduct the research. It is a much more valuable indicator of—

MRS JONES: People can find what they want to find?

Ms Little: That is right. Are we contributing to the research that is being conducted within the city? That is where we are heading in the future.

THE CHAIR: We will break there and reconvene at 11.15.

Hearing suspended from 11.02 to 11.17 am.

MR PETTERSSON: I see that there is funding in the budget for playgrounds in the ACT. I was wondering if you could tell me what new playgrounds we might be getting and any upgrades to playgrounds.

Mr Steel: As a result of funding of \$1.9 million that was made available for the play spaces forum last year we undertook to do play space reviews in five suburbs, and those play space reviews are underway as we speak, working with the community to look at all playgrounds in each of those suburbs, what the next play experiences are, what improvements can be made either to all the playgrounds or to one playground,

the need to build a new one or to upgrade one playground or several playgrounds in those suburbs.

MRS JONES: Which suburbs are they?

Mr Steel: Those suburbs include Torrens, Waramanga, Richardson, Narrabundah and Higgins, and the funding in the budget this year is to fund the outcomes of those play space reviews. We do not exactly know what the outcome will be because the process around the play space review has not quite finished but there is funding available to support the outcomes of those reviews, which are a bit of an experiment for the government. We have not undertaken play space reviews with the community before that co-design process, and we are looking forward to seeing the outcomes of that.

In addition, there are 19 play space refreshes which have been funded. That information was not available at budget time. We have put that out today. That includes painting new playgrounds and replacing some equipment, and new shade sails at certain playgrounds as well to make sure that they are accessible particularly during the summer for families. That expands upon the 16 we refreshed as part of the play spaces forum, and that funding will be refreshing playgrounds right across Canberra, in every region.

MR PETTERSSON: Do you have the detail where the shade sails are going?

Mr Steel: The shade sails are going into Hughes, Isaacs, Monash and Macquarie. We also funded seven shade sails last year. That is in addition to that.

MRS JONES: In an answer to question on notice No 2084, which I received at the end of 2018, there was a list of 32 playgrounds that were going to be upgraded. I am happy to show it to you. I just wonder if that is a separate list to the 16 and the 19 or whether that is the same one. Can you maybe on notice provide us with an updated—

Mr Steel: I think I might have to do that on notice. I have not got it in front of me but I would imagine that that would include some of the play spaces that we were upgrading as part of the play spaces forum. It may include others. We will have to check.

MRS JONES: It will be good to know what all the play space or playground improvements are going to be. Can I also ask specifically, as I have been asked by a resident in Rivett whilst sitting in estimates this week, whether the playground at the end of Carbeen Street and Santalum Street in Rivett will get any attention? It has got wooden play structures where the paint has peeled away. Could there be anything new in there? I guess you will have to take that on notice.

Mr Steel: Yes, we will. We have assessors who go out and look at the playgrounds making sure that they are safe and that they meet the standards.

MRS JONES: I have noticed across the area that we both represent quite a number of old basketball hoops where the paint on the wooden structure has completely gone. Even a paint job would make such a difference to those parks. Surely it is not a massive cost. I wonder if an assessment could be done of that kind of improvement

where we are not saying there is a danger but it is really old and tired.

Mr Steel: Yes, I am happy to have a look at this specific case. If you can send it through I am happy to have a look at it.

MRS JONES: Just on Waramanga, as part of that list of the play spaces to be developed—is that right?

Mr Steel: Yes.

MRS JONES: Is that in the space that was suggested by the community group last year?

Mr Steel: That is the work that is happening now. TCCS is working with the Waramanga community, including Elizabeth Hoyt who is one of the advocates for a new playground. She was certainly advocating through a petition to the Assembly for a new playground in a new location adjacent to the shops. I am not sure what the outcome of that is because the play space review has not finished in that suburb. But I might pass it through to the team to give a bit more information about how those reviews are operating.

MRS JONES: To add to that before you throw it across, just to make it a bit easier, there was agreement in the Assembly, I believe, although there was an amendment that was part of that debate. When the minister voted in favour of starting the work on the playground in Waramanga it was to commit to the establishment of a new playground at Waramanga shops. Progress was to be reported back to the Assembly by July 2018 but Waramanga shops playground really was not covered in that report back to the Assembly. I am just following up on the agreement of the Assembly that there would be a new one for Waramanga. I am keen to hear what the position is.

Mr Alegria: I guess the important part there is that this is a co-design process. Originally there was a community proposal at Waramanga. The play space forum looked at a whole lot of different factors in recommending that Waramanga was in fact one of the play space review suburbs. The review process was really designed to look at the whole suburb rather than just look at individual play spaces. As the minister alluded to—

MRS JONES: There are some pretty old bits of playgrounds in Waramanga.

Mr Alegria: Exactly. In the big scheme of things it would be ideal if in future the community was able to agree: “We’re happy to get rid of that small playground that no-one uses and put our money into something that is fit for purpose and better quality.”

MRS JONES: Over the road and up the street there is a little one that is pretty old, I seem to recall.

Mr Alegria: That is the idea because, as you know, we have got over 500 play spaces.

MRS JONES: If you can get agreement to get rid of one of the smaller playgrounds

there is some scope for building a new one at the shops?

Mr Alegria: There is, yes.

Mr Steel: Definitely. It just depends on what the community would like us to do.

Mr Alegria: Exactly, yes.

Mr Steel: And it might be that there are upgrades that are made to all three playgrounds in a suburb, for example, rather than just building one brand new one and putting the investment into that.

Mr Alegria: It is community led.

MRS JONES: Okay, fantastic. You mentioned Torrens as being one of the possible places. I am sure that you are on a journey of conversation with the suburb, but can you give us any initial indications? Is it still the idea that it might be in that current location on the other side of the heritage wall?

Mr Steel: There are three playgrounds in Torrens. I know this because I grew up playing in them myself. There is Torrens Place, there is the one on Horrocks Street and there is the one on Duncan Street, I think, near the oval. All three of those are part of the conversation. We have heard from the community as part of the better suburbs process that playgrounds that are close to the shop are very good and convenient; they support the local businesses as well as being convenient for families who might be ducking into the shops or going for a coffee at the local cafe. The wall that exists between the playground on Torrens Place and the shops disconnects the playground, I think, from the shops, and there are safety considerations there as well. That needs to be worked through. Having visibility from the shops to the playground; there are currently some shrubs around there that are blocking the line of sight. The Torrens community has been providing some feedback on that.

MRS JONES: Also, concerning the heritage business with that wall: I believe they are Yarralumla bricks or something and they are not technically meant to have anything done to them. I do not know if that is true. That is what I have been told. But is there still a possibility of potentially making an opening in that wall even if the rest of it is still protected?

Mr Steel: There is an opening near the—

MRS JONES: Up the other end near the new kids centre.

Mr Steel: Yes, there is an opening there already, and I think the early childhood centre put in a new path as part of the work that they did. We are certainly open to looking at—

MRS JONES: Another one.

Mr Steel: Or extending it and improving visibility. But I think that that part of the wall is actually new. It is not using the old brickwork, which is part of the heritage

value of the whole shopping centre.

MRS JONES: It is a balancing act.

Mr Steel: It is often used for climbers and that sort of thing.

MS LAWDER: Are you able to provide maps of the new ones that you are going to upgrade to the committee so we know exactly which playgrounds in those suburbs will be upgraded?

Mr Steel: In relation to the 19 that are getting the refreshes, we have not determined what is being upgraded in the five that are subject to the play space review. We can provide those at a point in time but we have not quite got there yet.

MS LAWDER: I noticed that there is a shade sail going in at the park and ride at Lake Tuggeranong. It has been a really popular park and ride. It is always packed there on the weekends. There was also a discussion, I believe, about a shade sail over the playground nearby on Mortimer Lewis Crescent, and I think there was some agreement that there would be shade provided there. Do you know if that is part of your package?

Mr Alegria: I do not believe that is part of the package. You are referring to the learn to ride facility there?

MS LAWDER: The learn to ride park, yes. We can see that the shade sail there is underway.

Mr Alegria: I do not believe that a shade sail over that adjacent playground is on the priority list.

MS LAWDER: I think that there had been some correspondence with your office, Minister, with an agreement to put a shade sail over that playground.

Mr Steel: We will come back to you on that one.

MS LAWDER: There was an email on 21 March saying—anyway, it is your email; I am sure you can find it.

Mr Steel: We will come back to you on that one.

THE CHAIR: We will move on to roads and infrastructure.

MS LAWDER: At some of the delivering safer intersections nominations there have been quite a number of crashes since 2011. For example, on Southern Cross Drive and Starke Street in Holt, it says that there have been at least 50 crashes at that intersection since 2011, eight of which caused serious or major injuries. Can you go through the process as to, for example, why the intersection was not upgraded earlier? What is the process that you go through? Is there a magic number that you have to achieve before you upgrade an intersection?

Mr Steel: We certainly study the crash data around intersections when making decisions about where our investment goes.

Just to clarify, I understand that the shade sail for the learn to ride was done as part of the play space review last year, so that work will be ongoing. Also I want to clarify that the playground in Torrens I mentioned is not on Horrocks Street; it is on Howchin Place.

I will pass over to Ken Marshall to provide further detail about what data is taken into consideration around intersections.

Mr Marshall: Roads has an ongoing process of forward works planning. We maintain programs of potential works over two, five and 10-year horizons. We also maintain a database of intersections and mid-block sections in the network, ranked according to their statistical history in terms of traffic volumes, speed data and crash history. On that basis intersections are essentially ranked in terms of what that data suggests about the level of risk associated with those intersections or sections of road. That indicative risk, based on available data, is then taken into account in a further process of considering what interventions might be effective in reducing the level of risk. That process produces those programs of potential future capital works projects.

MS LAWDER: The ones that are having upgrades have a varied numbers of crashes recorded. There is one in Phillip says at least 32 crashes since 2011, Deakin, 10 crashes since 2011 and Hawker 48 crashes, and the one I mentioned earlier in Holt says 50 crashes. Fifty crashes seems like a lot before you take action to upgrade the intersection.

Mr Steel: We are taking action on these but it is also important that not all of these are based on the crash data; it is also about traffic flow, and safety improvements to pedestrian access in particular.

MS LAWDER: Surely crash data is an indication of that?

Mr Steel: It is part of the mix that we would consider in making an investment. I will just point out that in relation to the Launceston Street and Irving Street intersection and the Novar and Kent Street intersection it is about not only traffic flow but also pedestrian safety on those intersections, and ease of access for pedestrians.

MS LAWDER: With the one in Holt, for example, when is that expected to be completed? When will the safety upgrades be completed at Southern Cross Drive and Starke Street in Holt?

Mr Corrigan: With those intersections we will commence with design work, obviously, to get the detailed designs in place about what is the best solution for them. Most of them would be signalling as the best and safest solution. Alluding to the minister's comment about pedestrian safety, that is often the best way to manage that. Then we go to tender, to the market, and then construction will commence as soon as possible. Depending on intersections and the complexity of them, they take various lengths of time, but maybe—

MS LAWDER: Is the funding for the planning and design work or is it also to deliver the safety improvements?

Mr Corrigan: It is to deliver as well: design and construct.

Mr Smith: As Jim has already highlighted, the funding for the Southern Cross and Starke intersection is both the design and the construction money. We need to work through the detailed design for that intersection before we can then go ahead and deliver it. It is quite a complex intersection. It is slightly offset. That prolongs our design a little but, as Jim said, we will deliver that as soon as possible within the budget.

MS LAWDER: As soon as possible: two years, four years, 10 years?

Mr Smith: At the moment the funding goes through to 2021-22 for that intersection. We will work sensibly to bring that forward if we can.

MRS JONES: I have a question about an intersection that has been raised with me on a number of occasions. I do not think it is a crash data issue. I refer to the intersection between Mulley Street and Streeton Drive, at the entrance to Holder. As people drive south from Cotter Road towards Cooleman Court and want to turn right, they cannot always see clearly cars that are coming out. Also, with cars that are turning from Mulley Street onto Streeton Drive, a lot of the more elderly people in that suburb are having trouble seeing oncoming traffic that wants to turn onto Mulley Street. On notice, could you let me know if there are any thoughts about this? I think it is because of the—

Mr Steel: Shrubs in the median?

MRS JONES: In the median there is a big cage around a hole in the road, which is for the walkway underneath or something like that. The metal structures, while providing a safety feature, are providing another hazard. Could you get back to us on that as well?

Mr Marshall: Yes, we can certainly arrange an assessment. Off the top of my head, I am not aware of where that intersection sits in terms of rankings.

MRS JONES: They are quite elderly people who talk to me about it, and who are still driving. All of that entry to Streeton Drive towards Cooleman Court is a bit tough where there are not lights. We do not want any more accidents.

Mr Marshall: Yes, we can do an assessment.

THE CHAIR: Commonwealth Avenue bridge: what is the government's involvement in the process to determine whether the Commonwealth Avenue bridge should be replaced?

Mr Steel: Discussions are being had mainly in relation to the light rail stage 2 project, which you will appreciate is not in my portfolio.

Mr Edghill: With the Commonwealth Avenue bridge, there are effectively two things happening at the moment at that crossing. On the commonwealth government side of the equation, the NCA is looking at engineering works that need to happen. There are two bridges there. They are looking at engineering works which are required to ensure the longevity of those bridges. The bridges are 50 or 60 years old, and there is work required to bring them up to standard and to prolong the life of the bridge, if that is the path that the commonwealth goes down. In the recent federal budget there was money afforded to the NCA to undertake those works.

THE CHAIR: Is the ACT government contributing to that process, though?

Mr Edghill: No, that is federal government money.

THE CHAIR: That is just NCA; okay.

Mr Edghill: Yes. With light rail stage 2, the alignment crosses at the Commonwealth Avenue bridge, so a lot of thought and a lot of liaison have gone into how we get from one side of the lake to the other. We are thinking at the moment that there would be a new structure, a light rail only structure, to be built between the two existing Commonwealth bridge structures.

MRS JONES: In between.

Mr Edghill: Yes. We liaise very closely with the NCA through the light rail development process. With the recent funding that was provided to the NCA, both of us came to the conclusion that before we go too far down our respective paths, we should at least ask ourselves the basic question: if we were to think of both of these objectives and projects together, what may be the best holistic outcome?

We are in very early stages of conversations with the NCA, but we have had a number of workshops to date involving not only the NCA but the Chief Architect and pre-eminent designers to ask ourselves the question: what is the most appropriate solution here; and if you were to take an integrated approach, what would that look like?

The aim of doing that is to work through all of the issues that may be associated with the Commonwealth Avenue bridge and do something new there, from an urban design perspective. From a traffic perspective, there is a question of constructability and what it means to put a new structure there, and what you do to traffic in the city during that period of time.

There are other questions. The bridge serves a function not only for cars and pedestrians; there are also utility services underneath the bridge. You will note the big columns at either end of the bridge. One of them has a big sewerage vent or stack in the middle of it. These are all quite technical questions that we need to work through.

Where we are hoping to get to with the NCA is to work out whether something there is potentially feasible, and ultimately what the cost of doing that may be. We are at least then in an informed position, early on, before our respective designs become too far progressed, to answer the question: is it more appropriate for us to go down the

path of the NCA strengthening the bridges and us constructing a new bridge in between, or is it a better outcome from an urban realm perspective, from a cost perspective or from any other perspective to do it all together?

The conversations have been really constructive so far, but we are trying to cover off the question so that in 10, 20 or 50 years somebody does not look back and say, “Why did you do it like that, rather than do it like this?”

THE CHAIR: When did you become aware that the bridge might need to be replaced?

Mr Edghill: That is really a commonwealth government issue rather than an ACT government issue.

MRS JONES: But when did you become aware of it?

Mr Edghill: Essentially, I became aware that the NCA would be doing works through the commonwealth government budget process when it was provided with money.

MRS JONES: For this year?

Mr Edghill: Yes.

THE CHAIR: This might be a bit too early to say, but have you looked yet at what contingencies will be put in place if there is a rebuild? Could Kings Avenue handle the traffic in the interim or would there be—

Mr Edghill: It is one of the questions. Just in relation to the last question, I do not think it has been any great state secret that at some point works would need to be done to the existing structures. We knew that ourselves, even through the early processes that we went through with light rail stage 2, where we were thinking that it did not make sense to put light rail on the existing structures. In terms of when they got the funding, that was through the commonwealth government process.

The question that you just asked is one that we are working through, and I do not have an answer for it at the moment. Because there are two existing structures, it may well be the case—and this is a little bit hypothetical at the moment—that if there were a decision made by both the commonwealth government and the ACT government to look at replacing those bridges, it would probably be highly unlikely that you would just go in there and knock everything down. There are two structures there, so there are ways that you can have contra-flow arrangements during peak and so forth. But that is a level of detail that we just have not got to yet.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a question about the development approval role of this output class. In particular I am talking about the very large Republic development by Geocon, which is clearly going to put a lot of traffic on Cameron Avenue in Belconnen town centre. What plans are there for the developer to upgrade Cameron Avenue to cope with this?

Mr Steel: I will ask Jim and the team to talk about what our role is during the

development application process, and then the idea of developer contributions.

Mr Corrigan: I will hand over to Geoff Davidson in a minute, and he can talk about the process that we undertake. In terms of specifically what they are doing to those roads, unless Geoff has that information in his mind, we may have to take that on notice.

Mr Davidson: The directorate has a team that deals with EPSDD on developments. On this particular development there is a bit of work ongoing right now to assess the traffic impacts of that development, and to look at any off-site works that are required to be delivered by the developer to support that particular development. But that work is ongoing. Some of it might include the requirement initially for some modelling, to understand the full extent of the traffic impacts of that development. We can then have a better understanding of any off-site works that are required.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said it “might” include traffic modelling. Surely, for a development of that size, it is not optional? I was quite surprised there. You said you might require them to do traffic modelling. Surely, this is a very large development. It is not a “might”; it is a requirement.

Mr Davidson: You are right. I was talking in general terms, but for this particular development, yes, there is currently some work that is being undertaken to assess exactly what the extent of those traffic impacts are, and any upgrades that need to be undertaken to the network in that vicinity.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you not yet come to any conclusion that has been communicated to the developer or anyone else about traffic works?

Mr Davidson: We are working very closely with the developer right now, but that dialogue is ongoing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you—

MRS JONES: Do you want to take on notice to provide the details of what is happening, how it is happening, and what the solutions that are being considered are?

