



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2019-2020

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

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 26 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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	940
Community Services Directorate.....	950
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate	881, 914
Suburban Land Agency.....	914

Privilege statement

The Assembly has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings.

All witnesses making submissions or giving evidence to committees of the Legislative Assembly for the ACT are protected by parliamentary privilege.

“Parliamentary privilege” means the special rights and immunities which belong to the Assembly, its committees and its members. These rights and immunities enable committees to operate effectively, and enable those involved in committee processes to do so without obstruction, or fear of prosecution.

Witnesses must tell the truth: giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter, and may be considered a contempt of the Assembly.

While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, it may take evidence in-camera if requested. Confidential evidence will be recorded and kept securely. It is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly; but any decision to publish or present in-camera evidence will not be taken without consulting with the person who gave the evidence.

Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.30 am.

Appearances:

Gentleman, Mr Mick, Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Minister for Planning and Land Management, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister assisting the Chief Minister on Advanced Technology and Space Industries

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

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

Rutledge, Mr Geoffrey, Deputy Director-General, Sustainability and the Built Environment

Simmons, Mr Craig, Chief Operating Officer

Power, Mr Gary, Executive Branch Manager, Housing and Building Policy

Cilliers, Mr George, Executive Branch Manager, Development Assessment

Kaucz, Ms Alix, Senior Director, Territory Plan

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

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 taken on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

Could witnesses please confirm that they have read the privilege card before them and understand the implications of the privilege statement?

Mr Gentleman: Yes, we have.

THE CHAIR: As we are not taking opening statements, we will go straight into questioning.

MR PARTON: Why has the total number of residential dwellings scheduled to be released fallen by 1,400 since the 2018-19 budget?

Mr Gentleman: Over the forward years?

MR PARTON: That is my understanding, yes. My understanding is that the number of residential dwellings has fallen to 15,600, which would be the lowest point since the 2014-15 budget. Am I reading that incorrectly, Mr Ponton?

Mr Ponton: I might kick that off and Dr Brady may wish to add something. In terms of developing the four-year indicative land release program, the directorate looks at a range of factors, including expected demand and policy. We need to factor all of that in. There was a particular need over the previous period for the additional greenfields sites in particular. As we have undertaken further analysis, and mindful of the government's—

MRS JONES: Sorry, Mr Ponton, you are quite hard to hear.

Mr Ponton: Sorry, I will speak up. It is important, as I said, that we look at a range of factors in developing the indicative land release program. That includes looking at demand. Also, we need to be very mindful of government policy. We have the planning strategy 2018 that looks at an urban renewal greenfield split of 70-30, so 70 per cent of new dwellings within the existing urban footprint. Not all of that will be delivered by the government. There is a range of factors that we—

MRS JONES: That is why you have fewer blocks available? Because you are hoping for more infill.

Mr Ponton: Indeed. Then we need to look at the strategies that are available to the government to encourage the private sector to assist in delivering on that planning strategy and the outcomes. I might ask Dr Brady whether she would like to add anything further to that. No? Okay.

MR PARTON: How many dwellings do we need to release each year to keep up with population growth? I understand that in your answer you are suggesting that there is a sort of backlog of releases from previous years, but can I get an understanding of how many dwellings need to be released each year to keep up with population growth.

Mr Ponton: We do have that detail, but not at hand. We might come back during the hearings, if that is okay, Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: Because, Mr Ponton and minister, it is difficult for many to understand—the Chief Minister continually talks about ongoing population growth in Canberra, and we see those figures—why we should not be releasing more dwellings if there is increasing demand. It appears to those looking on that we are restricting supply and pushing the prices up.

Mr Ponton: Mr Parton, I will refer back to my earlier answer: that it is not just for the government to meet the demand in terms of population. It is not just a simple equation where there is an increased population and therefore the government must release more greenfield land; we need to consider other planning objectives.

Going back to the planning strategy, with 70 per cent of that growth being contained within the existing urban footprint, the government does not own all of that land. There are other policies that will facilitate the private sector to step in and assist in meeting that demand. For example, the work that has been undertaken through the master planning program—looking at local and group centres and encouraging a revitalisation of many of those centres and subsequent Territory Plan variations—will allow for the private sector to step in and assist. It is not all for the government to

release greenfield land to meet that demand.