Mr Davidson: Happy to.

Mr Corrigan: We will have to take that—

MRS JONES: Yes.

Mr Corrigan: We may not be able to respond within the five days because it is ongoing. It might be a bit of time.

MRS JONES: Okay, yes. Keep in touch with us about that.

Mr Corrigan: Modelling takes—

MRS JONES: Or even about what exactly is being done right now.

Mr Corrigan: Okay.

MS LE COUTEUR: Has TCCS given a final sign-off of the DA for Republic?

Mr Davidson: I am not exactly sure of the status of where we are at right now but as I said we are continuing to work with the developer to really determine what the traffic and transport impacts are within that vicinity.

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

Mr Davidson: There is a number of developments that are going on in close proximity to that particular development.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am aware, yes.

Mr Davidson: So we are really talking about essentially vertical suburbs going up.

MS LE COUTEUR: Absolutely.

Mr Davidson: We need to make sure that we are planning effectively to ensure that we can keep people moving in the vicinity of those developments.

MS LE COUTEUR: I guess that there are a few questions arising from that. I hope I remember all of them. What you have said is that you have not yet done a final sign-off on the transport arrangements. Yet clearly the building is going up; it is significantly progressed. Is it normal to have a building being built—they have spent millions of dollars there already. From a traffic point of view, obviously they do the works in the ground before they do the works in the sky. Is it normal to have a building clearly being well and truly constructed without the traffic arrangements being finalised and without you, TCCS, signing off as the entity that the traffic arrangements are going to work?

Mr Corrigan: In this development, because it is large and it is complex, I understand that the developer has staged the development applications. The works that are being undertaken now are only to a certain stage. It is really getting it out of the ground, where we get the footings dug and complete and the several basement levels done.

Mr Davidson is referring to further approvals being needed for the rest of the development. But it is multiple towers as well. Obviously, the concept is known about, originally what the developer was proposing and those sort of things. That all gets factored in, all those broader planning terms: traffic and all that sort of stuff.

But the work that is going on now is specific to the development application. What you are alluding to seems unusual. We are saying that traffic modelling is still happening, but they are doing work. They are doing work for the early stages. They are just getting the development out of the ground because of the scale of it.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think that you are saying that you would have signed off for all the traffic on those early stages. So you have signed off, effectively, for the traffic

plan for the Republic? I think that was kind of what you were saying.

Mr Corrigan: At a conceptual level early on, through the development application process that EPSDD run, they would seek to see all those impacts of the development in total. But the construction build time for this development is over several years. So at each stage there will be the more detail to go into.

When you say that we have signed off, we are aware of what the impacts will be and these sort of things, the concept of the proposal. As the DAs come in they are referred to Geoff's team and then they look into the detail, that sort of thing. There are multiple stages of approval as well as; it is not like one single sign-off and off they go.

MRS JONES: Just to clarify, though, does TCCS have the power to say no?

MS LE COUTEUR: Absolutely it does.

MRS JONES: Just curious; I know it is not necessarily how you want to operate, but—

Mr Corrigan: Yes, look, it is a difficult question. It is not binary. The answer is yes. You can always step in and say, "Look, there is an issue," and we work with our planning colleagues. But to say no, to get to a point in time where we are well into the process, that is not good for any stakeholder.

MRS JONES: No, I guess that is why Ms Le Couteur is asking.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, that is the point here.

MRS JONES: If you are doing it in an incremental way, as plans are being approved, you have basically got an initial yes from planning or they would not have dug up the ground. Then I guess what you are saying is that you have got an initial yes from roads but you are not sure quite yet what you would have to do to fix those roads up.

Mr Corrigan: Initial yeses go back some years too. The site was sold. The site was sold with development parameters. It is a town centre. The master plan is predicated on wanting big populations at the town centres; so you understand. At the highest level, a lot of those decisions have been made. When you get to the detail, there will be impacts, absolutely. There will be traffic impacts, there will be a range of impacts, both good and bad, in terms—

MRS JONES: Yes. So the attitude is essentially "make it work" but what do we have to do by this stage, and what do we have to do by that stage? Would that be a fair—

Mr Corrigan: Well put.

MRS JONES: Yes, right.

MS LE COUTEUR: You mentioned multiple DAs. Clearly there are not only multiple DAs for a public development, but there are other sites in that sort of general vicinity of the Belconnen town centre. Are you looking at the traffic impacts for all of

that development?

Mr Davidson: That is correct.

MS LE COUTEUR: You are saying that that means that it is not a situation of, “This will work for the Republic, but if there are more things, it will not work” It is not a question of first in, best dressed? All the other developments will have equally good traffic options?

Mr Davidson: I think the answer is both. We need to investigate the individual impacts of each assessment, but we cannot ignore what is going on around each of those developments as well. So we need to take that into consideration as we look at the overall traffic impacts of development that is happening in those town centres.

MS LE COUTEUR: When you are doing Republic, for instance, you are telling me, I think, that you are taking into account all the expected traffic impacts from the other developments which clearly will happen over a period of time in that area.

Mr Davidson: It is a careful approach to it. As Jim mentioned earlier, we work with each of the developers from a very early planning stage of their developments. But we also have to take what is really a coordination approach to traffic and transport in those town centres. So we have a dedicated team that is looking at the overall transport planning that is required within the town centres and with other areas that are undergoing intensification.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that the government’s plan in the fullness of time is to bring light rail to the Belconnen Town Centre and some of the developments are very close to where this is likely to be, is that something that is a factor in your traffic planning? Are you saying, “Okay, things are going to be a bit problematic now but in the fullness of time it will be sorted because the public transport will be so good that people will not use cars as much”? Is that one of your considerations?

Mr Davidson: It is certainly factored in at certain developments. But really what we are talking about is that we already have a rapid transport network. So that is really what we factor in. We have a rapid transport network. Over time some of the buses that are operating as rapid buses will be replaced by light rail. But we do consider the links of developments to the rapid transport network.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think from that answer you said that you are not expecting any particular change in patronage if there is a change from bus to light rail. I think that is what you were saying, but I am a bit unclear.

Mr Davidson: What I am saying is that it is important that we provide access to rapid public transport for people. Belconnen currently has rapid public transport—

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, I am well aware of that.

Mr Davidson: but over time that will be replaced by a light rail service.

MS LE COUTEUR: But I think what you are saying is that you are not expecting it

to increase patronage from a traffic planning point of view.

Mr Davidson: I think what I am saying is that we deal with the here and now, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Cameron Avenue is designated as a main on-road cycling route. Do your plans ensure that that will continue and that it will meet the current design standards for on-road cycling?

Mr Davidson: We do. What we have is a couple of tools that are used by both the directorate and developers with developments that are happening. With the cycle routes, we have what we call the active travel practitioners' tool, which then identifies the hierarchy of the paths and any special considerations that need to be given in that space.

For example, cycling priority is required on some of those paths, depending on their hierarchy. But also, it is important that we consider the function and the surrounding land use as well. We provide for cycling and walking facilities that help people get around.

MRS JONES: I have a question about the scoping study to improve Hume Circle roundabout in Narrabundah, which is referred to at page 164 of BP3. Why is that undergoing a scoping study?

Mr Steel: This roundabout has a high incidence of crashes. That is one of the reasons that we are looking at what treatments might apply to improve safety.

MRS JONES: Where exactly is the Hume Circle roundabout?

Mr Steel: It is at the intersections of Sturt Avenue, Canberra Avenue and Wentworth Avenue.

Mr Corrigan: It is the roundabout adjacent to St Clare's College at the start of Fyshwick.

MRS JONES: So it is safety that you are doing this for and not aesthetics as such?

Mr Corrigan: Mr Marshall will have the details. Ms Lawder asked me before about how we rank intersections and those sorts of things. Hume Circle is ranked quite high in crash history and safety issues. It is the configuration of that roundabout as well because it is not four ways. It is an interesting intersection. But the geometry is really important for that end of south Canberra.

Mr Marshall: This is a case in point of how a project transitions from being high on the list of statistically indicated problems to potentially being on a forward works program for an intervention. At the moment the statistics are telling us that that intersection ranks quite high in terms of traffic volumes, traffic speeds and most importantly in this case crashes. The purpose of this study is to try to understand the reasons for that and what potential there is for an intervention that might address it cost effectively.

MRS JONES: Is there a consideration of lights as a part of that?

Mr Marshall: All factors would come under consideration in the study to try to understand what the mechanisms are.

MRS JONES: Is the cost of the study just the budget line item? When is it expected to be complete?

Mr Marshall: Yes, the budget line item is for the study. As to what might come out of the study—whether there is or is not a viable cost-effective intervention—will determine whether that turns into a future planned capital works project. The timing of that would depend of course on a budget decision and its priority against other proposed projects. In terms of the timing for the completion of the study, I would expect within the financial year.

MR PETTERSSON: Ahead of the federal election the federal Labor Party committed to several active travel upgrades across Canberra. Will the ACT government continue with these projects despite the lack of commonwealth funding?

Mr Steel: That is a good question. We certainly were very pleased to be able to commit to match some of those commitments by federal Labor. But as the result of the election outcome we have not seen the current commonwealth government commit to those projects. That has been disappointing because they dealt with much-needed active travel upgrades and addressing some of the east-to-west missing links across Canberra: Sulwood Drive between Drakeford Drive and Athllon Drive; a further stage in addition to the existing works on Hyacinth Street; and connecting the work we are doing on Flemington Road through the budget process right down to the EPIC light rail stop.

We will still consider those as priorities in the future and look at what funding might be available to address those issues. But it is certainly disappointing that the funding is not there from the commonwealth to be able to deliver those projects.

MS LAWDER: I want to talk about the table on page 331 of budget paper 3, road maintenance and road construction. It appears that in the road maintenance line there will be about \$17 million less, or eight per cent less, budgeted for the coming year than expected in the year that is just about to end. How will you be able to still maintain the territory roads in good condition with an eight per cent cut in the budget?

Mr Steel: Actually there has been some very significant investment in road maintenance. I will pass it over to the team to explain.

Mr Marshall: The logic behind the way Roads ACT prepares its road maintenance program, principally the road resurfacing program, each year is to essentially reassess every segment of the road again on a yearly basis and optimise the program within any given year to deliver the maximum benefit in terms of prolonging the life of the overall network within the resources available. I guess what that means is that we have data which is never any more than three years old on the condition and the position of each segment of road in terms of its deterioration over time from wear and

tear, and we are able to see, for each segment, the optimum time for intervention to maximise the benefit that we get from what is mostly a preventative treatment program in terms of extending the life of those segments and then aggregate that up in quite a sophisticated computer modelling exercise and determine what the maximum benefit over the whole network is for a given resource input.

MS LAWDER: I am not quite sure what you mean by that but can I clarify: in a different budget paper, on page 22 of budget statements H, it talks about the annual percentage of territory roads resurfaced and municipal roads resurfaced. The percentages remain the same for next year as this year. I am asking you: how are you going to continue to maintain the territory roads and municipal roads given an eight per cent less spend this year than last year? What are you doing differently or better because the quantum of four per cent or five per cent, depending on which part is steady—do you understand what I am trying to get at?

Mr Marshall: Yes. The four and five per cent targets are essentially based, a little simplistically, on the expected useful life of the surfacing treatments of roads. They are targets that give a broad indication of whether, essentially, we are reinvesting in the road network at a rate that is equivalent to the rate at which those surfaces are being consumed by use. Broadly speaking, that four and five per cent indicates that, if we can meet those targets, we are in a steady state, if you like; we are reinvesting in the road network at the same rate at which we are consuming it. There is a range of strategies that we use to target that steady state, that equilibrium state.

We certainly are constantly trialling and investigating different treatment options to maximise value for money, and the optimisation process that I discussed earlier is, in fact, also aimed at extracting the maximum possible benefit from the resources available in pursuit of those targets.

MS LAWDER: How will you achieve that eight per cent, in effect—

Mr Marshall: We will achieve that target by choosing sites to treat and surfacing treatments to treat those sites that give us the greatest benefit and that—

MS LAWDER: Again, the target, an estimated outcome of your percentage of territory roads in good condition, remains the same. You are saying you will choose which ones to target. In effect, are you saying that you are going to apply cheaper treatments to more of those? Is that how you are going to achieve the eight per cent less?

Mr Marshall: No. I am saying we will choose those treatments that give the best aggregated net benefit for the network as a whole.

MS LAWDER: How are you going to do that with \$17 million less?

Mr Steel: There is not a direct correlation between the number in the back of the budget papers and the five per cent target, and this year, in the 2018-19 financial year, there was a road resealing blitz which is probably being picked up in those numbers. There is an ongoing maintenance program which will help us to meet the four to five per cent target, and the numbers in there reflect the fact that we have done a blitz this

year and it will be going back to normal levels in the following financial years.

MS LAWDER: The estimated outcome is the same?

Mr Steel: The same. We are still achieving the same targets but, that is right, there is not a correlation between the two.

MRS JONES: Can you please take on notice to confirm the value of the blitz?

Mr Steel: Yes.

MRS JONES: So that we can then see how, going back to \$182,277 is, in fact, not a step backwards from \$199,252?

Mr Steel: Yes.

MRS JONES: You could imagine that, to the average punter, that looks like a step backwards in funding?

MS LE COUTEUR: Moving to paths as distinct from roads—I see it is all in the same accountability indicator—as I have no doubt Pedal Power has told you, they are of the belief that the current level of investment is about half of what is required to actually maintain Canberra’s path network. The Auditor-General’s report a couple of years ago came to similar conclusions. How are we going to end up getting adequate path maintenance?

Mr Steel: There was a very significant investment in last year’s budget particularly around the town centres to improve active travel networks, and that included existing travel, active travel networks and upgrades to those. I think that has shown a very significant investment in active travel, particularly in areas where there is high foot traffic. I will hand over to Ken Marshall to talk about the maintenance program for the rest of the footpath network as well.

Mr Marshall: The maintenance program on paths covers, of course, both concrete and asphalt paths and, in a typical year—certainly this year, year to date—what that delivers in terms of concrete paths is replacement of the order of 15,000 square metres of panels of path that are cracked by uplift from tree roots or other deterioration. It also delivers at this stage, year to date, something of the order of 14,500 lineal metres of displacements, trip hazards, removed by grinding and other treatments. That is a significant proportion of the overall network in terms of corrective treatments. It is clearly not as high a proportion as the preventative treatments that we are talking about in terms of bitumen pavements, road pavements.

I guess that is inherent in the difference between a preventative strategy and a corrective strategy. A preventative treatment is typically an order of magnitude cheaper or significantly cheaper than a corrective treatment. Our strategy in terms of flexible pavements, bitumen-based pavements, is largely preventative. That means we are doing larger areas of relatively cheaper treatments.

In relation to concrete paths, we do not have a preventative treatment option.

Technically the nature of concrete pavements is that they are good until they are not good. They are good until they are cracked and displaced, and at that point there is no life-extension treatment that we can apply. We need to replace that piece of pavement. The numbers are smaller proportionately in terms of the area of the whole network but that is inherent in the nature of the treatments that we are using on concrete paths.

MS LE COUTEUR: The Auditor-General said we were significantly underspending on path maintenance. Pedal Power has done their analysis which I am sure they have sent to you and which has the same conclusion. You gave me a technical description of what you were doing, but it does not answer the question of how we are going to get to a better level of maintenance. This is probably one for the minister. It is a question of priorities. We are simply not adequately maintaining our community paths.

Mr Steel: It is certainly something we need to consider on an ongoing basis, but we have been investing significantly in upgrades to active travel connections. In last year's budget I think there was \$30 million for active travel. That is a significant investment that we have not seen on that scale in the ACT since a lot of the suburbs were built. We are seeing investments in maintenance. In my area alone there is footpath maintenance in Kambah and Weston Creek.

In the budget there is of course the age-friendly cities program which has been moving on to a further set of suburbs. That is less around maintaining existing footpaths and more around improving and updating some of the old infrastructure. That can be updating ramps or widening paths in certain areas, depending on what the community feedback has been.

Interestingly, when we engaged with the community through the better suburbs process the recommendation was not really to increase the amount of investment in this area; it was to maintain a similar level, so we have to consider that as well as the Auditor-General's recommendations and so forth when we are making decisions.

MS LE COUTEUR: Does this funding come out of the same funding as the road transport maintenance on page 331?

Mr Corrigan: We will take that on notice to explain exactly where it works and how it is accounted. I will add that Roads ACT is trying to get our hands on better data about movements. We have had a number of conversations with Pedal Power about where the cyclists are going.

Where we have had serious bike crashes—unfortunately we had a fatality a couple of years ago—we look at the circumstances that led to some of those serious crashes and we analyse the network and look at other intersections that may have similar circumstances. We target our resources in terms of where we know there is likelihood of serious injury, things like that, and we look at our maintenance program.

Sometimes the condition of a path is acceptable but it might be subject to continual washouts, a lot of tree debris, things like that. So we look at other interventions as well. It is not like we just sit there and just look at it in a lineal fashion—I know they are lineal paths of course—but we look at how we get the best return on safety for the city, particularly cyclists.

THE CHAIR: The government has committed \$19 million in capital over the next four years, accompanied by an increase of \$80,000 per year in recurring payments for improving stormwater networks. How much of that \$19 million capital investment will be used to expand or replace existing stormwater drains?

Mr Steel: This is a very significant increase in the investment we are putting into stormwater. It was the number one priority of the better suburbs forum and so we are delighted we have been able to provide a significant investment. This will go largely to the augmentation of the existing stormwater network. That is outlined on page 2 of the better suburbs brochure or glossy or whatever you want to call it. I will hand over to the roads team to talk more around the specifics of each stormwater upgrade we are making.

Mr Marshall: Essentially three projects comprise the planned upgrades. Two of those are major physical infrastructure upgrades in Page-Weetangera on the one hand and in Fyshwick on the other. The third project is a design project around an issue in Waramanga.

The two major projects are aimed at capacity issues in the existing underground pipe network to address specific flooding issues. In both cases it is about either land use that is not reflective of the original design of the stormwater network and/or the increasing impermeability of the urban environment, a phenomenon that impacts on the capacity of the stormwater network generally.

MRS JONES: Because of building?

Mr Marshall: Because of densification but also because of changing expectations about the size of impervious areas, so the size of areas that are paved or roofed over time.

MRS JONES: So less green grass on people's properties and more concreted areas?

Mr Marshall: Yes. Essentially that means the same amount of total water to run off, but the more impervious the surfaces are the faster that water runs off and the higher and earlier the peaks are that the stormwater network has to deal with.