MR PARTON: In regard to greenfield land, though, surely, if we are releasing fewer blocks, the demand is not necessarily going to diminish, so that would result in a higher price for the blocks that are being released, would it not?

Mr Ponton: No, because we do not want all of that demand to be catered for in greenfield areas. It is not, as I said, a simple equation of there being people needing housing and therefore it is all greenfields. We need to think about how we want the city to grow. The government has made a very clear decision, through the planning strategy, that it wants to protect those things that we have heard from the Canberra community are important to them, which are the city in the landscape concept. That means we cannot continue to spread out.

MRS JONES: What percentage did you say the government wants to have in infill?

Mr Ponton: Seventy per cent of—

MRS JONES: Seventy per cent of new dwellings as infill?

Mr Ponton: Within the existing urban footprint.

MRS JONES: I am just trying to fathom that.

Mr Gentleman: This was a policy decision that was announced quite a few months ago.

MRS JONES: Seventy per cent of new dwellings as urban infill?

Mr Ponton: If it helps you to understand what that might mean—

MRS JONES: I can imagine exactly what it means. It means a lot more apartments and a lot more dual occs on suburban blocks.

Mr Ponton: Over the past several years we have been averaging 64 per cent within new dwellings.

MRS JONES: Yes, but the whole city has been changing completely.

Mr Ponton: Indeed.

MRS JONES: I was not aware that that is the permanent state that we are hoping for.

Mr Ponton: The minister did announce that last year in releasing the planning strategy, and there was some 12 months of conversation with—

MRS JONES: Seventy per cent?

Mr Ponton: Seventy per cent, and that included significant engagement with the Canberra community.

MRS JONES: The price of new blocks will continue to go up because it will become a premium product to get a block of land in the new developments.

Mr Ponton: I do not know that that necessarily follows. Going back to the 70 per cent, as I said, we have been averaging 64 per cent over the past several years in terms of dwellings within the existing urban footprint. This is not necessarily a new issue. The minister's statement of planning intent is when he first started the conversation with the Canberra community. That process involved 12 months of extensive conversations with the Canberra community, and we have talked about that in this room previously.

We heard very strongly that the Canberra community were quite comfortable with the idea of a more compact and efficient city. They were comfortable with moving away from what was then a fifty-fifty split to a higher ratio of development within the existing urban footprint, provided that, as a result of that, they were seeing high quality development and good quality public spaces. The planning strategy talks about how we are going to deliver on that.

MRS JONES: Mr Ponton, is your department in charge of developing urban open spaces?

Mr Ponton: We are in charge of—

Mr Gentleman: Planning for them.

Mr Ponton: planning for them and approving those. Keeping in mind that publicly accessible spaces are not necessarily all government-owned spaces, that is where we come in. For example, if you think about a precinct such as New Acton, there is a lot of public space there that people use as public space that is privately owned.

MRS JONES: There is a lot of public concrete in New Acton.

Mr Ponton: That space is highly valued by the Canberra community.

MRS JONES: I am sure you speak for everyone in the Canberra community, Mr Ponton.

Mr Ponton: Well—

MRS JONES: It is open space, that is true, yes.

Mr Ponton: In terms of speaking for the Canberra community, if I could go back to the conversations that were had during 2015, it is safe to say that the response to those conversations is a very good reflection of the Canberra community. We went to some lengths to engage, as I said, over a 12-month period with a range of stakeholders; not the traditional people that you would ordinarily have a conversation with. We targeted young people and older people. We targeted community councils. We targeted people who ordinarily would not engage in the planning process.

The minister attended many of those workshops. We heard that people were quite

comfortable with the idea of a more compact and efficient city, provided that, as I said, they were seeing high quality buildings and spaces. It is not just about the buildings but about the spaces that are left behind.

In terms of your reference to New Acton being concrete, that is probably an unfair description. There is a lot of landscape in that space. There is a lot of artwork and people—

MRS JONES: Mr Ponton, we will leave that up to the people who use New Acton to determine.

Mr Gentleman: You touch on a very important point, though, Mrs Jones. During the conversation with the younger demographic, in particular, they not only told us about the types of houses they would like to live in but about how they would like to live into the future. They want to be close to live precincts—

MRS JONES: Amenities.