THE CHAIR: Will any of that capital investment be used to install new stormwater drains?

Mr Marshall: Yes, both those major projects involve the installation of new pipes. They are not new pipes where there have not been pipes before; they are bigger capacity pipes.

THE CHAIR: They are upgrades as opposed to new drains.

Mr Marshall: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: When will those projects be completed?

Mr Marshall: Both of those major projects extend over a number of years. In the case of Page-Weetangera the completion date is in the 2021-22 financial year and the south Fyshwick project extends a little bit longer into 2022-23.

THE CHAIR: Will any of the capital investment be used to acquire new or replace existing water sensitive urban design assets?

Mr Marshall: These projects are primarily focused on capacity, but if and where there are opportunities to influence water quality outcomes we would certainly investigate those. But the primary focus of these projects is flood mitigation.

MS LAWDER: What part, if any, of the stormwater investment will go to the inner north area that was impacted by the floods in February 2018? Are any upgrades or changes planned in that area?

Mr Marshall: These two projects do not impact on that catchment.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a few questions about the Monaro Highway upgrade at Hume. How much is that due to population growth over the border at New South Wales?

Mr Steel: This is a jointly funded project between the commonwealth and the ACT government. I imagine that the federal government is certainly looking holistically over the border and of course that traffic impacts people in the ACT as well. We are seeing Googong in particular grow. I am expecting it to be around 20,000 people at some point in the near future. It is a significant population out there. Ultimately they will be using the Monaro, currently through Lanyon Drive, potentially on a future road called Dunns Creek Road, which may intersect with the Monaro Highway in the future. That is something that the New South Wales government committed to at the previous election.

We are taking into account those factors. We have some specific modelling on the number of cars we expect to be travelling through there by 2031. It will significantly increase in terms of the number of vehicles travelling along the Monaro. It is obviously used by a large number of people travelling, particularly to south Tuggeranong, every day into work. It is also a very significant freight route connecting with the Majura Parkway, and there are upgrades there, for trucks travelling down to the South Coast on the Monaro Highway and through Cooma.

MS LE COUTEUR: I note that some of the Xpressos from Tuggeranong have been cancelled as a result of network 19. How much have you looked at other options like better public transport rather than the road upgrade?

Mr Steel: Certainly we are looking at better public transport as part of the new network, and we have rolled that out. Obviously a decision was made that Monaro was not the best location for buses to travel along and that the priority transport route was through the middle of Canberra from the south, particularly on Athllon Drive. Athllon Drive is also subject to funding for duplication, between Drakeford Drive and Sulwood Drive, and we are looking at duplicating it in Phillip as well.

So we are certainly doing both, but we know that there are going to be a huge number of vehicles travelling along the road, and we know that we need to look at the intersections along the Monaro Highway. It is a highway but it has intersections all the way from Hume through to the AMC at the moment where cars are literally having to stop dead. We are looking at how we can improve traffic flow. As we improve safety, we can also potentially make sure that it has the highway speed it has the rest of the way, which is 100 kilometres an hour.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said you know that there are going to be lots of cars. How much are you looking at induced travel demand? Historically, basically every city that builds better roads finds what you have just said: there will be cars to fill them. But how much are you looking at the demand that is being induced by the roads that you are building?

Mr Steel: We can provide the specific number. I think it was 16,000 extra cars by 2031 on the Monaro Highway. That is what we know is going to come. We know that part of that is from across the border. That is not something we have direct control of as an ACT government but we know it is going to affect people who are travelling on that road from the ACT. I can come back to you on the specifics of your question, on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: That would be great. There has been discussion of a western alignment for this road which would be very close to a new solar farm and also destroy an earless dragon habitat. Is this being seriously looked at, or is it just there because you always want to have a number of options? This is a real possibility?

Mr Steel: We want to look at a number of options. We are making a very significant investment, up to \$100 million from the ACT government and up to \$100 million from the commonwealth. When we have a substantial project like that, an example might be light rail stage 2, where we looked at a whole range of different options around getting across the lake. A few of those options were ruled out pretty early, including a tunnel under the lake. With this one, we are looking at the options to make sure that the current alignment will deliver all of the benefits it can. I suspect that at the end of the day we will rest on the current alignment rather than others, but we are comparing it to what the other option might be.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the western option has not been ruled out as yet; it is still a live option?

Mr Steel: I suspect that at some stage it will be ruled out.

MS LE COUTEUR: But it has not as yet?

Mr Steel: We are going through the planning process. It is really an exercise in whether the current alignment we have is going to deliver the benefits we think it will, and it is important that we have a comparator. At the moment we do not really have a comparator, so we have provided one, but it is unlikely to be the final choice.

MS LE COUTEUR: You talked about \$100 million from each of the ACT and federal, so \$200 million is the expected cost. Are the ACT's share and the

commonwealth's share, already committed in their respective budgets?

Mr Steel: The \$200 million is not in the budget for either the commonwealth or the ACT. This will go beyond the forward estimates as well. We need to do the early planning and design work to understand what the cost of each segment is, and there is a whole range of different segments. The work that is going to start first is closer to the southern end of the Monaro in the ACT around, I think, Williamsdale Road. That will get underway around the end of the year. Then there are the other segments which are closer to the Canberra central business district, particularly around Hume and the intersections with Isabella Drive, Mugga Lane, Sheppard Street, Tralee Street, Lanyon Drive and the AMC, as well as looking at the Pialligo Avenue intersection with the Monaro.

MS LE COUTEUR: But you did say it is beyond the forward estimates to finish this for both governments, so this is a four or five year or whatever project.

Mr Steel: It is a massive project, yes. We are doing the work to understand the costs in relation to each segment and what the best interventions might be to achieve the outcome that we want: to improve safety and to improve traffic flow in those areas.

Mr Corrigan: The immediate priority is the safety of that section to the south down near Williamsdale. We have had over the years—I cannot remember the exact numbers—a number of fatalities there. Most of them are fatigue accidents, which is not good. So we are looking to do some modest interventions there: extra overtaking lanes, the separation between lanes and things like that. Then we are working with New South Wales to make sure that with what they do south of the border we continue the treatments as best we can.

As the minister alluded to, it is a significant piece of road and there are a number of intersections. Some of those intersections may need grade separation, so they are costly capital projects. We would need to look at the cost-benefits and all those things—traffic movements, what the best outcomes are and where the best locations are to get the overall effect—because \$200 million is a lot of money but it is also a significant stretch of highway. North of Fyshwick heading towards Majura Road at the moment, just to give you an example, is the busiest section. Northbound vehicles per day is up to 38,000. It is one of the most heavily used arterials in the whole ACT network.

MS LAWDER: Page 167, “Planning better roads”, talks about planning and delivering improvements for both William Hovell and Athllon drives. With regard to Athllon Drive, is this expected to be delivered within the terms of this budget, the four-year thing? Is this simply the planning of it, or will it be planning and delivery?

Mr Steel: There are two aspects to Athllon Drive. There is one section between Sulwood Drive and Drakeford Drive which is an unduplicated section. It was a Labor election commitment that we made; we have committed to duplicate that. I understand that in construction funding there is provision for that section. Then there is another section, which is between Melrose Drive and Shea Street in Phillip. We have funded the planning work on that section, which is also an unduplicated part. That will see virtually the entire Athllon Drive duplicated right the way through down to

Tuggeranong.

MS LAWDER: So it is just the planning work at this point?

Mr Steel: No, I believe the funding has provision for the construction.

Mr Corrigan: There is a provision amount there but it is essentially planning initially. Then there is a provision amount for—

MS LAWDER: Okay. Does that mean that to deliver the actual duplication will require another budget bit or—

Mr Steel: Yes but the money is in the budget as a provision because we want to get the best outcome we possibly can when we are going out to tender for this project. Putting in an amount there locks the government into a price. You have had that discussion, I think, in this committee, probably about SPIRE. It is a similar concept there. Once we have done that planning work, we can come back in a future budget to put in a more exact cost.

MS LAWDER: For Athllon Drive and William Hovell, when would your nominal completion date be to deliver the duplication work?

Mr Corrigan: The design work would have to commence. We do not have an exact date. There is still a fair bit of work to be done.

Hearing suspended from 12.29 to 2.00 pm.

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

Transport Canberra and City Services

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

Flanery, Ms Fleur, Executive Branch Manager, Public Transport Operations, Transport Canberra

Davidson, Mr Geoffrey, Executive Branch Manager, Place Coordination and Planning, City Services

Steele, Mr Peter, Director, Performance Analysis and Business Improvements, Public Transport Operations, Transport Canberra

O'Daly, Mr Edward, Executive Branch Manager, Communications

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon to the new officials who are joining us. Can you acknowledge before you speak that you have read and understood the privilege statement? As we are not accepting opening statements, we will proceed straight to questions. One of the strategic objectives for Transport Canberra is to drive a sense of excitement about public transport. How exactly do you measure a sense of excitement?

MR PETTERSSON: I am excited

MRS JONES: Just use the excitement-o-meter.

Ms Fitzharris: It is good if the estimates committee is excited. A way to measure, in terms of objective measures, is our patronage data. But there will also be a whole range of other measures; we are not looking to measure the excitement. We will measure through some objective. It is to encourage more people to use public transport, be talking about public transport and to use it not only for commuting, which is what we have traditionally seen in Canberra, but also to have people excited about using it on the weekend. I think that that is what we have seen over the past six or seven weeks. There has been a real increase in weekend patronage, which does deliver a seven day a week network. There will be subjective measures and objective measures, many of which will be referenced in the budget papers.

THE CHAIR: What feedback has the directorate received on the new bus network since it commenced?

Ms Fitzharris: A wide range of feedback.

THE CHAIR: How many complaints have been received?

Ms Fitzharris: We can give you the number of pieces of correspondence that we have received but I think that that would be hard to break down into a number of categories. I think we have some categories for you. We can probably take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. What is your action plan for addressing complaints that have been raised?

Ms Fitzharris: The Transport Canberra officials have put a lot of work into designing the new network and consulting on the new network over an extensive period of time. That was a huge effort by a lot of people. Since the network started, there has been an incredible amount of work, both behind the scenes working with individuals, working with community groups and especially working with schools as well as the customer service officers being out at the interchanges talking to people on a day-to-day basis. Duncan can give you a little more detail about some of that and we can take specific questions.

Mr Edghill: I may be able to answer the question that we just took on notice. I think there have been about—not complaints but just items of feedback—4,500 over the first seven weeks. To put that into context, just generally within Transport Canberra we receive a heap of feedback in any event; calls to Access Canberra. If you look at the ACT government website, the Transport Canberra website is always the most popularly used one. So it is in that context.

In terms of that feedback, some of them are undoubtedly complaints. Some of them are suggestions; some of them are compliments; some of them are queries. It is the full gamut of everything that you might expect. It really depends upon the nature of the question which is being received.

We have a customer service team within Transport Canberra. It works closely with Access Canberra. If it is a piece of feedback which is in the nature of feedback that does not demand a response, then it is noted. But there is a range, particularly since the establishment of the new network. There is a range of occasions where we have taken feedback from the community. Where there is a quick fix to be had, we do our utmost to do that.

For example, there have been instances with the new network when, if there was a school bus that was at capacity and there was a way to kind of deal with that quickly by swapping out one form of bus for a steer-tag or an articulated bus, then we did that. If it is more in the nature of a substantive comment, it gets noted. Then as we consider our future network changes down the line, it effectively goes to the consultation process around those future network changes.

That is a kind of long-winded way of saying that if it is a piece of feedback that we can deal with quickly and easily, that is always what we try to do. If it is in the nature of something that is more policy or of a more long-term nature, it is noted and then we consider it in future network changes.

THE CHAIR: How does that 4,500 pieces of feedback over the past seven weeks compare to what you would usually receive over similar time frames?

Ms Fitzharris: You could probably compare it to this time last year but I think probably you need to compare it to a network change. I think the previous large-scale network change was in 2014. I do not think we would have that here. Clearly, it is a

massive change. It is probably one of the biggest changes ever. We expected to see a lot more feedback. We expected to hear complaints from people because for a number of people their journey did change. It is certainly higher than what it would have been in an average week at the same point last year. But in terms of a major network change, we expected high levels of feedback.

MRS JONES: I have a supplementary to that. I am sure that you are aware that in the chamber we discussed a particular piece of feedback about the 629 bus that went past Sacred Heart school. The replacement routes 2035 and 2036 now skip Sacred Heart. You mentioned that you would have a look at that. But a constituent has come back to me more recently to say that she has not had any response from your office, even though she has also emailed. Is the process for those who have emailed you similar?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, it should be. Certainly, it will be forwarded to the directorate. If you particularly want to have a chat about Sacred Heart, it may be that there are a variety of ways we have responded. Some have been commentary, some have been specific questions, some have been—I am just not sure about that particular one.

MRS JONES: Can the 2035 and the 2036 buses stop at Sacred Heart?

Ms Fitzharris: Right, okay.

MRS JONES: I am fine if people can have a look at that over the next—

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, sure. We can have a look. In terms of people saying, “I would like you to redesign the bus network,” that is a—

MRS JONES: Understood, but this is not asking for a completely new bus. It is asking for one stop on a route. I know you cannot do that 30 times on a route, but—

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Edghill: Before I hand over to our colleague Peter Steele, I note that all those items of feedback do go into the mix. Sometimes things that at a general level look like they are simple changes in the bus network actually take a little bit of time for us to work through.

MRS JONES: Understood.

Mr Edghill: Every time you stop a bus at a new stop it has a knock-on effect in terms of what happens thereafter. If that bus is meant to be stopping at another school within the kinds of time frames that we strive to have buses turn up within at the next school, then it kind of tips it over that period. It kind of creates another issue for us to deal with.

MRS JONES: Yes, understood.

Mr Edghill: There is also an issue with the fact that drivers have their shifts when they are meant to be working and they need to have breaks. Adding an extra five minutes can eat into the—

MRS JONES: Yes, I think nobody is underestimating how hard it can be to fix these problems. But, for example, do we get back to people? This particular constituent said to me that she has not been contacted. I am happy to find her name for you.

Ms Fitzharris: Okay, sure.

MRS JONES: But she actually has not had a response to whether her complaint, or her request, is being taken up.

Ms Fitzharris: Okay.

MRS JONES: I have raised it in the chamber and here. And at the same time—

THE CHAIR: I hear the same thing from many people.

MRS JONES: The future of bus route 25, which goes along Hilder Street in Weston, and bus route 60, servicing the residents of Gleneagles, are both questions that we have asked. That one was asked 106 days ago, and I have not had a response. Even if the answer is that there is a possibility that it will be rectified, that information is important to those who are asking.

Ms Fitzharris: Can I give you an update? My office has spoken to one parent from Sacred Heart. That has occurred. There have been a variety of—

MRS JONES: It may be a different parent.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, it might be a different parent, on that particular one. There has been a range of follow-up. Those that have asked specific questions ought to have been followed up by now, with a phone call either directly from my office or from Transport Canberra. If it is general commentary, sometimes that is a bit difficult to respond to.

MRS JONES: I think there are people falling through the cracks. The committee has a limited role, in a way, but there is a lot of regular feedback about people not hearing back. Even if what they are saying is a comment—

Ms Fitzharris: Every single email from my office has been acknowledged, with an indication of how that will be responded to, and forwarded on to the directorate. They have made an extensive effort in getting back to people. On schools, in particular, there is also direct correspondence with the schools and also with, obviously, the Education Directorate, for government schools, and with peak bodies in the non-government sector as well. Schools have been communicated with on multiple occasions.

There has been a bit of a mix in the schools in terms of their communication with parent communities. You will know that you might ask your own school principal, “What’s happening with this thing?” He might say to you, “Didn’t you read the newsletter last week?” There are a variety of ways of communicating.

MRS JONES: Of course.

Ms Fitzharris: We have had extensive engagement with schools and also with peak bodies.

MRS JONES: Specifically, with bus route 25, which goes along Hilder Street in Weston, the fear is that it is being scrapped; I do not know. The other one is the rationale for removing bus route 60. Do you have any information on that, or can you come back to us later during the session, perhaps?

Mr Edghill: Certainly, in terms of specific correspondence, I would be more than happy to have the directorate follow up, if a response has not been received.

MRS JONES: Yes, absolutely.

Mr Edghill: In terms of specific bus routes, it is important to note that when we went through the process of redesigning the system it was not the case that we looked at an individual route and said yes, no, or, “What happens with that?” The way that we approached the network was effectively to look at it as a whole. Every single route in the network changed in one form or another.

MRS JONES: I think people can understand that. To the same extent, out of justice to those individuals, some information should go their way about the actual route that was changed. There must be a way of explaining: “The outcome we were trying to get was a direct route through the middle of your suburb 700 times a day,” or whatever the answer is. The voters vote us in here, and we are answerable to them. I think more is less, when it comes to information to the voter.

Ms Fitzharris: I understand that. I am in exactly the same position as you. There has been a whole range of feedback that we have received in different ways. It is clear that people have heard it in different ways. There has been very extensive media coverage of it. There have been extensive messages through Transport Canberra. We have learnt over the course of this process how better to communicate and what people will hear when you speak with them.

This has been a very extensive process. If you were to look at the available information, I would certainly say that, as a parent with kids who are using the network, and who also used the old one, the information available now about school services is infinitely more accessible than the information available beforehand.

MRS JONES: That is good. Finally, I want to ask about kids that transport officers have interacted with. Is there the same number of transport officers in the interchanges now as was the case at the start of the network or has that decreased?

Mr Edghill: There is still the same number of transport officers within the organisation. We have supplemented that with additional customer service agents. In effect, in terms of people available at interchanges, with the new network—

MRS JONES: Are they the ones at interchanges—customer service agents?

Mr Edghill: And transport officers.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a—

MS LE COUTEUR: What is the difference between the two?

Mr Edghill: The key difference between the two is that our transport officers fulfil a number of functions. Our transport officers are available at interchanges, but if there is a collision between a bus and a car, for example, they may be called upon to deal with that.

MRS JONES: Whereas the customer service agents are the ones who you have sent out to the interchanges?

Mr Edghill: With the introduction of the new network, we were particularly conscious that passengers would have questions about how the new network operates and how you move around it, so it was a conscious decision by us to put customer service agents in place with the commencement—

MRS JONES: And they are still there?

Mr Edghill: Yes, they are still there.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a process in place to regularly collect feedback from those customer service agents and transport officers at interchanges?