Mr Gentleman: Yes, close to amenities. Also they want to have really good urban open space nearby, to recreate in. They were quite happy. In fact they would like to see a denser city but with the appropriate amenity and urban open spaces.

MR PARTON: Yet in those conversations that were had in 2015, I do not believe you and I have ever sat in this room, Mr Ponton, without me mentioning the 2015 Winton housing choices survey, which revealed that 91 per cent of those who planned to move proposed to move into a detached house. Only 8.3 per cent wanted to move into an apartment. The most prevalent reason for dictating choice is affordability, and I still find it astounding that the feedback from that report is almost dismissed.

Mr Ponton: Of course, we have also talked in this room about the context of many of those questions. We asked a series of questions, including, “In an ideal world, what would you like to see?”; then, as we started to drill down into what that might mean in terms of infrastructure costs, impact on the environment, and what it means if we start to spread the city outwards as opposed to being more compact, people started to balance what was really important to them.

That was when, as a result of the further drilling down in that particular survey, people were more comfortable with the idea of a compact and efficient city. It is important to understand the context of the questions, and I have made that point previously.

MR PARTON: We had this conversation, in part, at annual reports. I think the indication was that the figures in that Winton housing survey were correct, but essentially, as you said, people would eventually accept higher density living after a number of trade-offs. Why are we not planning to ideals? I cannot get away from the fact that we are forcing people into high density dwellings when it is clear that it is not their ideal.

Mr Gentleman: Mr Parton, the newer Winton research shows that there are just as

many people who want to downsize into denser living as, as you mentioned earlier, want to upsize. It is a reflection of what we have seen in the community and implemented in our planning process that is now coming out in the research as well.

Mr Ponton: It is also important to note that since 2015 and the minister's statement of planning intent, that was the start of the conversation. We moved to housing choices, which was an outcome of the statement of planning intent. We undertook the research with Winton. Since then, and importantly over 2018, we undertook extensive community engagement in relation to the planning strategy refresh. That is where we really started to drill down in terms of this idea of the major policy shift potentially being a change from a fifty-fifty split.

That was foreshadowed in the 2015 minister's statement of planning intent, but we really explored this with the community. We had a speaker series where we had a range of people come and talk to interested community members. We had a series of workshops and a range of other activities where we had that conversation. It confirmed for us that people were comfortable with the idea of increasing urban density in terms of a more compact and efficient city in order to protect what is important to them, which is the landscape qualities of the city. But that was not just a case of, "We're comfortable with this, full stop." It was, "We're comfortable with this, with some provisos," the important ones being high quality design and better quality spaces in terms of what is left of the spaces around the buildings.

That is why we have undertaken the work in developing the capital city design review panel, as a response to what we heard from the community, to lift the design quality. That is chaired by the Government Architect. We are also doing some further work in relation to the pre-DA consultation guidelines. We are currently reviewing those to enforce the importance of engaging with communities early, and reinforcing the need to have good design.

We are listening to what we are hearing from the community, and we are making sure that the community is well represented in those conversations. It is not just the people who have time to engage with us; we are actively getting out there and engaging with people who ordinarily would not engage until there was a development application next door. We want to get people involved in the policy work.

MR PARTON: Thanks for indulging me again.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a question about multiple DAs. Some developers appear to be using multiple DAs to substantially change a development after it has been approved, to take out features that objectors wanted and put back in things that the objectors may have objected to. What are you doing to stop this?

Mr Ponton: We are very mindful of that as a potential strategy. I do not know, Ms Le Couteur, if you have any specific examples, but I can certainly think of a reasonably high-profile development that was approved. The proponent recently came back to the planning authority seeking to make significant changes to that development, and we refused that amendment.

It is more challenging if the amendments are considered individually to be minor and

able to be dealt with by the certifier, for example, a change in glazing. What we are doing in that respect is looking at how we can require those particular matters to come back through the planning process. We are also including conditions. There are certain aspects of developments that we think are important design elements. We are clearly marking those on the plans and including conditions. Even if it is considered ordinarily to be minor and able to be dealt with as exempt, we are saying we think it is important enough that it needs to come back to the planning authority.

In relation to some of those, we are also then requiring an assessment by the Government Architect if they are important design features. We are certainly mindful of the issue and working on how we can address that, and it will be a case of incremental change. We will try new avenues, and, if it works, that is great; if we think we can refine it, we will continue to refine it. But we are very mindful of that as a potential problem.

MS LE COUTEUR: The specific example I was going to talk about was the one that I talked about with TCCS last week. It is the approvals for Geocon's Republic development. It is already six storeys high; so it is clearly happening. But I understand that it has just had another major DA amendment being considered. Look, I am possibly verballing TCCS but they basically seemed to say that, as far as the traffic was concerned, they are on the back foot. All they could do was just try to make things work as well as they could, given that this DA keeps on changing. Why are developers able to change major features of a building, in particular traffic access—that is what I was talking about last week—when it has already been built? You are kind of stuck with six storeys of it and things are changing.

Mr Ponton: If an approval is in place, Ms Le Couteur, and a proponent builds not in accordance with the approved plan, and then seeks to amend that DA, we are not stuck at all. We can, and we have, refused those types of applications. It is then incumbent on the proponent to build as per the approved plan. It is open to proponents—we do not want to close it off completely—to seek amendments. That is simply because, as they start construction, things can change. They may need to make some adjustments, but that will undergo a detailed and thorough assessment. As I said, we are now incorporating conditions of approval where we think particular aspects are critically important to the success of the development.

MS LE COUTEUR: That sounds like it is good that some things are critically important. Are you suggesting in this case that traffic access would not have been one of them—

Mr Ponton: I am not—

MS LE COUTEUR: Despite being someone who lives in Murrumbidgee and not Belconnen, I actually have had constituent representations about the impacts on the traffic in Belconnen, specifically around a series of changes that have occurred. I am not a traffic engineer, obviously, but it certainly has been alleged, and it looks to me like that traffic access, at any rate, was not improving as a result of these changes.

Mr Ponton: Ms Le Couteur, I will ask my colleague, Mr Cilliers, who is familiar with the detail of that particular proposal, to answer that question.

Mr Cilliers: The particular amendment, Ms Le Couteur, that you are referring to is currently under assessment still. The DA has been referred to TCCS for their advice. I would say that it is open to TCCS to provide their advice fearlessly and frankly to us. I do not think they are tied in any way. We will refer back to the original approval when we make our decision, as well as to the advice provided by TCCS on that. If we think that the advice is not sufficient, we may require further information or further traffic analysis as part of—

MRS JONES: One of the key points that TCCS made to us—this is what Ms Le Couteur is asking about—was that there is already a big hole in the ground at that site; so presumably the development is going ahead.

MS LE COUTEUR: There is more than a hole; there are things sticking out of that hole—

Mr Cilliers: Yes.

MRS JONES: While the answer about your process is great, the point we could not seem to marry up was that the development was underway. It will perhaps take a couple of years to complete. It seems that the traffic side has not been worked out—

Mr Ponton: No, that is—

MRS JONES: so what is the chicken and egg of the whole business?

Mr Ponton: That is not the case at all. For the original development application to be approved, we consider the traffic impacts. That decision has been made and—

MRS JONES: So you consider that but not in consultation with TCCS, because they just—

Mr Ponton: No, that is not—

MS LE COUTEUR: No.

Mr Ponton: You are confusing the original development application and approval with the amendment, which, as I understand it, is a change to the location of the access point.

Mr Cilliers: The amendment is still being assessed.

Mr Ponton: Yes. There are two aspects. In terms of traffic for the development, that is under construction, for which the big hole is there. That is approved and considered to be—

MRS JONES: In train.

Mr Ponton: reasonable. In terms of the changes proposed, we are currently assessing that. As I understand it, it is to do with the access point. That can still change during

construction. If deemed to be appropriate, and that is where we would rely on our colleagues in Transport Canberra and City Services—

MRS JONES: Yes, to give you the advice.

Mr Ponton: to provide us with the frank and fearless advice, we will then consider that and make a decision, which could be to approve—they may be able to build a really strong case—or, alternatively, they do not and we would refuse that, and they will need to build in accordance with the approved plans.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said that you rely on your colleagues in TCCS, which is great. But what about your constituents, not your colleagues, in terms of the public out there who will have had a chance to comment on Geocon's original proposal—

Mr Ponton: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: What sort of say do they have in terms of the quite significant changes to traffic flow which are envisaged in the changes.