MRS JONES: On numbers of disoriented children, for example—or is it more anecdotal?

Mr Edghill: It depends upon the nature of what is happening. We have a reporting system whereby, if there is anything happening across the network which is potentially problematic, depending upon the severity of it, my phone will ding, other people's phones will ding, and you get those text messages straightaway. So there is an immediate reporting mechanism.

MRS JONES: Is there a training document? Who is sending you that information? Is it the customer service—

Mr Edghill: We have transport officers. It depends upon the nature of any situation, of course. As you could appreciate, given the breadth and complexity of the network, all sorts of things happen which have nothing to do with the new or the old network. All sorts of odd things can happen—and good things. Depending upon the nature of the incident, we have procedures in place that give us guidance as to how we categorise those. They will then send through immediate reports, depending upon the severity of the incident, so that there is appropriate escalation.

MRS JONES: If the incident is that they have assisted someone younger, who maybe had not been at a bus interchange much before, to find their bus, you do not know about that?

Mr Edghill: Typically, we would think of that as business as usual for our customer service agents. If it is somebody who is disoriented and needs medical assistance then they come through.

THE CHAIR: You do not know how many children have potentially been lost and disoriented under the new network?

Mr Edghill: I would hope none have been lost.

Ms Fitzharris: If a child is lost—

THE CHAIR: Lost and seeking help from the customer service agent—

Ms Fitzharris: That is what they are there to help with, and you would find that on any—

THE CHAIR: But you do not know how many children have been in that situation?

Ms Fitzharris: No, and we would not have known about it beforehand either.

Mr Edghill: No. If it is the case that—

MRS JONES: I do not think you had those customer service operators before on a regular basis, did you?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, so now is an improvement on the previous situation.

MRS JONES: We are asking about the data that they are collecting, to get a better picture.

Mr Edghill: If, within the organisation, it is “lost” in the sense that there is a child who has never used a bus before, who has stayed on beyond their stop and needs to get home, and we send out a transport officer to take that child home, in that circumstance, absolutely, we know about it.

MRS JONES: What we have had reported was about—

MR PETTERSSON: Does that happen often?

MRS JONES: when kids had to learn how to do the changes. You would have seen a dip, but—

Mr Edghill: I think our experience is that probably the students are the most resilient of our users. Kids know how to figure things out. In terms of a customer service officer—

MRS JONES: You obviously have not been reading the same correspondence that we have.

Mr Edghill: In terms of the customer service officer saying, “You have to go to

platform 2 or platform3,” that is business as usual and we do not capture that data.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a number of follow-ups about the actual complaints. The basic complaint that I have is that under the previous network I had a bus which went reasonably close to where I am, and it took me to where I wanted to go. Now I have to catch three buses. I have to get a bus from where I am, down to a rapid, then the rapid takes me to the closest town centre to where I want to go and I have to get a third bus to get to where I want to go. I appreciate that that is the whole idea of the new network.

Of course, the hope with the new network is that most people will be able to walk to a rapid. The issue is that not everybody can walk to the rapids. We have a population that is ageing; also, in winter, it is really cold out there. I appreciate the efficiency reasons for doing the hub and spoke, but what are you going to do about the fact that there is a substantial minority in Canberra that find the change very problematic?

I will talk later about the flexible bus service, but I am not talking specifically about people who are at that level of disability. It is about the people for whom this is taking a lot longer, and it is harder.

Ms Fitzharris: Perhaps we could set the bigger scene. I understand that there will be questions, and generally, all the way through, we have said very clearly that we are much more likely to hear from people where it has been a change for them and they are finding it different, as opposed to those other people. The figures show that there are more people, more boardings and more journeys on weekdays, and particularly on the weekends. The number of people transferring is actually very low. In the previous network 0.13 per cent of passengers would have had three transfers, and in the new network it is 0.25 per cent.

With a lot of the letters that I have received, for example, many were received before the new network started, so they had not yet had the opportunity to try it. Certainly, the peak of correspondence about the new network was in week 1; there was less in weeks 2, 3 and 4. If you map it, that is what it looks like.

We are genuinely looking to respond to a number of those issues. For some people a bus stop might have now appeared in front of their residence, whereas previously there was not one. I know particularly of one retirement village that now has a bus stop right outside, and dozens of residents there are delighted. Equally, there are some where that has not been the case for them.

With respect to designing a network that makes sense for the city as a whole, and that takes into account all of those factors that have been spoken about—actually properly designing a public transport network—that has been done. Genuinely listening to the feedback is again something we have genuinely been doing.

MRS JONES: I think what Ms Le Couteur was getting at, which is an important question, is that there is a group of people who are worse off. We do not know exactly how big that group is, but we hear from them on a regular basis—in particular, older Canberrans who have to walk further. Do you have a particular plan for those people? I think that is the crux of it.

Ms Fitzharris: Certainly, in broad terms, Caroline mentioned people having to transfer three times. I wanted to—

MS LE COUTEUR: They complain about this, yes.

Ms Fitzharris: I know you referred to a substantial minority of people. I think it is worthwhile understanding some of the data, and the number of people who will transfer three times is very small—less than one per cent. And I appreciate that. The broader issue—

MRS JONES: Maybe they are not catching the bus because they have to transfer.

Ms Fitzharris: is that there are more people catching the bus.

MRS JONES: Maybe that group is not catching the bus.

MS LE COUTEUR: Usually that group is saying, “It’s going to take me an hour and a half when it took half an hour, and it will take me a quarter of an hour in the car so I’m not going to use public transport.”

Ms Fitzharris: I heard that from people beforehand; probably a little bit less since. We are genuinely taking all this feedback on board. A few small adjustments have been made since the network launched and all the feedback we are getting now—because not everything will be 100 per cent right—will be factored in when we come to review the network over the course of the next six and 12 months.

There will be some people who need to walk further, and we recognise that. For other people it will be a different experience. We have to balance both of these things. You cannot have a system that is going to meet everybody’s needs all the time to take them from where they currently live to where they currently work. I have also seen correspondence saying, “This worked perfectly for me because I worked in Barton, and now that my job has changed it is working differently for me.” There are swings and roundabouts in that sort of feedback.

MS LE COUTEUR: Probably the route I have had most feedback about is the number 3 specifically, because it used to go to Calvary. There seem to be quite a few people who decided to live in a certain place partly because of the proximity to Calvary on the number 3. It does not seem that they have any real alternatives.

Mr Edghill: That is related to the difference between a bus and light rail. To be honest, part of the answer there is that light rail has tracks in the ground and does not move and buses by necessity can change as the needs of the city demand.

In terms of route 3—again, if I take this a step backwards—when we design the network we try to deliver the best possible outcome for Canberra as a whole. That invariably means there will be changes for some people and other people win. What is the ultimate measure? The ultimate measure is patronage, and we have been delighted with the outcomes from the new network.

Route 3 also goes through the ANU, and we found that the vast majority of ANU students were not using route 3; they are using the rapid routes and the other routes that service the outside of the university. When we are starting with a blank sheet of paper and we know that the route 3 patronage is not as high as somewhere else in the network, that is when we make that decision of where we put the route, where we are going to create the best overall outcome.

We freely acknowledge that for some people that may mean it is more difficult, while others are winners. But if you look at where we were with the old network, we have very low rates of public transport usage in Canberra compared to other major cities. If you look at how many people catch the bus to get to work in the morning, for example, it is about eight per cent, so that means 92 per cent of Canberrans were not choosing public transport.

By improving the network and by creating that choice for Canberrans we are ultimately hoping to see a lift in public transport patronage over time. As part of doing that, tough decisions needed to be made. In this instance it meant putting that resource to more effective use somewhere else in the network.

THE CHAIR: Going back to schoolchildren, Mr Edghill, you said that if a child had missed their stop and needed to get home a transport officer would drive them home and you would know about that incident. Can you take on notice the number of times transport officers have had to drive children home?

Mr Edghill: I can take it on notice, but it is a very rare event. We bump our side mirrors a reasonable amount, but anything to do with schoolchildren is typically a really rare event and something that is escalated quite quickly.

Ms Fitzharris: There were 240 dedicated school services in the previous network and there are now 224. My kids catch a mix of dedicated school services and public services, and I know that things will come up, just as they did with the old network. Our Transport Canberra team understand that what is happening across the network on any given day is a reflection of our community. Those incidents have happened in the past and they will happen under the new network in the future.

MR PETTERSSON: You have been talking about patronage numbers a lot for the wider population. Do you have patronage numbers for students?

Mr Edghill: The short answer is yes. Of course, we always encourage them to make sure they are tapping on and off with their MyWay cards because that improves the quality of our data. One of the features of the new network is that we have seen an uplift in student usage of the public transport network. We measure by boardings, and that is consistent with other jurisdictions, but regardless of whether you measure by boardings or journeys there has been an uplift from the corresponding time last year.

MRS JONES: Do you want to take the exact numbers on notice?

Mr Edghill: Would you like the exact numbers?

MR PETTERSSON: That would be good.

Ms Fitzharris: This time last year, 580,225 journeys; now, 599,397. So in total nearly 20,000 more journeys.

MRS JONES: Is it a journey when you get on and get off again or is it when you get home?

Ms Fitzharris: A journey is where there may have been an interchange. You have been very vocal in your criticism of using the journey figures as opposed to the boarding figures.

MRS JONES: Just curious.

Ms Fitzharris: I am just responding to the previous question. That was journeys on the overall network and passenger boardings have also gone up.

THE CHAIR: Can you isolate unique passengers within that data?

Mr Edghill: We can aggregate journeys where they have used a MyWay card.

THE CHAIR: So a journey is a passenger taking a trip that might have multiple changes?

Mr Edghill: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: As opposed to boardings.

MRS JONES: Can you clarify the whole thing?

Ms Fitzharris: Boardings has been a measure we have used frequently. In the first week of the new network we put out figures on instances of boardings, and I was heavily criticised by the opposition for using boardings. I just referred to a journey time, and I think the implication was, "Oh, but that's journey times, not boardings."

MRS JONES: No, there are no implications here. People like me who are not swatting up on this in their spare time want to understand the definitions of the different terms.

Mr Edghill: A boarding is when you tap on and tap off. If somebody were to catch two buses and tap on twice in one journey, that counts as two boardings. Boardings are how the ACT and other jurisdictions count patronage because that gives you the count of people getting on to a bus or a tram. If you look back at the budget papers for however long, our patronage has always been measured by boardings.

What we are seeing in the new network versus the old network is that the ratio of boardings is pretty much the same. In the old network we were at 1.31 boardings per journey; at the moment we are at 1.36 or 1.37 boardings per journey. What is happening with the new network is that, using the example that was given before, some people now have to make an interchange in their journey where they did not have to before and other people no longer have to make an interchange where they did

before. There are also new users to the system who have a single seat journey. The rapid route to the airport, for example, which did not exist before, is now creating a single seat journey for people. So the effects have netted themselves out across the system.

MS LE COUTEUR: This is a sort of continuation of what I was talking about before. One of the alternatives for people who the new bus system does not suit is the flexible bus service. Why was there only a one-year extension in the budget papers for flexible bus services? It seemed like a very good idea.

Ms Fitzharris: It is, but we could do so much more with it and so much more with the rest of the capacity that exists in the community transport sector. That is a piece of work that is at the point where we are getting to the end of a particular procurement process. We hope that it looks even bigger and better in future years. We will continue to fund it; we remain very committed not only to the existing service but to opportunities to improve that service and make it available to many people.

MS LE COUTEUR: So it should not be seen as likely to—

Ms Fitzharris: No, definitely not.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is obviously a somewhat on-demand service, though not very. What work are you doing in terms of on-demand services, the last mile issue?

Mr Edghill: There is a procurement process on foot at the moment which is looking at a new booking system which can be applied for both the flexible service and potentially other shuttle services that we are running in the new network.

As you quite rightly pointed out, the flexible bus service at the moment is kind of demand responsive, but we acknowledge that there is a lead time that is needed for bookings. We are very keen to see what we can do to bring down some of those lead times. A big part of that will be the procurement process that we are going through at the moment for that new booking system. Off the back of that, between that and work which is underway around future ticketing systems, there will be an opportunity in the future for us to think about the more efficient and customer-friendly delivery of some of those services so that you can book less in advance, for example. Or maybe there are some other services where, when you are getting into mobility as a service space, you are able to combine some of your public and private transport offerings in a seamless journey.

There is a lot happening in the industry at this point, particularly around demand-responsive services. The New South Wales government, for example, have had a couple of demand-responsive bus services, some of which have come to an end because they did not quite work as they had wanted, some of which are going exceptionally well. As well as what we are doing here, we have close relationships with other public transport authorities throughout Australia. Off the back of what they are doing and off the back of our own procurement processes, we are trying to shape public transport's future in Canberra in a way which is as customer friendly as possible. I would expect that, in the coming years, you will see some advancements in those spaces in Canberra.

MS LE COUTEUR: I certainly hope so.

Ms Fitzharris: In addition, during the day and during the week the flexible bus service meets the needs of people in the community who have mobility issues or might be recovering from an operation or have a variety of other needs. In terms of the last mile, over the last couple of years we have had work with Uber; we have partnered with them to offer discounted last-mile services on the way home over the summer period. That has been well-received. A range of those options are being trialled around the country. In the future we will provide a mix of services to people to be able to meet their needs at different times of the day and different times of the year, and also for different customer groups.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is that going to envisage still having what I call a kiss-and-ride facility so that people can be dropped off by private transport, taxi, Uber or something somewhere where you can get on a bus? The newer interchanges do not seem to have places for private cars to drop off in any easy way. If you are really in that because you cannot walk much, it is what you need.

MRS JONES: Yes, with the disability stuff.

Mr Edghill: Yes. With the footprint of some of the existing interchanges there are constraints that we are working on. Through the process that we are going through with the Woden bus interchange and how that interacts not only with light rail but with other forms of transport and the land environment around it, there is an opportunity for us to really think about that kind of seamless integration between those different transport options. It is definitely something that we are alive to.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good. And can I just reflect on something. Mr Edghill, earlier you said you had to make some tough decisions. Presumably you did work on the costs and benefits of those tough decisions. Did you look at the greenhouse gas emissions, for instance, of decisions which would have included more buses? I know that for decades the government has had modal share targets for bus use which traditionally are optimistic and never actually are met. Did you look at those decisions in terms of meeting those modal share targets or the greenhouse targets?

Ms Fitzharris: Broadly, in terms of tough decisions and meeting emissions reductions targets, arguably one of those is light rail. Investing in public transport is a decision that you make to invest in significantly transforming the public transport network. One of the biggest changes that we can make on climate change emissions, as you know very well, is reducing emissions from private vehicles.

MS LE COUTEUR: Exactly. That is my point, really.

Ms Fitzharris: Fundamentally, in terms of tough political decisions and tough political campaigns, light rail was probably one of the toughest that has been seen in the city. Subsequent to that, the fundamental redesign of the network, going from two rapid services in 2016 to now having 10, is again a significant decision because it meant a significant redesign of the whole network. So it is in terms of those decisions, and then we have further work to do on the procurement of lower emission buses as

well.

MS LE COUTEUR: The context in which Mr Edghill said this was when he was talking about tough decisions about trading off in the bus network. I would be looking at the tough decision to put some more money into our public transport. That is where I am going. I am pleased we have done what we have done. My standard response to constituents is that there is a limit of resources for our public transport and this is probably the best trade-off that could be made, given what resources there are. But the issue is not making the tough decision to put more resources in.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes. The other tough decision is knowing that, with the redesign of this network, it fundamentally changed almost every bus network in the city. That is why I think we have had a level of feedback. If you had a look at the previous network and you tried to map it and say, “Does it make sense that that particular route might take an hour and 20 minutes to get from one side of the city to another?” it might not make sense, but it made perfect sense for the people that were using it. Broadly, they are some of the tougher decisions that were made.

But fundamentally what this has meant over the last four years has been that we have had a completely different debate about public transport. Prior to 2016 the debate was about whether or not we needed to invest in public transport. In 2016 the debate was about which form of public transport we were going to invest in. We have significantly shifted as a city, and I think that is a good thing.

MR PETTERSSON: I want to go to the change to the network. One of the numbers that was mentioned before was that the ratio of boardings to June was at 1.3, and it has only changed to 1.36. If we have changed to a hub and spoke model, should that number have changed more?

Mr Edghill: It is one of those things where, until you actually make the change, you can never be 100 per cent certain how it is going to pan out. If anything, we have been more pleased with the network than we anticipated.

The experience of other cities around the world when there is a fundamental redesign of the public transport network is that quite often you actually see a reduction in patronage as new users who are affected do not catch the bus, the tram, the train or whatnot anymore. There is a lag time: it takes a bit of time for people who have not considered public transport as a viable alternative to become aware of what is happening. You are looking at a year or two years down the track before patronage picks up. In that respect, we have been really happy that patronage did not drop; it actually went the other way straight off the bat, which is fantastic.

In terms of the interchanges with the new network, because we changed from a lot of meandering, single seat journeys to frequent rapid routes, there may have been a thought that we could see more interchange in the network. But I think the reasons it has held fairly steady from the old network to the new network are the ones I articulated before. One of the features of the network is that there are some connections between local and rapid services, but we have gone from having four rapids to effectively 10 rapids in the network, which is more convenient for a lot of users. A lot of users are looking at it and saying, “That new rapid is providing me with

a single seat journey from A to B, to where I want to go.” That has netted out against some of the journeys where there may be an interchange now.

Fundamentally, with the new network, for a lot of existing and prospective customers it is just change and how exactly you might use the public transport network. The overall net effect has been to hold steady with interchanges.

MRS JONES: One of our witnesses here last Friday from the community groups spoke about the percentage of buses that are accessible. I am sure you have heard me talk about this, too. In their view it was around 80 per cent now. Is that correct?

Ms Fitzharris: A bit higher.

Mr Edghill: Eighty-five per cent, I think it should be.

MRS JONES: Do you have a target of when you would like to get to 100 per cent?

Mr Steele: Absolutely; there is a legislated target for DDA compliance, which is 31 December 2022. In the latest budget there is replacement of 84 vehicles for the Transport Canberra fleet.

MRS JONES: How many are there in the fleet?

Mr Steele: The fleet number is 454. That is the figure I have in my head; it can change. There are 72 of the non-DDA compliant orange buses left. Some are painted as a dinosaur—essentially, they are the orange buses with the steps. They will go as part of this replacement program.

MRS JONES: Does that replacement program conclude in December 2022 or this year?

Mr Edghill: The replacement and growth program is ongoing, but that is the point in time—

MRS JONES: When they will be gone.

Mr Edghill: when the yellow buses should be gone. We are getting close to parity now between the blue and orange buses.

MRS JONES: Some people have talked about the fact that they know when their bus is coming via some of the apps and so on, but they do not know whether it is accessible. So if you are a mum with a pram or a person with a wheelchair, you cannot, a hundred per cent, be sure, when you are planning. When we get to that point, everyone will be pretty relieved.

I want to go back to the new network. Driver shortages on the weekends: I understand that this has been one of the things that have been difficult with the new network, to try to get that real increase on the weekends when you have a voluntary option to choose, through the union’s preference. Is that right?

Ms Fitzharris: It is through the EBA.

MRS JONES: When is the next EBA being negotiated, and is there an option for a dedicated workforce who like to work on the weekends, for example, as their second job?

Ms Fitzharris: We have a bit of a mix of that now, anyway, between full time, part time and casual. The EBA has just been concluded, so the next one is in four years.

MRS JONES: It will remain for four years with the voluntary weekends, presumably?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, that is right, and it has been that way for—

MRS JONES: Can you offer incentives for the weekends or anything like that? Have you thought of that?

Ms Fitzharris: We will continue to have discussions with the drivers. Now that we have genuinely moved to a seven-day-a-week network, that is new. What you do see now is the same routes over the course of the weekends, very different frequencies and many more services over the weekend. I think there will be an ongoing discussion with them around that, and around what some of the options are for that in the future.

MRS JONES: Even very recently, you have still had failure on the weekends to have enough drivers; is that correct?

Ms Fitzharris: It might be helpful to talk about how that is managed. There are certainly enough drivers.

THE CHAIR: How many service failures have there been on the weekends?

MRS JONES: On the weekends there are.

Ms Fitzharris: There are enough drivers. It is about how many of them will sign up to work a weekend roster.

MRS JONES: Yes; that is what I mean. How many drivers do you have for weekend rosters and how many do you need?

Mr Edghill: This issue, in some respects, is not related to the new network because it was something that existed beforehand.

MRS JONES: No; it has been an ongoing issue.

Mr Edghill: What has brought it to attention is that, as the minister remarked, there are hundreds more services that we are delivering per weekend under the new network, which we think is a positive. In terms of the weekend services, it can depend a little bit upon whether it is a long weekend or whatever the case may be. Generally, we are delivering in excess of 90 per cent for the weekend network.

MRS JONES: Yes, but if someone is planning their weekend—

Mr Edghill: We appreciate that.

MRS JONES: Maybe we should get some members of the community who are connected to the union to give them a little shove and say, “Maybe we actually need a weekend workforce.”

Mr Edghill: From Transport Canberra’s perspective, of course, with everything we do, we are trying to make life good for as many people as we possibly can, and get as many people as possible using public transport. The way that we address the weekend filling of shifts is multifaceted. There are proposed rosters that go up in our depots in advance of every weekend. We will have discussions with individual drivers, if it is looking like numbers may be falling short, to encourage people to fill the shifts. We have a continuing rolling recruitment process on foot at the moment, which is really focused on engaging drivers who are more inclined to work on the weekend. We also try to manage on the ground on a weekend so that, if there are some services which are going to be lost, we do it in a way that creates as few issues as possible.

MRS JONES: Do you have, perhaps, some stand-by drivers?

Mr Edghill: For example, if it is a route where there is a bus, five minutes later another bus, and five minutes later another bus, we are more inclined, if we have to move a service, to move that five-minute one in the middle, so that there is still a bus coming in 10 minutes, rather than remove a bus that maybe has a 30-minute frequency. We try to minimise the impact as much as possible. We are in constant dialogue with our driver workforce, and we are constantly going through the recruitment process to try and minimise weekend issues.

MRS JONES: Is there a way of incentivising weekend work over and above the EBA?

Mr Edghill: Effectively, part of what we are going through at the moment when we are hiring people is that we have a real focus on our casual driver workforce. The reason is that, naturally, those drivers will have more of an incentive because they do not have fixed routes during the week.

MRS JONES: They can keep another job during the week.

Mr Edghill: Exactly.

THE CHAIR: How many weekend service failures have there been since the commencement of the new network?

MRS JONES: Do you have a statistic on that?

Mr Edghill: Yes, I am not sure if I have it to hand.

MRS JONES: You can take it on notice.

THE CHAIR: Take that on notice; thank you.

Mr Edghill: I may need to take this on notice.

THE CHAIR: How often have transport officers had to run the field van because of those service failures?

Mr Edghill: We run the field van, kind of regardless, all the time. Is the question in terms of how often have we had to run it to see if there are people who are left waiting?

THE CHAIR: To cover for service failures, yes.

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

THE CHAIR: You will take that on notice; thank you.

MR PETTERSSON: I have never heard that before. What is the field van?

Ms Fitzharris: You probably have seen it.

MR PETTERSSON: Is it a small van? I am sure it is the vans I have seen, but what do they do?

Mr Edghill: They do a few things. As you can appreciate, our public transport officers need cars because if there is a problem with the public transport network they cannot catch the bus to wherever the problem is. They need to drive there. For that reason, we have cars. What the mini-vans do is everything that we need them to do. If there is an accident involving a bus, they will use the van to get out there.

MRS JONES: Decamp the people as well.

Mr Edghill: Yes. For example, if there is a breakdown of a school bus or if a bus on the weekend is not available, rather than us leaving people stranded, if it makes sense in the circumstances we will ask the transport officers to drive the route and check on customers and check on bus stops. Then, yes, if somebody needs to be transported from one place to another in a bus, the vans are available for that also.

MRS JONES: Are they used if there is a breakdown on the light rail as well or is that a totally separate workforce management type of business?

Mr Edghill: Yes. Canberra Metro has its own customer response people. If there were to be a completely catastrophic failure of the light rail network, we have arrangements in place with Canberra Metro where we would, on an emergency basis, organise our bus network to fill the gap if there were that problem. We have those contingency plans in place.

MRS JONES: So you would help each other.

THE CHAIR: You said “catastrophic” earlier. How are you defining that?

Mr Edghill: It really depends upon the circumstances and when it happens. A failure in the light rail system in Monday morning peak has a different impact than some other point in time. It is not an instantaneous thing, where we can shift buses to cover for light rail. If it is a software issue with a light rail vehicle and it may be out of action for 10 minutes or cause a 10-minute delay to the system, in that circumstance we would very likely not stand up the bus network because by the time we have done that, the system is fixed. It is really, in the circumstances, a balance. The ultimate question is: what is going to get our passengers moved the quickest? That is what guides our decision.

MRS JONES: Finally, I briefly go back to the discussion we were having earlier about feedback from individuals. I wanted to put on the record some feedback from Dr Amarjit Singh Grewal in Macgregor, who is particularly upset by or disturbed by the more frequent services line that is being used. In his case, he has obviously fewer. He was taking the 743 from Macgregor to where he needed to go, and the R2 takes a lot longer. In his view, he is worried about misleading or deceptive conduct because of the claim that services are faster. Obviously, this service is not. Do you want to put something on the record for Dr Grewal?

Mr Edghill: The route that the constituent is talking about is an Xpresso route. I think one of the important things for us in thinking about convenience and journey time for the customer is that the customer experience does not start and end from the time they get on the bus to the time they get off the bus. It is about the time spent in totality getting from where you want to be.

With an Xpresso, absolutely, if you were there and you got it on time, you got from A to B without stopping anywhere in the middle on some occasions. But the real issue with the Xpresso service was the fact that if the last Xpresso left at 6.32 in the evening and you were at work and you had to stay back or had to do something and you missed it then what were your options?

MRS JONES: Because it is not an all-day, all-night service?

Mr Edghill: Exactly. Some of the feedback that we have received relates to going from Xpressos to rapids. This is by design. Where it is of benefit to you is if you miss the bus. That is okay because there is another rapid bus coming five minutes behind.

MRS JONES: On the way.

Mr Edghill: That is the real balance with the Xpresso. What we were finding in the old network was that, just on an aggregate basis, many more people were using rapid buses than Xpressos anyway. But even on a per bus basis, there are actually about twice as many people using the rapid buses than the Xpresso buses. I have had this experience myself.

The reason for this is that the beginning of your journey in the morning, or the beginning of any journey, you can kind of plan it to a T. That is okay. But where you have the potential to lose confidence in your public transport network is if you do not exactly know when you are going to get back home and you do not exactly know how

that is going to work if there is only one express bus and you miss it.

So part of the design of the new network—this is why we talk about the more frequent seven-day network—is to give the community confidence that you do not exactly have to know when you are going to go home because there will be a bus turning up shortly or a light rail vehicle turning up shortly to get you there. That is the real kind of Xpresso-rapid trade-off.

MRS JONES: I suppose there is at least an acknowledgement in what the minister said earlier. Obviously, it is worth acknowledging for those who are upset by it that it is not faster for everybody, it is not quicker for everybody and it is not easier for everybody. I think that is what you were saying before.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, and I think that that is not a possible thing to achieve for every variety of journey, either. But the background to this was looking at the numbers of patronage and the type of network that we had that had incrementally grown. It was not really having any impact on patronage. We have had this discussion a lot, particularly in the chamber, about what does work. Rapid turn up and go services are consistent and have the same number on the weekend. It is confusing when you have got a completely different route on the weekend.

MRS JONES: That is right.

Ms Fitzharris: That lowers confidence in the overall network and generally means that people only use it to get to and from work and then forget about it for the rest of their lives. That is not a public transport network that can meet the needs of a growing city. This is the design. It is a fundamental design around rapids and local services. In the future they will change again, but for some time they will not move away from that fundamental design principle that has been the big change. I think why we had confidence in that was the original rapids. Their patronage numbers were strong and continued to grow. When the black and green came on in 2017, those numbers were also very strong. That data will grow over time. People's confidence in the system will grow over time.

The fact that we have been able to put buses into new suburbs is a really fundamental principle that we have been seeking to achieve for some time. So people, whether they are in Wright, in Taylor or in new parts of the city, can move into the suburbs. The people in Throsby now have a bus service. Previously, they did not. Throsby is only partially built and partially populated. But when you have the service there when the suburb opens up and when people start to move in, you have a much better chance of increasing usage from day one.

MR PETTERSSON: I was wondering if you could take us through the expected and actual patronage numbers of light rail.

Mr Edghill: Within the light rail stage 1 business case there were two measurement points for our patronage estimates for light rail; there was a 2021 and a 2031 estimate. The light rail patronage estimate at 2021 was a bit over 15,000; by 2031 the figure was, from memory, 18,000 or something like that.

In any event, what we have pleasingly seen is that the light rail system has been better patronised than we were anticipating, from day one, which is fantastic. The numbers on a day-to-day basis vary. Part of that, particularly at this time of year, is that a lot of public transport usage in Canberra is, as you might appreciate, particularly where it is discretionary travel, very weather dependent. Across buses, light rail or whatever, if it is raining, people are less inclined. If it is a great day, they will get out there and use public transport.

What we have been seeing is that in broad terms we are already achieving our 2021 patronage estimates of 15,000 boardings per weekday. During the free travel period, we were experiencing light rail patronage that was getting up to our 2031 forecast. The biggest day that we had on light rail was Friday, 17 May. We got exceptionally close to the 19,000 boardings on that particular day.

All in all, we have been particularly pleased with the raw number of the patronage on the light rail, but what has been especially pleasing is some of the inter-peak patronage that we have seen. I have the good fortune, at the moment anyway, that my office overlooks Dickson. A striking feature has been that you can look out the window at lunchtime and there will be people on reasonably full light rail vehicles going one way or the other.

MR PETTERSSON: Are there any other trends emerging from the data apart from the anecdotal account from looking out of the window?

Mr Edghill: One of the observations that we are seeing is that people are beginning to think differently about how they travel and what is close to you. I could use the example of our team in the office at Dickson. Before, going up to, say, Kmart in Gungahlin was probably not something that you could duck out and do in your lunchbreak particularly easily. Now there is a recognition that you can get on there and be back in your lunch hour. We saw people across the entirety of the line realising that they could go to yum cha in Dickson for lunch, whereas maybe they would not have done that before. People realise that they can get on in Gungahlin at the weekend and the city is a much easier prospect than it was. It is that shift of people thinking about distance and closeness, not in terms of just distance but in terms of travel time and convenience. That is still evolving, and will continue to evolve, but that kind of change in thinking is there.

The other observation that I would make is that school students have flocked to light rail, which is great. We put dedicated school buses on for some schools, and patronage for those along the route has been a little less than we anticipated because, even if it is not the bus at the front door and they have to walk 100 metres or whatever it is to get to the light rail, students are voting with their feet and saying, "I would much rather go down to the light rail line." As a consequence of that, at school bell time in the afternoon, we have put different services on to cater for that. If you have had the opportunity to drive down Northbourne at afternoon school bell time, you will see a lot of school students flocking to the light rail stops. That has been something which has been even more popular than we had anticipated.

MR PETTERSSON: Still on stage 1, I was wondering if you could give me any updates on a light rail stop for Mitchell. Are there any time frames?

Ms Fitzharris: Could I just add to that. You will appreciate this as a member for Yerrabi. A couple of times I have sat in the town centre and just watched what was happening on the weekend with light rail. You would see what looked like tourists from other parts from the city arrive in Gungahlin and look around at this place that they had never visited before. I have been in the bookshop there with people saying, “What can I have? Where can I go for lunch in Gungahlin?” You see people who generally look like tourists.

Someone said to me that it is starting to change the geography of the city. If you live in the inner north and have not travelled north before, now that is an option. Some of the businesses have really noted that. They have seen that change and started to see more people coming to visit Gungahlin on the weekend. I expect that that will continue. The commonwealth will, hopefully, get underway with their DHA move to Gungahlin. That will be more people moving north, hopefully, to work in Gungahlin.

That has been one of those more anecdotal experiences of light rail, with people using it on the weekend when they would not have otherwise or to go out at night. I would always say that you could have done that with the buses as well, but there has been a different pull with light rail than there was with the previous bus network.

MR PETTERSSON: I agree. Previously, it was the supermarkets that drew people north.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, to Dickson Woolies.

MR PETTERSSON: Now people are coming out for lunch, going to get coffee. It is a nice change.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, it is good.

MR PETTERSSON: Time frames for the Mitchell light rail stop?

Mr Edghill: There is funding for the construction of the stop over the next two financial years. We are working through that process at the moment to get something underway as soon as we appropriately can. There is a broader logistical question about potentially doing the Mitchell stop in conjunction with other works that may need to happen in the future, but our current expectation is that there will be arrangements which are finalised in the 2019-20 financial year. Then there is more detailed planning that needs to be finalised with Canberra Metro to determine the precise time of delivering it. That is when we are talking about.

Provision has been made for building the Mitchell stop. We have futureproofed that area of Sandford Street. One of the things we need to think through in actually building it is that you cannot build a stop in a live rail environment, so it is thinking about the night-time hours when you can build it. That is one question. Then, with Canberra Metro, we would need to work through what it means for the journey time of the whole system. That is related to the payment mechanism and some of the more complicated arrangements within the PPP contract. It is not quite as simple as just going in there and pouring in concrete and then you are done, but it is something that

we are actively working through at present.

MR PETTERSSON: At this point you are looking at night works and not interrupting the services during the day?

Mr Edghill: Our strong preference is not to stop the city's mass transit system while we build a stop, so we will be working around that. By definition, that means that you are really looking at engineering hours as the appropriate time to do that.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a few more questions on light rail stage 1. What is the current peak hour capacity and how does that compare with the current peak hour usage?

Mr Edghill: There are two components to that. There is the capacity of the light rail vehicle itself, and I would like to say it is 267 or thereabouts.

Ms Fitzharris: It is 207.

Mr Edghill: Sorry, 207. I was getting a bit carried away.

MS LE COUTEUR: In a vehicle, but appreciably you have more than one vehicle.

Mr Edghill: But a lot more than a bus. It also depends upon your load factor. That is a comfortable capacity. If we were in Tokyo, they might say that the vehicles can hold more people.

The other element of capacity in the network is how frequently you are running vehicles. At peak hour we are presently running at six-minute frequencies. Because it has been very popular, we have had a sweeper service running. We have enough light rail vehicles that we can, essentially immediately if needs be, increase the frequency. The design of the network itself, in terms of the substations that have been built, provides that without further augmentation the system itself is capable of three-minute headways or three-minute frequencies. That is a way of saying that we have built capacity into the system for immediate and future expansion.

MS LE COUTEUR: This is all really interesting. Do you want to take the question I actually asked on notice? I asked what the current peak hour capacity was and what the current peak hour usage was, neither of which you actually answered.

Ms Fitzharris: Do you want to know how full they are in the peak hours?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, how many is the capacity we can get from Gungahlin to Civic at peak hour, and how many do we actually do? They were the questions I asked; maybe they have to be taken on notice.

Ms Fitzharris: In terms of the precise numbers, yes, we can do that. One of the things that we did was particularly extend the afternoon peak from 6.00 to 6.30, because we were seeing more people, greater numbers, needing or wanting to use light rail a bit later in the day. That is one thing that we have done. We will take that on notice and get the specific numbers for you.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am asking about the current configuration, which is every six minutes or whatever. If you wanted more frequent services, would you have to buy more vehicles?

Mr Edghill: Just on that previous point, we will make an assumption you are referring to just to Gungahlin and the city?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Edghill: Ten vehicles at 207 is 2,070 and that is the capacity in Gungahlin. That is the current capacity on current frequency. If you were to change the frequency then the capacity would change. We have enough vehicles to move to five-minute frequency without needing to purchase additional vehicles. We have 14 light rail vehicles. You always have one or two vehicles spare. Technically, at a bare minimum, we need ten vehicles to run the frequency.

When we made the investment we knew there was a lead time for light rail vehicles, so the ACT government made the decision to invest in an additional two vehicles that were not strictly necessary to meet day one minimums. But we knew that if it ended up being more popular than predicted we might have to at short notice put vehicles in the system. As to the system itself—taking away the light rail vehicles and just focusing on the electrical capacity of the system—we can run at three-minute frequencies.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is it the plan that people will be standing up and there will not be room for bicycles in peak time? That appears to be the situation.

Mr Edghill: There are no plans from our perspective to prohibit bicycles.