Mr Ponton: Sure, depending on the nature of the amendment proposed, it can be renotified. If it is minor internal changes, that would not necessarily be publicly notified. But more significant changes are publicly notified. Mr Cilliers or Mr Rutledge might want to run us through the requirements for application.

Mr Rutledge: Because this amendment is currently under assessment, I think it is probably wiser for the committee to talk in general terms about the renotification process.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am happy to talk in general terms about the issue.

MRS JONES: Yes, it is the general concept that—

Mr Ponton: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is the general concept—

Mr Rutledge: The other addition to the things that Mr Ponton said that we put in place, if we do see significant changes or what we deem a significant amendment, is that we ask the proponent to go back out to public notification. In that way, that provides a new opportunity for the community to put forward their views as well as agency comments, including those of TCCS, to re-evaluate and assist the assessing officers on whether that amendment is approvable or not.

MR PARTON: How often does that happen?

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have some public guidelines as to when you go out for renotification? Clearly, you have them in the first case and clearly the sort of buildings we are talking about would have had full community consultation—

Mr Rutledge: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: at the beginning and they have not shrunk in the meanwhile.

Mr Ponton: That is what I was proposing Mr Cilliers might run us through—

MS LE COUTEUR: Okay.

Mr Ponton: because that is essentially within the legislation in terms of the requirements for notification for amendment. I will ask Mr Cilliers, in general terms, to run us through the requirements and the tests that are applied.

Mr Cilliers: The general answer is that the Planning and Development Act allows discretion to the planning authority to undertake renotification of an amendment application. Generally our test would be whether anybody who made a representation, or anybody else, would be detrimentally affected by what is proposed. That would be the first test.

The second test could relate to the extent of the changes; whether the change is so significant that it warrants that further notification process. If it is internal arrangements, most of the time we would probably not renotify that. If it is minor changes to things like building materials or finishes, we probably will not notify. But if it impacts things like access, solar access for an adjoining neighbour or the interface with a neighbour, we are more likely to notify.

We also look at what was initially said and the original consideration of the act. We look at two things there: the number of representations or the actual representations received—not necessarily a quantum—to see what they were and what the issues were to inform us of whether this is something that is important to renotify. Then the other aspect is to look at entity advice received, whether that will change the substance of what we have approved initially. I think that is—

MS LE COUTEUR: So anyone who originally put in a comment will be told about any next DA, but you also referred to people who are materially affected. The first bunch of people who are materially affected would be the people who have bought off the plan. Do you have some way that you can let them know?

Mr Cilliers: Unfortunately the only way we can let them know is through our online provision. We do not know who those people are at that stage. There has not been a process of unit titling so at that stage it is more like a sales contract where contracts have been exchanged.

MS LE COUTEUR: These developments tend to take a few years, so people could have purchased and then there will be a DA change after that. Is there some way of ensuring those these people know about the changes?

Mr Cilliers: There is no statutory mechanism for that. We encourage people to look at websites and even our DA phone app to see if it is renotified. But the short answer is no.

Mr Ponton: The reason for that, as Mr Cilliers said, is that we simply do not know

who has purchased. We are dealing with the land-owner.

MS LE COUTEUR: I appreciate that you do not know; you do not have a reason to know. But you also do not have any requirement for the developer to tell the people who are directly affected?

Mr Ponton: There is no statutory requirement for that. All we can do is provide information to prospective purchasers to make sure they remain vigilant if they have concerns.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is possibly a defect in our legislation.

Mr Gentleman: We are looking at these aspects through the strata reform process to ensure that we can inform those purchasers of any option changes and whether we need to legislate that position as well.

MR PARTON: Minister, my understanding is that there is a discretionary aspect of this in terms of a decision on whether an amendment to a development application should be approved without publication or republished for public comment prior to final approval and that the directorate has the discretion to just tick and say it is fine.

Mr Ponton: No, we never just tick, Mr Parton.

Mr Gentleman: Whilst we have a directorate, it is the independent planning authority—

MR PARTON: I understand that. I am just trying to reach an understanding of how much discretion is there on how a decision is reached on whether an amendment to a DA should be approved without publication or republished.

Mr Ponton: Mr Cilliers has already touched on this to some extent. The legislation allows that discretion and there are standard operating procedures in place for the development assessment team for a range of our activities. We would go back to the original decision to see whether this was a point of contention for the original decisions. That is a fairly clear indicator that you would want to renotify if we had submissions dealing with that issue. Particularly if our assessment team had identified it themselves as an issue, not through public notification, we would probably want to renotify.

If it was internal to the building—sometimes it is simply a slight adjustment to the electrical substation—it might not necessarily impact and it would probably be a change to internal arrangements for the basement car park.

We go through a range of considerations to understand whether somebody might be materially impacted. We have a range of professionals who apply their professional judgement, and that is what we expect of them.

MR PARTON: Rather than DA amendments driven by directorate requests to correct areas or issues, how common is it to have these proponent-initiated DA amendments? How many do we get each year?

Mr Cilliers: I can provide a statistic for up to 17 June this year—that is 264 applications.

Mr Ponton: But they could be as simple as changing a window dimension.

MS LE COUTEUR: In terms of being materially affected by something which will impact on the traffic arrangements, surely that would be a lot of people. If the traffic arrangements are changed would there not be a presumption that you would go out to public notification again?

Mr Ponton: It would depend on the nature of the particular proposal: its location and whether the access was onto a major arterial or a local road. It would depend on how many vehicles have been approved to use that access point and whether more vehicles were being put on to that access point. We would need to consider a range of factors, so it is not a simple answer of saying changing traffic access means public notification. Mr Cilliers and his professional team would need to undertake that detailed assessment informing the view as to whether to notify.

MS LE COUTEUR: Would it be possible to have a consecutive list of DAs for a number of sites where I am aware that these things have happened—Geocon's Republic site, the Grand Central site, the development of the old Tradies site? I would like to know whether they were referred to general public consultation or if it was only the people who put in an objection who were told about them?

Mr Ponton: Are you asking in relation to changes to traffic only or any amendment?

MS LE COUTEUR: No, that is partly in the too-hard basket. Just changed DAs for these large sites.

Mr Ponton: Yes, we could find that and we will take that on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: How many, when they were and did they go out for public consultation?

Mr Ponton: So any amendment for those three DAs?

MS LE COUTEUR: Those three sites, yes.

Mr Ponton: Certainly.

MS CODY: Minister, can you tell me how the planning for the city to Woden light rail will support the implementation of the planning strategy?

Mr Gentleman: The planning strategy looks at densification, particularly along transport corridors—we term this as transport-orientated development. We have seen that successfully roll out in other jurisdictions across the world, and that was part of the discussion we had with the community during the statement of planning intent workshops as well.

We have seen where there is an opportunity to do more dense and active development along those corridors. Light rail stage 2 from the city to the Woden would bring that opportunity, particularly around the nodes. Around the city and Woden itself we see a great opportunity to reactivate Woden and draw some more attention for residential purchasers and also businesses to go into Woden.

MS CODY: We are already starting to see some refresh of the Woden town centre, in particular with the Alexander, Albemarle and a couple of other developments going ahead. You are saying that the planning strategy will help to assist a bit more vibrancy around those areas as well?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly, and I congratulate the proponent on the refurbishment of those two particular buildings.

MS CODY: They look fabulous.

Mr Gentleman: Yes. I think they are going to really bring some wow to Woden. It is a great opportunity for—

MRS JONES: Is that the line?

Mr Gentleman: Yes. You have heard the Woden Community Council asking for some refreshment in Woden and it is starting to be delivered now. Light rail stage 2 will certainly assist that too.

MR PARTON: Minister, you have set the commencement of the western edge study for greenfield site opportunities as a key action for 2019-20. When will the study commence? How long will it take?

Mr Gentleman: I will hand over to the director to give you the detail on that.

Mr Ponton: I will kick off and then I will ask Dr Brady to expand. In terms of when the work will commence, we have started scoping that work and are very grateful that the government has included budget funding for that work for this financial year. In anticipation that that was going to be included in the budget we started the scoping work.

In terms of how long it is likely to take, the very nature of not only the extent of the land area that we are looking at but also the type of work that we need to do and the investigations that we need to do as part of this work—it would include seasonable surveys of particular types of species—I expect it will be several years. I might hand over to Dr Brady.