MS LE COUTEUR: I did not say prohibit. I do not use the service frequently because it is not where I live, but I have heard many reports that people cannot get their bikes on in peak hours.

Mr Edghill: There is space for four bikes per vehicle. It is the same sort of issue with the bus—if there are already bikes on the rack or in the LRVs then they are at capacity.

Ms Fitzharris: It might depend on where you get on. If you are getting on at the Gungahlin town centre it might be a bit different to getting on at Phillip Avenue, for example.

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate that. It is almost certainly the case that the people I have been talking to are from the inner north.

Ms Fitzharris: But there are bike racks at the stops.

MS LE COUTEUR: But some people like to take their bikes with them.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, I understand that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Have you looked at the option of some trams not going the whole way backwards and forwards but having some that start at EPIC or Dickson to give you greater capacity?

Mr Edghill: There have been occasions where we have run what we have called a sweep of service in peak routes—come out of the depot in Mitchell, turn right and run down to the city. That can help provide extra capacity in that southern part. In terms of a longer term arrangement for the network, those in-between services or partial services create their own operational difficulties. By far the easiest and the clearest solution for customers is to have the vehicles running from one end to the other.

MS LE COUTEUR: Your website says light rail still does not have a fixed timetable. When is it going to have a timetable?

Mr Edghill: I think the new one is there. It has a timetable; the timetable is actually in the contract, which I think is online. The point we are making is that you do not need to rely on a timetable to know when a light rail vehicle is going to come because they are coming, in peak hours every six minutes, at inter-peaks every ten minutes, and the worst frequency is 15 minutes. It is a turn up and go service. If you turn up at a light rail stop you do not have to have studied a timetable beforehand; you can have confidence that a vehicle is coming very quickly.

MS LE COUTEUR: A quarter of an hour, for some of us, is a reasonable amount of time to wait.

Mr Edghill: The other option is the journey planner, which shows you when the next light rail vehicle is coming. As with other networks you see around the world, for both our rapid bus system and the light rail the customer preference is that you just turn up and have confidence there will be public transport, rather than necessarily looking at timetables.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have just googled it on your website and it says that after the embedding period light rail will be every six minutes et cetera. Maybe there is a timetable hiding behind this but it is certainly not what you are telling people at the beginning. You are saying, “We don’t have a timetable; it’s a normal part of delivering a major infrastructure program. We appreciate your patience as we fine-tune our operations.” Maybe you should have deleted this, but that is the message you got out there.

Ms Fitzharris: We will have a look at the wording.

THE CHAIR: There are still some works going on along the route. When are they expected to be finished?

Ms Fitzharris: The majority of those by August, but one or two elements may take a little bit longer—principally the work around some of the rails that will be installed. But in terms of the intersection works and some elements of resurfacing, they will be done by August.

Hearing suspended from 3.20 to 3.37 pm.

THE CHAIR: We have a quorum, so we will resume the hearing. It was reported that the estimated cost of the light rail launch party was in excess of \$100,000. What was the actual cost of the day's proceedings?

Mr Edghill: I will ask Ed O'Daly to join us, but I can provide some commentary at the outset. For the light rail launch event, there are two components to costs associated with the day. There is the cost of the light rail launch event itself, and that is some of the entertainment and whatnot that you saw there. The other component is not related to an event, but just by virtue of the fact that it was the first day of light rail, whether there was entertainment or not. There was a component of traffic management, crowd safety and crowd management that we needed to invest in, given that we were aware that the launch of light rail would create a lot of community interest. They are the two ways that we were thinking about it. In terms of the exact cost, I will pass to my colleague.

Mr O'Daly: I have read the privilege statement. Would you mind repeating the question?

THE CHAIR: What was the total cost of the proceedings for light rail launch day?

Mr O'Daly: As my colleague said, there were two streams of costs. We knew that day one of operations of the light rail would create a large amount of interest, with large numbers of people. To deal with that we brought in a lot of traffic management and security people to ensure safety on the day. On top of that there was a modest launch event—a celebratory thing that we did at the same time. To deliver that unavoidable day one cost type of thing, we spent \$292,000 on traffic management, security and queue management. As I said, that was for traffic management along the route, so at every stop we had security, traffic management people and some sort of queue supervision. Where we ran the larger events, at either end of the route, we had road closures, queue management and security. Those are the costs that we knew would happen because we know from other jurisdictions that—

THE CHAIR: The public safety element.

Mr O'Daly: Yes, and we know that, on the first day of light rail, whenever that is and whatever celebration you do or do not do, that is the day that people are really excited about. That is where you get the large costs. In terms of the celebratory side of things—things like event management, entertainment, AV, marquees and that kind of thing—we spent \$154,000.

THE CHAIR: Were there any other costs incurred by Canberra Metro or was that cost fully met by Transport Canberra?

Ms Fitzharris: Canberra Metro meet their own costs within the—

THE CHAIR: For the inauguration?

Ms Fitzharris: In terms of what they will pay, that is up to them. In terms of us paying them for that event—

Mr Edghill: We ran light rail vehicles more frequently on the day than we would have on an ordinary weekend. Of course, we pay for those services. But not, as the minister mentioned, Canberra Metro costs.

MRS JONES: Was the \$154,000 out of the \$292,000 or are they two separate—

Mr Edghill: They are two separate costs.

THE CHAIR: In addition, yes. Were there staffing costs on top of that?

Mr Edghill: For Canberra Metro there were.

THE CHAIR: For Transport Canberra?

Mr O'Daly: We had a bunch of volunteers who came out on the day to help. They were volunteering their time. There were about 200 of those. We had staff who, if they were doing it because of their normal day job, took time in lieu, as you normally would if you did some work out of hours.

THE CHAIR: Where were the volunteers drawn from?

Mr O'Daly: Across government. We put the call out across government to see who wanted to come out. We had almost every part of the public service represented. We had people who were nurses, people who were policy people or lawyers. We had people from across government who came out to sign up for the day.

THE CHAIR: There was nobody from outside government? It was all from within government?

Ms Fitzharris: Hands Across Canberra were participating on the day, but they were not volunteering, in terms of assistance to customers on the day.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a grab bag of things which I might have asked as separate questions—some of them as follow-ups. With flexible buses, have you had any increase in sign-ups for them from people who are no longer able to use the main network? Has that changed it at all? I am expecting that the answer is no—

Ms Fitzharris: I do not know if we would know that.

MS LE COUTEUR: because the eligibility is such that, if you were eligible now, you would have been eligible regardless of the network changes.

Mr Edghill: We have certainly been creating community awareness around the flexible bus transport. As part of our communication on the new network we have been reminding Canberrans that those services exist. Whether we have exact numbers to hand—

Ms Flanery: Could you repeat the question?

MS LE COUTEUR: With the flexible bus service, have there been more people signing up for it now that we have network 19, and now that, for some people, it is harder to get to the bus than it was before?

Ms Flanery: A modest increase. With the new network, it is seven weeks old. All of the data is very new. With the number of people that used the service last year compared to this year, we compare time of year. There are so many variables that I think it would be inaccurate for me to say there has or has not been, just because it is so new.

MS LE COUTEUR: Fine, A definite “don’t know”.

Ms Flanery: Do not know yet.

Mr Edghill: In terms of the numbers that are in front of us, there were around 300 more boardings from May to April. As Ms Flanery mentioned, it is probably a little bit too hard at the moment to discern whether that was as a consequence of the new bus network, climatic conditions or whatever the case may be.

MS LE COUTEUR: During question time I asked about bus routes which were overcrowded. You said you were looking particularly at R4, R5 and 32. In particular, with R4, I do a lot of research on that one. What progress has been made on this, and to what extent are there still problems?

Ms Fitzharris: We might ask Peter Steele to rejoin us.

MS LE COUTEUR: I can say that R4 has improved; compared to the early days, it has definitely improved.

Ms Fitzharris: That is good to hear.

Mr Steele: On the capacity of the network, as someone mentioned, the network is seven weeks old. We are constantly staying on top of what is going on. The R4 and the R5 routes are being specifically designed with larger capacity vehicles on them, to help. We anticipated they would be high demand services.

As we see the ridership settle then we can look at specific trips. I know, for example, that on the rapid 5 there was one specific trip that happened to be the only one in the peak hour that had a regular bus on it, and it was getting full. We have swapped that out for a larger capacity vehicle. It is always the way; it is the one bus that is the smaller bus that gets all of the demand. That is the kind of change we have made already on that rapid 5.

The rapid 4, certainly, is a popular service. We are continuing to keep an eye on it, as we do across our network. Route 32 was mentioned. It is another service where we swapped a standard rigid bus for an articulated vehicle, to have three articulated vehicles coming through during that am peak.

That is how we continually monitor the network. We are still tracking, as things go. We can look at a trip level. We can look at whether there is only one trip of a series of

10 buses coming through that is causing that bottleneck. We will then look at how operationally we can amend the service to take care of that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Particularly with the R4, because I know it and it is a very frequent route, have you looked at using your customer service officers better? What I mean in particular is that you are still getting bus bunching. Mildly often, I will get off here and I will look down the road and another R4 is just coming in. Usually, the first R4 will be totally full, because it picked everyone up, and that is why it has slowed down, and on the one behind there will be tonnes of seats. I am suggesting that maybe the customer service officers could say, "Slow down, folks. There's going to be a bus in a minute, and if you wait for a minute, you will get a seat." We see a bus; we hop on the bus that we see. We do not think to do that.

Mr Steele: We mentioned before that we have customer service assistants at the interchanges, and our transport officers. Our transport officers, who are more operationally focused, can work to regulate the headway in the service, to stop three buses going at once, meaning there is a gap, and then another. That is one strategy that we employ, using the transport officers.

For our customer service assistants, that is absolutely the case. They are equipped with iPads as well, so they can see the real-time feed coming through. That is the kind of strategy we will put in place, to say, "Yes, this is full. However, we know another one is two minutes away; so if you wait, you will be able to get a seat on that one."

The first goal will be to regulate the headway. No-one likes seeing three buses in a row and then a big gap. The ability to do that is something we have tried to design into the network. We will look at where they are. If it is because of run times, if there is too much run time or not enough run time, we look at that and we will balance that out, with the idea of really hitting that.

We also manage within traffic as well. While the light rail has that right of way and is there every six minutes, the buses have a bit of competition. We have to work out how we get around that as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: With Cooleman Court, you are making basically a new little interchange. What is the timetabling on that?

Mr Steele: In terms of further improvements to the area?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, in terms of further improvements to the bus stops in Cooleman Court, and particularly the separation.

Mr Steele: I understand that that work has mostly been completed. In Cooleman Court, because of the change through there, the upgrade to Parkinson Street was really to expand the bus area to allow for the rapid, which is from the master plan for the Weston group centre from 2014, I believe. We have put some more shelters in there. The change to the parking around that Cooleman Court area has helped with the flow. It has been announced that there will be a car park built across the road, so there may be further work to ensure pedestrian activity is safe in that area.

MRS JONES: Yes, like getting trolleys across there, for example.

Mr Steele: Yes. Part of that might also be about understanding how people start to use the area and designing it to suit it. In terms of that area, we are still rolling out improved way-finding or signage through the network. Now that Cooleman Court has become a more important interchange for our network, having better signage there and directional signage for our customers is one of the next things we will be going through and rolling out.

MRS JONES: There could be improvement to the car signage there as well, with the changes. That is probably not your area.

Mr Steele: Certainly, how that area operates is very important—the ecosystem of how things move around that area. We can speak to our colleagues from roads about making sure that public transport signage complements any road signage.

MRS JONES: There is a big change for cars there in how they go in and out of the car park. There are fewer entrances because of the bus terminal being put in place. People are still confused about where the in and the out are.

THE CHAIR: Back on the flexi bus, we spoke at annual reports about efforts to expand the flexi bus service and make it more demand responsive. Where is that up to?

Ms Fitzharris: We did speak about that earlier.

Mr Edghill: That is related to the booking system procurement process that we have in train at the moment. Bits have been received. It is in its evaluation phase at present. The idea is that, in order to make the flexible bus network something which is more demand responsive, the implementation of this new booking system will enable that to be more demand responsive than it is today.

MRS JONES: What is the intention? Is it to get it to the stage of being able to book it on the morning and have it come in the afternoon, or the night before for the next day? What are you trying to achieve?

Mr Edghill: Yes, that is part of what we are working through with the bits that have been received at the moment, and what different systems are capable of. Ultimately, for me, you would be talking about minutes, 30 minutes or—

Ms Fitzharris: Certainly not two days.

Mr Edghill: Not two days.

MRS JONES: We spoke earlier about the elderly people who are struggling with the distance to stops in the new network and the changes there. Presumably, part of the intention is to pick those people up.

Mr Edghill: If they qualify for the flexible bus service.

MRS JONES: How do you qualify for the flexible bus?

Ms Flanery: The main category is around age. It is for older people.

MRS JONES: Yes, it is for older people.

Ms Flanery: There are a range of criteria, which are all on our website. The best way, I suggest, is to ring the flexible transport office, and you will be stepped through a process there.

MRS JONES: I will not be ringing the flexible bus service. You might need to take it on notice, because it is good for the record to have what those conditions for use are. In a nutshell, is it older people who are on pension? Is it financial or is it physical?

Ms Flanery: It is in part a service that is door to door. It is not an assisted service. It is not a disability service. It is there to provide an additional service where people are not able to access a bus or where they might find it too difficult to walk to the bus stop. It is a kerb to kerbside system. They can take mobility scooters on it. There is some assistance. There is an assistant on the bus to help them, but it is certainly not one that is a disability service.

THE CHAIR: Are there any plans to expand eligibility?

Ms Fitzharris: I will read the criteria:

Eligibility consideration is given to:

seniors card holders with mobility issues

seniors card holders aged 70 or over

people living in a nursing home and/or retirement village

people impacted by a permanent or temporary disability that prevents them from accessing regular route services

holders of a Vision Impaired (VIP), or Total and Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) travel pass.

MRS JONES: How is the temporary disability measured? Who is the decision-maker?

Mr Edghill: The people at the end of the telephone call take a fairly pragmatic and flexible approach.

Ms Fitzharris: I have been aware of people who were otherwise very active but who had a hip replacement and they were able to use the service.

MRS JONES: The decision-maker is the booking person and they take a flexible approach?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Are you hoping to expand that flexibility or is it just case by case?

Ms Fitzharris: There will be in the future different types of services for different groups of people. I think this one will be dedicated to people who for these reasons need it most. We have talked about some of the examples of other services we see around the country. There might be different types of services for different types of people.

Our main bus network has the rapid services with the biggest buses, the local services have the standard buses, then we use the fleet that we call the special needs transport to take kids to and from schools, and the flexible bus service is using that fleet. We have to look at the available fleet and use that for the best group of people.

MRS JONES: So it is in those other hours?

MS FITZHARRIS: Yes.

Mr Edghill: The service was expanded over the last few years, so it now is a service which covers every region.

MRS JONES: Last year you stated that the ACT's integrated ticketing system will be leapfrogging the New South Wales system in terms of functionality. Is that still the case?

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

MRS JONES: Has it been implemented?

Ms Fitzharris: Not yet. We can give you an update on that process.

Mr Edghill: A procurement process is on foot, but effectively we are looking to move away from a card-based ticketing system, as we have at the moment, to what is called an account-based ticketing system. At present the data as to how much money you have left on your MyWay card is actually on the card itself. With an account-based ticketing system that information is done over internet and it is an account in the background. The advantage of that is—

MRS JONES: Online payments will be immediate.

Mr Edghill: Yes, and the card just becomes a token. You might be able to scan your phone or you could use your Mastercard or Visa in the same way. The world is definitely moving in that direction. One jurisdiction that is in the same space as us at the moment is Queensland. That is the direction of the type of technology that we are heading to.

MRS JONES: At present if you charge a MyWay card online it can take some days for that money to be applied. This would obviously make it immediate because rather than it going to the card—

Mr Edghill: It would be much quicker. In fact, I suspect a lot of people will not have a card.

MRS JONES: When are you hoping to roll that out?

Mr Edghill: Realistically, it is going to take a few years yet just because the procurement and commercial processes need to be resolved, but then you have to go through a process of ordering the equipment. You cannot install the equipment in 450 buses overnight; there is testing, and anything to do with a system being tested takes time.

MRS JONES: And they are both going to have to be up and running for a while, presumably?

Mr Edghill: We are working on the basis that you will have maybe two readers in a bus for some time while we transition.

MRS JONES: Is consideration being given to the new system being in any way compatible with the New South Wales system for people, for example, in Queanbeyan and so on?

Mr Edghill: That is very firmly the direction we are wanting to head in. It is the type of system where you almost do not think of it as a MyWay card anymore; there are lots of different things you can wave at it to make the payment happen. The nirvana for public transport agencies in Australia is that you can use any card and any token in any public transport system across the nation. It will take us a while to get there, but certainly what we are doing now is with a view to that future interoperability with other jurisdictions.

MRS JONES: Wouldn't it be great if you could use it on the rail to Sydney and everything else that is available?

Ms Fitzharris: Parking.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Mr Edghill: Parking. An Uber-type thing. This is the Holy Grail of mobility as a service.

MRS JONES: So we are after the Holy Grail? That is good. Estimates is going well then.

Ms Fitzharris: In the meantime, both in terms of what is on the light rail platforms but also in terms of the machines at interchanges, I think it has been quite a good investment. You can top up your card and get your balance in real time.

MRS JONES: It works.

Ms Fitzharris: My daughters do it every day. They check it every day, because they can. They like standing at a machine and checking it every day.

MRS JONES: They sound as though they might end up as ministers of a government.

THE CHAIR: How many MyWay agents are there at the moment?

Mr Edghill: That is a good question. It is around 27 to 30.

THE CHAIR: Is there any move to increase those or move away from them because of the ticketing machines?

Ms Fitzharris: Ultimately, yes, over the next few years.

THE CHAIR: Ultimately move away from that?

Mr Edghill: Yes. In the immediate future, the MyWay system is coming to the end of its life, so there are no immediate plans to invest in MyWay dispensers that are going to very rapidly be out of date. With the move to the new ticketing system, what we think will happen is something like what we are seeing in London, for example; if you use the tube, you just wave your Mastercard and it gives you the same pricing as the normal tickets. Because it is convenient like that, there will be less of a need to stand in the newsagents and top up your card. It will be either ticket vending machines, doing it online, or using some other form of payment.

MRS JONES: It might be great for kids to have something they can wear around their—

Mr Edghill: Maybe not their—

MRS JONES: I am just throwing that in there, given that I have quite a few kids on the bus at the moment.

Mr Edghill: That is a good idea.

MRS JONES: Keeping track of cards is quite a challenge.

Mr Edghill: Indeed.

THE CHAIR: Does the revenue that is collected as administrative fees with MyWay come to Transport Canberra or does it go to Access Canberra?

Mr Edghill: It just goes into consolidated revenue, but it goes into a separate bank account. Depending upon the nature of the question, it goes into a separate bank account. We are not spending other people's MyWay money. In terms of where the revenue itself goes, my understanding is that it goes into consolidated revenue, but if that is wrong, I will correct the record.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have some questions about the current MyWay system. How long can your MyWay card be inactive before it expires?

Mr Steele: I believe it is two years.

MS LE COUTEUR: I believe it was two years, but why? The plastic is still fine.

MRS JONES: It is the decorations on it, Ms Le Couteur; they have to be updated.

MS LE COUTEUR: Why? I have repaired mine with sticky tape, but I am using it.

Mr Steele: The answer to that is really that it is an ageing system. The MyWay system is probably 15 years old. When they designed it way back, and the hardware, the people designing the back end of it coded it in. They thought two years would probably be about right. That is probably where that really came from.

What it is about is that, due to the complexity of the ticketing system, the system has to recognise the card in the system to be able to keep it up to date. Over the course of two years, the system goes through incremental software updates and things like that. It is a kind of hard rule that is in the system. If it does not see your card for quite a while, it moves it to the side and carries on. As Duncan was saying, as we move to an account-based system these types of legacy issues will go away.

MS LE COUTEUR: How many expire every year? Or don't you know that?

Mr Steele: I do not know.

Ms Fitzharris: We might see if we can take that one on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: Take that one on notice. I have been told there has to be at least \$90 credit before you apply for a park and ride voucher. Is that correct? And if so, why?

MRS JONES: That is a lot of money for some people.

Mr Steele: Yes. It is part of the terms and conditions if you are applying for a permit at some of our park and ride locations. The general idea behind that is to ensure that people have got the money on their card and use the park and ride appropriately, rather than just signing up and never using the card. I believe there are also checks to make sure that park and ride permit users are actually using their card.

MRS JONES: Is \$90 more than it would cost to catch the bus every day for a fortnight?

Mr Steele: Yes.

Ms Fitzharris: But it is also less than what it would cost in some locations to park.

MRS JONES: Right.

Ms Fitzharris: For pay parking.

MRS JONES: For that period of time.

Ms Fitzharris: Because you get free parking in some locations.

MRS JONES: We might look at this in the recommendations. The consideration should be a fortnight's worth of money. Some people are living fortnight to fortnight, and that is hard for them.

Mr Steele: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have also had a complaint about the fees for refunding and transferring balances. What are the fees, and why do you have them?

Mr Steele: Is that at a service centre or over the phone?

MS LE COUTEUR: Either would do, either or both. I have been told there was a \$25 fee to have a MyWay card refunded and a \$10 fee to have the balance transferred to another card. Is that correct? If it is not, can we say what it is? If it is correct, why is it so high?

Mr Edghill: We might need to take that on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: While you are doing that, can you put in how many balance refunds and how many transfers you do each year, please.

Mr Edghill: Yes, of course.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thanks.

MR PETTERSSON: Last year you undertook a trial of electric and hybrid buses. What were the results of this trial?

Mr Edghill: We did, indeed. We had two electric buses and one hybrid bus. I think there were lessons that we learned across the entirety of that process. I think it was publicly documented that in the first instance we had gone down the path of one particular bus that was not able to be delivered; so we changed tack and had different buses brought in. Straight away, I think one of the lessons there was that there is still a degree of maturing that the bus market in Australia needs to go through.

In terms of the performance of the vehicles themselves, I think we found a few things. Actually, pleasingly, the battery system in the buses worked. It did what was expected of it, which was fantastic. On the flip side with the electric buses, there were maybe two things that were brought to our attention. One was that the batteries carry weight with them; so it does reach a point where you need to consider how many batteries you put on versus the people-carrying capacity. There is a balancing act. Obviously, the fewer batteries you have on board, the less the range but the more passengers you can carry. That is one learning.

Another learning was that you need to give thought to the way that you charge these buses. The way that our diesel buses work at the moment is that they come in at the end of the evening. The refuellers put diesel in and then they are right to go in the morning. It is okay to have gone to electric buses, but one of the logistical challenges for us is that, as well as investing in the electrical capacity of the depots, it may not work that way with an electric bus. You may have some of them charging for a period

in the middle of the day and then in the middle of the night other ones need to be charged. So the way that you prepare the buses—

MRS JONES: Staffing and so on.

Mr Edghill: And it has implications for staffing. It has implications ultimately for the mix of skills that you need in your workshop. Probably the other key lesson that we learnt was that—I will be delicate here—we had some reliability issues with the electric buses, not so much because of the battery systems themselves but just because the buses were coming from an area where the build quality maybe was not quite so good. So some of the electric buses spent time off the road, not because they were electric buses per se but because there were other build quality issues with them. From our perspective, that will be an important consideration in the future procurement of buses because we actually need them on the road doing what they are meant to do.

On the hybrid bus, one of the pieces of feedback we had was really interesting. There was some driver feedback about just the drive performance of the bus—not that it is necessarily a good or a bad thing. It is different, in that when—

THE CHAIR: Once you get used to it.

Mr Edghill: Yes, when bus drivers put their foot on the accelerator, they just want to know that it is going. In the hybrid bus, it goes for a bit with the electric and then it cuts over to the diesel. It just has some different drive characteristics, which some liked and some did not like.

All in all, we have a procurement process for buses underway at the moment. I would be happy to talk about that. That procurement process is open to zero emission vehicles as well as to diesel low emission vehicles. The learnings from the trial are proving to be very valuable for us in that procurement process which is on foot.

MR PETTERSSON: I note that there is money for more buses. How many new buses can we expect to see on the roads?

Mr Steele: The current procurement is for 40 buses, to help grow our fleet. The budget has provided funding for 84 replacement buses over the next four years.

Ms Fitzharris: So an additional 124 over the next—

MS LE COUTEUR: That is 40 replacements and 84 new.

MRS JONES: New, additional.

MS LE COUTEUR: Additional.

Ms Fitzharris: No, I think it is growth and replacement, if you think about them all as one. But there is a current procurement, which was funded some budgets ago. It is for 40. What was funded in the budget that was just handed down was another 84.

MS LE COUTEUR: I guess my question is: how many more buses are we actually

going to have on the road? That is why I am asking what is replacement and growth—

MRS JONES: Some of them are replacement.

Ms Fitzharris: Between growth and replacement?

MS LE COUTEUR: It does make a difference.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Edghill: Assuming that we have enough buses to run the network, the first priority is to get the old orange buses off the road.

MR PETTERSSON: How many of those do you have left?

MRS JONES: Yes, we dealt with that before.

MR PETTERSSON: Did we?

Mr Edghill: Seventy-two.

MRS JONES: It is 72. It should be done by 2022, yes?

Mr Edghill: Throughout the entirety of the process, rough maths, if we have about 20 to 25 buses per year that we need to replace in any event, then the 124 buses over four years is resulting in some of them being replacement buses but a number of them being growth buses also to allow us to expand the system.

MS LE COUTEUR: So 80 of them will be replacement buses. Then, if it is 20 a year for four years—

Mr Edghill: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: it could be up to 100 if it was 25 a year. So most of the buses are replacements?

Mr Edghill: Yes. The reason it is not exactly precise is because it depends upon future decisions that are made with the network. In three years there may be fewer buses that we are buying that will be in one category, not the other. If we are expanding the services again in three years, maybe there are fewer going into the replacement category. But, in general terms, we have grown the network and we are meeting the needs of the network at the moment. One of the priorities is to get rid of those old orange buses as quickly as we can. A significant portion of those buses that are coming in will replace the fleet.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that the population of Canberra is going up 7,000 to 10,000 a year, don't you just have a standard formula that an extra X thousand people equals needing another bus somewhere? Everywhere else in the government has growth formulas.

Ms Fitzharris: I think we have just had a major investment. There are the 80 buses, of which the current procurement is for 40. That is underway and there are another 84. It is not just a clear number. It is the capacity on the buses as well. So we have still got room to move in terms of capacity in the bus network, rather than just new buses.

Mr Edghill: Yes, that is exactly right. It is the types of buses that we are buying. We have bought more articulated buses than we have previously—

THE CHAIR: Sorry; that was going to be my next question. What proportion of those are articulated?

Mr Edghill: It depends partly upon each separate procurement process. So you have got your funding envelope and then we—

THE CHAIR: For each?

Mr Edghill: try and get as much bang for the buck as we can. We cannot put articulated buses on every route just because of the design of the route network. I think in the last round that we did, which was the last 40 we had—

Mr Steele: There were 10 in that. The fleet is generally at 10 per cent high capacity vehicles, which is kind of a standard across the industry.

Mr Edghill: The other component of the number of buses that we can bring in is that there are constraints. One of the constraints is how many bus depots you have, because you need to park the buses somewhere.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes.

Mr Edghill: The investment which is happening in the Woden bus depot at the moment will allow us in the coming years to make that step change in the growth of buses across the network.

MR PETTERSSON: What are the routes articulated buses cannot do?

Mr Steele: Articulated buses can do most routes. We have a certain type of bus called a steer tag; it has got a double rear axle and it has a wider swing when turning corners. We probably would not put that on a local bus route going through the suburban area. We do not send steer tag vehicles to the airport because there is a quite a small road network through there.

MR PETTERSSON: Specifically what are the routes that articulated buses cannot do?

Mr Steele: The articulated vehicles could actually do all of the routes in the network; it is the steer tag high capacity vehicles that cannot do certain routes, which includes the rapid 3 to the airport.

MR PETTERSSON: Are there any other routes?

Mr Steele: The rapid 10 that goes out towards Denman Prospect. I do not believe we put them on them because that has a small turnaround at the shops. As that expands they may be able to go there in the future. We have prioritised putting those in the high capacity routes. The rapid 5 and the rapid 4 is where you will find most of them because they are large capacity routes up and down a relatively straight route.

THE CHAIR: The Turner layover and driver facility funded in this budget, where is that going to be located? Will that be in addition to the city west layover or will that be a new facility?

Mr Edghill: It will be a new facility in Turner on Barry Drive.—

THE CHAIR: In addition to city west or instead?

Mr Edghill: As a replacement for city west. Our understanding is that future developments are proposed in that area.

MS LE COUTEUR: I would like to ask about the expansion of the city interchange to the front of the GPO—why?

Ms Fitzharris: Buses need a bigger interchange.

Mr Edghill: One of the key features is more buses are coming through the city, so we need more space. The other element is that with the opening of the light rail system you have the current terminus of stage 1, and even when stage 2 progresses the Alinga Street light rail stop will be a key interchange between buses and light rail.

The previous footprint of the city bus interchange meant that from the customer's perspective if you are getting off the light rail vehicle on Northbourne it is not necessarily intuitive that you go down the block and turn the corner to find the bus interchange.

The idea behind moving to Alinga Street west is that predominantly that is where the rapids are. On either side of your light rail route you will have that interchange and those connections where you have the visual connection from the stop to where the buses are. That is the primary driver behind reconfiguring the city bus interchange.

MS LE COUTEUR: What feedback have you had from people about the fact they now have to cross Northbourne Avenue when fewer people had to cross it before?

Ms Fitzharris: If you were getting off light rail and work around the western side of the city you have to cross anyway. It is horses for courses in terms of where you are coming from.

MS LE COUTEUR: But there were always buses that went on the west side.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes, but from light rail you would disperse across Northbourne Avenue whichever you were going.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is not usual to have public transport interchanges in main

cities being on the main road with so much traffic.

Mr Edghill: That is debatable—for example, Circular Quay, on George Street, where there is a lot of traffic. In one sense it is a neat issue to have because one reason more people are crossing is that more people are using public transport.

We are alive to ensuring that we are making pedestrian movements as safe as possible in that area. I think you would have already seen the no left-hand turn signs and from Alinga Street west on to Northbourne northbound. Part of that is around minimising vehicle-pedestrian interactions. There is continuing work with our colleagues in the roads area to further enhance and monitor what is happening at the interchange.

Ms Fitzharris: Especially in the first week, a number of people were not aware that their platform had changed, so that was definitely one of the elements of feedback. As Duncan said, you will have the no turn heading eastbound, but we will be talking with businesses there next week because we plan to close that to general traffic between Northbourne Avenue and Moore Street. There are stops going in there as well and cover for passengers too.

MS LE COUTEUR: We have spoken to the CRA about things including bus shelters. They thought bus travellers should have the same level of amenity as light rail travellers, but they did say that was Transport Canberra's responsibility. What are you doing in that regard?

Ms Fitzharris: I think the amenity is fairly similar in terms of shelter and seating; it is probably the design. The Alinga Street stop is the major stop and is not a common feature. It is the most high quality stop along the whole route.

THE CHAIR: We have heard from businesses in the current interchange area that they are suffering from lower traffic since the changes to the new network. Has Transport Canberra had any engagement with businesses in that area?

Ms Fitzharris: In general terms, yes. I am aware of one particular business that has raised that issue; I am also aware of other businesses that have experienced the opposite—certainly some of those on the other side of Alinga Street—and now have many more people gathering outside their front doors. There has been a lot of ongoing discussion with business in that area, particularly around the works to upgrade the verge along the Melbourne and Sydney buildings. There was a lot of discussion with businesses about getting that work done, and that will continue. The CRA will obviously have a lot of discussion with those businesses and keep in close contact with Transport Canberra on that.

MRS JONES: I want to go back to the bus routes and numbering and then ask my question. It has been brought to my attention by some people that “R4” on the front of a bus looks like a number from a distance away, and that a number of people have had trouble realising until it is quite close that it is an R4. Is there anything that can be done about that? Can spaces be put between the R and the 4 or something like that?

Mr Steele: Yes, we have had some feedback from customers—and even from me, having been out in the interchange and helping customers with the change—about that.

We do have different destination signs across different types of buses. Certainly, it is something we will look at. With a bus destination sign, we try and make the route number the clearest thing for people to see.

MRS JONES: Can it say “Rapid 4” instead of “R4”?

Mr Steele: We try to make the route numbers clear to see, and the next part that is most important is the main destination sign. On a bigger destination sign, it will say where it is going. We try and use that space as best we can. I have heard similar feedback from customers.

MRS JONES: Yes, because you will not know whether to hail a bus or not if you do not know if it is yours until it is too late.

Mr Steele: Absolutely. Ensuring that the destination signs are very clear, both with the language that says where it is going, so that people know where it is going, and with the number, is a real priority. We will continue to look at that through the feedback.

MRS JONES: Can you take on notice to think about that and come back to us, if there is anything you can do to actually fix that problem?

Mr Steel: We actually can. We can make the font a bit sharper or move it. We will continue to look at that and talk to customers about it.

MRS JONES: Thank you. My substantive question is to do with the cost of light rail stage 1. I believe it is a little hard to work out where, in the previous budget or in the wash-up of the project, with the roadworks included, and the undergrounding of services and so on, they were paid.

Ms Fitzharris: It is all paid through the availability payment to Canberra Metro. All the costs associated with it are—

MRS JONES: Do we know where the costs of the undergrounding have been recorded?

Ms Fitzharris: Canberra Metro will know that.

Mr Edghill: From our perspective, in a sense it is neither here nor there to us, whatever Canberra Metro’s costs are, because it is the cost to us and the cost to the taxpayer which is important, not the cost to Canberra Metro.

MRS JONES: Certainly, people have asked me about the cost of the undergrounding of services. I understand that that was probably part of the package regarding what was done, but is there any way of finding out what that cost was?

Mr Edghill: That is a commercial matter for Canberra Metro. The cost to us over the 20-year operating period is the availability payment. That is wrapped up in the availability payment. With the availability payment, with the way the PPP was structured, that was agreed up-front. Whatever Canberra Metro’s ultimate costs were,

it does not change that availability payment.

MR PETTERSSON: I have a question about school crossing supervisors. How are they engaged?

Ms Fitzharris: As in their employment?

MR PETTERSSON: Yes.

Mr Davidson: The school crossing supervisors are engaged on a contract basis with Hoban Recruitment. They are a very experienced recruitment agency in the supply of crossing supervisors. Their selection was really based on the programs that they have in other jurisdictions, and in particular the school crossing supervisor program that they run in Victoria.

MR PETTERSSON: There is a wider program going on across government to reduce insecure employment across the service. Are the school crossing supervisors being considered for that?

Mr Davidson: They are employed casually through Hoban Recruitment. With their payment, they get approximately \$25 per hour. A challenge with the crossing supervisors program is that you need a lot of people to run the program. Currently, we are operating at 25 crossings across the territory, and you need in the order of 35 people to run that program. Clearly, there is quite a bit of administration in rostering, training and those sorts of things. The most effective way in which to provide that program was through a contract arrangement with Hoban.

MR PETTERSSON: So they are not being considered as part of the wider government attempts to reduce insecure employment?

Mr Davidson: No, they are not.

Ms Fitzharris: Broadly, across the directorate, there is a range of work underway.

MRS JONES: I am sure Ms Cody would love you to take on notice some of what you are doing across the directorate.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am sure she would.

MRS JONES: Having sat here in solidarity listening to her all week. Given that she is not well, perhaps you could take that on notice.

Ms Fitzharris: It is a fairly unique program.

THE CHAIR: I have a final question. We have not talked much about active travel. We often hear about the fact that most buses only have a two-bike capacity. Is there anything being done to increase the capacity either on the buses or at bus stops for bike racks?

Mr Edghill: I am happy to talk about on the buses. In fact, we are kind of unique here

in Canberra, in that in most other jurisdictions there is no capacity at all for bikes on a bus.

THE CHAIR: We must have a lot more cyclists.

Mr Edghill: Yes, indeed. There is a physical constraint to how big those things on the front of a bus can be, because they fold up, and they cannot fold up in front of the windscreen and so forth. So it is not possible on the buses themselves. I will invite Geoff to talk about bike storage throughout Canberra, which is important.

Mr Davidson: Bike racks are just one component of the integrated network. They provide an option for people that want to carry their bikes on the buses. Similarly, with the light rail, there is capacity for people to carry their bikes on those light rail vehicles. We need to think about it in terms of the whole integrated network. We also provide infrastructure such as bike-and-ride facilities, where there are cages available. Bicycle parking is located throughout the city. There are a range of ways in which you can integrate your bicycle trips with the overall network.

THE CHAIR: What about local bus stops, as opposed to the bike-and-ride facilities?

Mr Davidson: With local bus trips, you are allowing more on the bike racks on buses than you perhaps are in some of the hubs—the group centres and town centres. As I said before, the bicycle racks provide an option for people when they need it.

MRS JONES: When I lived overseas there was a common practice of leaving your bus at one end of a hub route and having a bike at the other end. That was in Switzerland. It was a very common practice. You could ride to the start of perhaps the light rail or your main route bus, that extra kilometre at one end, but you could also do a kilometre at the other end. Is there any capacity for us, over our future plan, to consider making that a possibility for people? If we want a fully integrated system—

Ms Fitzharris: Do you mean bike—

MRS JONES: Yes, a bike shed at both ends. People would keep one at one end for getting to the office, and one at the other end for getting back to the house.

Ms Fitzharris: The other aspect of that is more in the planning portfolio—the new standards around end-of-trip facilities and new buildings. The new building adjacent to the Assembly will have very good end-of-trip facilities.

MRS JONES: That is in the actual workplace, isn't it?

Ms Fitzharris: There are also some other options we have looked at around the country in terms of what might be provided that is not workplace specific. I know, for example, that when the Gungahlin Marketplace upgraded their shopping centre they put end of trip effectively into facilities underneath that could be used by anyone. I think a lot more major developments will look at doing that as well.

MRS JONES: It would be good to encourage it, wouldn't it?

Ms Fitzharris: We have encouraged it through the planning system codes and the various obligations that new buildings will have. Whether or not we could have a more publicly available end-of-trip facility at key locations—

MRS JONES: They do it at train stations. We do not have trains going around Canberra, but possibly it would be something to think about for the long term with light rail.

Ms Fitzharris: Yes.

Mr Edghill: We worked with industry also with the introduction of a bike-share system in Canberra. That was related to the same sort of thinking.

MRS JONES: They would have to be in places where there is a lot of traffic, a lot of pedestrian traffic, so that those bikes are well looked after, or in underground car parks where there are TV cameras and so on. It has to be thought through, but it can be a good addition.

THE CHAIR: On that note, we are out of time, so we will finish up there. Thank you very much.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

ACT Audit Office

Harris, Mr Michael, Auditor-General

Sharma, Mr Ajay, Assistant Auditor-General, Financial Audits

Stanton, Mr Brett, Assistant Auditor-General, Performance Audits

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the new officials that we have here. Please can you acknowledge that you have read and understand the privilege card statement in front of you. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if you could please say, “I will take that as a question on notice,” so that we can identify questions on notice from the transcript. As we are not accepting opening statements, we will proceed straight to questions.

The budget papers focus on the government’s preferred fiscal measure, which is the headline net operating balance, which takes into account the general government sector net operating balance and adds it to the item called superannuation return adjustment. Why isn’t this adjustment included in the audited financial statements?

Mr Harris: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. I do not know the answer to that question. I am going to ask my assistant auditor-general to answer it for me.

Mr Sharma: I have read the privilege statement. We are classified as a directorate and GGS under the whole-of-government statements. All the technical adjustments were provided to us by treasury. If you look at table 2, with these changes to appropriation there are some changes by way of 2019-20 budget technical adjustments, which are on page 20. They relate to revised superannuation parameters. Only those adjustments have been taken into account. There are some adjustments relating to shared services where the cost model was reviewed as well. Those adjustments have been factored through. All those technical adjustments that would have gone for the other agencies have come through in terms of adjustment to our appropriation as part of that process.

THE CHAIR: Could it undermine the public debate to have the government’s figures being so much lower than the net operating balance in the audited financial statements?

Mr Harris: I cannot conceive of a way in which it could lower the public debate. There is complete disclosure, and at the end of an audited program, you would have even more complete disclosure. So I do not believe that is the case.

MS LE COUTEUR: I would like to ask about how the Audit Office is coordinating, or planning to coordinate, with other oversight bodies. Have you started discussions at all yet with the Integrity Commissioner about how the relationship between you and the new office will work?

Mr Harris: There are two parts to that answer. We have started discussions with other officers of the Assembly, such as the Ombudsman.

MS LE COUTEUR: Such as? Sorry, I cannot hear you.

Mr Harris: The Ombudsman. That is in relation to how we manage those arrangements. We will engage with the Integrity Commissioner as soon as we get the opportunity to do so. The review of the PID legislation which is just commencing is the first step in that process. That will form part of the way in which we talk to each other about how we deal with public interest disclosures and other representations that are made to us, and how we allocate them between us.

MS LE COUTEUR: On the subject of PIDs, are there any PIDs that you have received which are leading you to contemplate a referral to the integrity commission while such is able to be done?

Mr Harris: I do not have any at the moment; we do not have any outstanding PIDs at the moment. We have a couple of representations that we are dealing with, but I would not classify them as public interest disclosures under the act at the present time.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is there anything that you have referred to the Public Sector Standards Commissioner?

Mr Harris: No, not at this point in time.

MS LE COUTEUR: You might need to take this on notice, but would you be able to tell us how many public interest disclosures you have received in the last two years and how many you have referred on to some other body? You may know that, Mr Stanton?

Mr Stanton: Yes. I acknowledge the privilege statement. The short answer is that, for this financial year, we have not received any public interest disclosures. I will take that on notice for the previous financial year.

MRS JONES: Can you provide an outline of how the Audit Office decides to pursue performance audits of ACT departments and agencies?

Mr Stanton: Every year we go through a planning process. We more or less commence that process towards the end of a calendar year or early in the new calendar year. Visibly, for external stakeholders and agencies, we commence that with an initial letter seeking calls or comments on the current performance audit program, which is a three-year program. With any ideas that any of the stakeholders might have, through other performance audits that might be considered by the Audit Office, we consult with members of the Assembly, directors-general, chief executives and other agencies and stakeholders. We do that early in the calendar year.

We take that information on board, and we add that to what is already going on in the Audit Office in terms of our own processes for identifying potential performance audit topics. We put those together and we apply some criteria to that list. It can be quite a lengthy list of potential performance audit topics. We apply the criteria to that list, and then we develop a draft performance audit program which we issue for

comment.

MRS JONES: The budget shows two additional staff compared to last year to deliver additional performance audits. What is the reason for additional performance audits compared to previous years?

Mr Stanton: We sought budget funding for an increase in our performance audit program. We have received that additional funding going forwards. We are scheduled to table seven performance audits this financial year. We are increasing that to eight for the next financial year, and nine the year after that and onwards.

MRS JONES: Is that just to reflect the growing size of government or the growing size of the community?

Mr Harris: I think it is reflective of an appetite for more performance audits, just to look at process and functions and add value.

MRS JONES: I understand that you seek feedback from audited agencies. Is there a satisfaction measure or is it just about their experience of it?

Mr Harris: It is a combination of both of those things. It is also to do with stakeholder engagement. We do not wish to be seen as policemen, and we are in fact not policemen—or women, as the case may be. But it is an opportunity for the auditee to provide feedback to us about the way in which we have gone about the process and things that perhaps we can improve on. As with anybody who wants to improve, getting feedback from your clients is one of the best ways of doing that.

MRS JONES: There have been some key findings that you have found by undertaking that process?

Mr Harris: Generally we get good feedback, I must say, from what I have read. I have only been here a short time myself, but I have read some of the material that has come back, and the feedback is generally positive. I must say that the staff put a significant effort into treating auditees with respect and with integrity, ensuring that we have a professional working relationship with them and there are no secrets along the way.

MRS JONES: Yes; fantastic.

Mr Sharma: Just to add to that, we also report this information in our statement of performance in our annual report. It is an indicator for funding.

MRS JONES: It is in there?

Mr Sharma: Yes. For example, it was on page 107 of last year's annual report.

MRS JONES: Thank you. I will have to have a look.

MR PETTERSSON: Mr Harris, you are new to the job. How are you finding the transition?

Mr Harris: Extremely pleasant and very rewarding, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Are there any other questions from the committee?

MRS JONES: At this stage not.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

Manthorpe, Mr Michael PSM, ACT Ombudsman

Hinchcliffe, Ms Jaala, Deputy Ombudsman

MacLeod, Ms Louise, Senior Assistant Ombudsman, Program Delivery Branch

THE CHAIR: Could you please confirm that you have read and understood the privilege statement.

Mr Manthorpe: I have read and understood the privilege statement.

Ms MacLeod: I have read and understood the statement.

Ms Hinchcliffe: I have read and understood the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. The new FOI Act has been implemented, albeit with continuing amendments. Can you update us on the progress of the implementation of the new act and any unforeseen issues that have become apparent?

Mr Manthorpe: The new act is now well and truly up and running. I am aware that there has been some consideration in the Assembly around amendments to the act, but it has been up and running since January 2018. We are seeing, I think, a growing understanding of how the act is intended to work amongst ACT directorates and members of the public—and, indeed, in some cases, members of the Assembly who have availed themselves of their right to seek reviews and things of that ilk through the act. We are seeing a steady increase in the sorts of activities we undertake. We have a series of statutory activities. Do you want me to give you a bit of a snapshot of the data from that? Would that be helpful?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Manthorpe: We take review applications; that is, review applications for reviews of decisions that agencies take. An agency says to a person, “We do not want you to have document X.” People come to us to seek review of that. We had 37 of those in 2018-19, up to 31 May. We have had a couple of complaints—only two. We have had 12 deemed decision notices. That is where an agency cannot or does not meet the prescribed time frames for dealing with an FOI request; they are required to notify us, and indeed the Assembly, of that, for extension of time requests. We currently have 11 review applications on hold, and we are churning through those as quickly as we can.

Going to your question about any problems with the act, probably the main issue we have encountered is around the time frames of the act. I totally get and respect that in passing the act, the Assembly was keen to get to a pro-disclosure culture and the rapid disclosure of things so that things did not drift on for many months. We seek to play a part in that. But there are occasions where it is just very difficult—given the complexity of the matters and the toing and froing that has to happen to afford people procedural fairness—for that to be achieved. That is an issue that we have been in a

conversation with relevant directorates about.

The other thing I would observe by way of learnings has been around sometimes—and we have reported on this publicly before—seeing decision-makers not necessarily articulating their reasons for decision very well. Say someone has applied for something and they get something back but it does not really explain to them very well against the act what the reason for not getting the material was. We are working with directorates to try and help lift capability in that area.

THE CHAIR: Going to your point about increasing understanding of the act, I know the importance of training for staff in that has been raised before, and in transparency and accessibility. Is there an ongoing training program, and is it sufficiently resourced?

Mr Manthorpe: Yes. I might invite Ms MacLeod to touch on that, but, yes, we are certainly active in that space.

Ms MacLeod: Yes. It is not so much a training program. What we have done is stand up a community of practice forum with all the FOI practitioners across the directorates. They have all been invited. We have had one of those already, and we have another one coming up in the second half of this year. We are continuing at an individual level with directorates and with the practitioners to engage with them. They can call my team at any time and speak about issues that they are grappling with. The intent is that they can learn from one another, identifying areas of best practice.

And there is our work around developing guidelines. The two guidelines that we have currently got out for consultation, on open access and how to deal with informal requests, are borne out of the practitioners themselves saying, “We would like more information and guidance on this from the Ombudsman.” So that is what we have done.

Mr Manthorpe: On your question as to whether we have adequate resources, we can cope. No agency is ever going to tell you that they would not like more, but we can cope. We have pretty steady resourcing through this next financial year from the recent budget.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that the ACT will soon have an integrity commission, have you got any matters before you which you are considering referring to the integrity commission?

Mr Manthorpe: At this moment in time, I do not think I would have any matter in front of me—certainly nothing that is top of mind—that we would have in mind to refer to the integrity commission because it raised matters of serious corruption, criminality, fraud and the like. It is probably important to note that we will have a role with respect to the integrity commission.

MRS JONES: Yes; you will be the inspector.

Mr Manthorpe: Correct. That is right. So we have been preparing to stand up that role and look forward to fulfilling that role going forward.

MRS JONES: What resources have you put in place to make that role effective?

Mr Manthorpe: To start the work in the financial year we are in now, 2018-19, we have got \$41,000 from the ACT government. For 2019-20, we have been allocated \$96,000.

MRS JONES: That is probably the annual standard amount.

Mr Manthorpe: I am not sure what it is in the outyears.

Ms MacLeod: It is \$98,000 in 2021, going up to \$101,000.

Mr Manthorpe: I guess that is indexing or something.

Ms MacLeod: Yes.

MRS JONES: Is that one person?

Mr Manthorpe: It is probably about one person with on-costs and all the various overheads that come with the person, and some other kinds of activity. This is an area where, if you asked me, “Well, is that adequate?” it would be a bit hard to know.

MRS JONES: You will have to wait and see.

Mr Manthorpe: That is right. If a flood of matters get referred to the integrity commissioner, that in turn may lead to a flood of notifications to us under the act and the need for us to examine, report, take complaints or whatever it might be. As you appreciate, we have a series of relatively small functions that we perform for the ACT. For each one of them, we get a line of money. On any given day, we might be spending more or spending less. We try to track it, and we keep in touch with the ACT government officials. If we think that there is a big shortfall, obviously we will sing out.

MRS JONES: My substantive question is about the reportable conduct scheme. We have discussed previously the introduction of the reportable conduct scheme, which has been expanded through the legislation throughout the year. In relation to the latest expansion of the scheme, do you have sufficient resources to deal with reportable conduct matters in your office?

Mr Manthorpe: Again, I think my response to that would be that we can cope. It is an area where you could spend a lot of money if—

MRS JONES: If you were going to be a police service.

Mr Manthorpe: That is right; that is exactly right. I think that last time, in November, when we were having a conversation about this, there was a discussion about how many people are covered by the scheme. From memory, Mr Coe might have asked that question: how many entities are covered by the scheme? There is no definitive list. We took that on notice, came back and said that there is actually no definitive list.

You can be pretty clear about how many schools there are and how many long day care centres there are, but religious organisations are bit harder to define. We know of about—

MRS JONES: Yes. And some of them are incorporated and some of them are not, and some of them meet in homes.

Mr Manthorpe: Yes, exactly. Some of them are very small. Exactly; all that. We know about 280, which means that there are in the order of 800 entities that we know of that are covered by the scheme. That includes a single school as a single entity, even though that might be part of a system, if you get the idea. Anyhow, there are 800 entities. With that many, we have sought to reach out to them all. We have sought to engage them all. Many have engaged. More and more are engaging, but—

MRS JONES: How many reports have you received?

Mr Manthorpe: In the first year it was 140-odd. In the second year, to 31 May—11 months—we reviewed a further 159. So the number has gone up a bit.

Ms MacLeod: Sorry, for that first year the number should have been 121 rather than 140.

Mr Manthorpe: Well, that was to May.

Ms MacLeod: Sorry, yes. I take that back. I withdraw that.

Mr Manthorpe: No, you are quite right. Comparing apples and apples: 121 in 2017-18 and 159 in 2018-19. But by the time we got to the end of financial year 2017-18 it was about 140. It is in our annual report. It has gone up a bit in the second financial year, which reflects the fact that the religious organisations are now covered by the scheme. We have had a relatively small number of reports there. I suppose it reflects the fact that there is, again, growing awareness, growing engagement with the scheme.

MRS JONES: Have you experienced any over-reporting or under-reporting in your view? I suppose it is hard to know.

Mr Manthorpe: Yes, it is hard to know because you do not know what you do not know. If something is not reported to you, you cannot know it. We will be looking at those sorts of trends—

MRS JONES: Over time.

Mr Manthorpe: and the proportions we are getting over time. We are reporting on that again in our annual report. Do you have anything to add to that?

Ms MacLeod: I suppose our expectation is, and it is what we are seeing, that the big directorates like education, and for aftercare and out of home care, are where we see the majority of the notifications coming from. We would have expected more notifications than perhaps we are seeing out of the Community Services Directorate.

MRS JONES: Have you engaged with them as a result?

Ms MacLeod: Yes. We are talking with them around that at the moment. Yes, we are still in discussion.

MRS JONES: In reality, with smaller entities it might be very sporadic.

Ms MacLeod: Yes.

Mr Manthorpe: That is right. It might also be that the scheme is having its intended effect—where there are things to report, they are being reported and people are more alert to caring for children.

MRS JONES: Yes; that is right. Finally, I have a question about the links on the Ombudsman website. Do you have data or analysis on how much the website is used, how often it is used and whether people find the information helpful?

Ms MacLeod: I do not have that information before me, but I will take that on notice.

MRS JONES: Please do; thank you.

Mr Manthorpe: We are in the process of launching an ACT website. I have written you all a letter about our website—

MRS JONES: Yes. In fact, we have got questions about your—

Mr Manthorpe: and our phone line and so forth—for what that is worth.

Ms MacLeod: We should be able to get you some information on that. On our website there is an analytic function sitting behind it that can tell us how many hits we are getting on the website—searches that are successful or unsuccessful. We are actually using that intelligence to inform how we redesign, rebuild our website.

MRS JONES: Sounds good.

THE CHAIR: We will end it there. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the ministers and officers who have appeared today.

MRS JONES: Before we adjourn, I have something short to note. This is the end of our first week. The key quotes of the week include Mr Barr reflecting that he does not think the act of making babies is going out of fashion any time soon. We had Mr Ramsay, having been asked about a particular matter, saying that the reason it was behind schedule was because some of the steps took longer than expected.

The chief psychologist introduced us to a new term, “bio-psychosocial situation”, which we will all now be using. Professor Shadbolt talked about having media at an event which was “drive-by” which I mentioned sounded a bit end of life-ish. And Mr Pettersson asked the health minister, “Can you tell me about your fancy new app?”

The roads and infrastructure division told us that we now have vertical suburbs going up in Belconnen, which I am sure is important to all of us. I said, in respect of attempting to reach the Holy Grail of public transport payments that, given that we are after the Holy Grail, estimates is going well. And I think Ms Cody wins the award for persistence for her questions on security of work. Thanks to all for the end of the first week.

Mr Manthorpe: That is a list the Ombudsman will try not to get on.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank the ministers and officers who have appeared today. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearing when it becomes 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 the receipt of the 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 on Monday.

The committee adjourned at 5.02 pm.