Dr Brady: We have got budget funding allocated for this coming financial year and the next financial year. It is about \$1.1 million in total. This will be the early stage of the planning that we would have seen done years ago for Gungahlin. We will have to start looking at all the natural environment, what offsets might be needed, what land has environmental values, doing some survey work. That will be some of our early investigation for the area, to really start to get a good idea of what land in that whole investigation area may be developable land and what land, basically, is no-go land. A

lot of the time it is based on environmental values, and that is probably one of our biggest pressures when we start looking at some of these greenfield areas.

MR PARTON: If you were going to summarise, what is the objective of the study? What are we looking at as an outcome?

Dr Brady: The objective is to see if there is land in that area that would be developable for greenfield development and to understand what is highly valued environment land that cannot be developed.

Mr Ponton: It may be that, as we work through the extent of that land, clearly not all of it will be able to be developed for residential developments. As Dr Brady has alluded to, we expect that parts of it will have quite a conservation value. Therefore, this work will allow us to identify that land that may be included into reserves. It may become offset areas for future residential development. I expect that that is the outcome. It is not just about identifying the land for residential development but also identifying those areas that are of high conservation value and understanding how we then will manage those areas.

MR PARTON: How large an area are we talking about in this whole western edge study?

Mr Ponton: I do not have the exact land area but I refer you to the ACT planning strategy 2018. There is a policy plan, and that identifies the general study area of the western edge. It is quite a substantial area.

MS LE COUTEUR: How much of that land does the ACT government currently own, given the LDA purchases a few years ago?

Mr Ponton: A substantial portion.

MR PARTON: Is it too early to be sprouting any vision, when we are looking at potential development of that area, of a mix of zone allocation? Is it too early to be talking about that or are we talking about, like Gungahlin, a stack of stand-alone blocks? Are we talking about RZ2 or are we—

Mr Ponton: I would expect that if the land is identified for future residential and commercial development it would be a mix of uses. You would expect that there would be local and group centres. In terms of good planning practice, you would expect that those areas would have high density in terms of a more compact form. And then you would expect, surrounding those areas, a more traditional residential-type development.

It is early. We need to undertake the analysis. We need to understand what type of development the particular areas could potentially accommodate. We need to understand the infrastructure needs. Understanding the infrastructure then leads us to work on the dwelling and commercial mix. A lot of work needs to be done. And then, of course, the final form would be subject to a decision by government and then advice from us to the minister.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I ask: why are you pursuing that rather than Kowen Forest? As you said, the western edge undoubtedly has some areas of high-conservation value, whereas Kowen Forest is appreciably a pine forest which has lesser conservation value. Is it because the LDA went and bought it?

Mr Ponton: Not at all. In fact, the 2012 strategy did not include Kowen, from what I recall. Kowen has consistently been considered as potential future residential development, but the analysis is not just looking at conservation values or land form. There are, as I alluded to just previously, infrastructure costs. The most significant impact in terms of future development of Kowen is, in fact, infrastructure costs associated with that land, and as a result of that, from a planning perspective and on balance, our recommendation to the government was that Kowen not be included for residential development.

Since that time the Chief Minister has announced publicly that that land will not be included moving forward. We will look at the planning strategy till 2035, I think is the time frame under the planning strategy, but the Chief Minister has made the public announcement that Kowen will not be included for residential development. We are currently working on how we can protect, for want of a better term, that land moving forward.

MS LE COUTEUR: Effectively the decision has been made on the basis of cost, despite the fact that it would appear that the western edge probably has more conservation value?

Mr Gentleman: No. There are a number of other considerations, particularly on the environmental side, along the Molonglo River. Some of the best riverine area is along the Molonglo River there. People recreate there and also there are a number of heritage aspects at Kowen as well.

Dr Brady: If I can just add, in the planning strategy we used some base criteria to work out where was probably the best area for further investigation for greenfield into the future, and one of the elements, as Mr Ponton mentioned, was around infrastructure and where there was existing infrastructure and where investment has already been made on infrastructure—pipes, poles, roads, those sorts of things—that may be able to be maximised or best used. There is already investment in those. There is some proximity to infrastructure where there might be some capacity to further develop that.

Again, with the western edge, because there has been a lot of investment around Molonglo and those areas, the investment in infrastructure was there. That was one of the criteria as well.

MR PETTERSSON: What steps is the directorate taking to address the DA backlog?

Mr Ponton: I will ask Mr Rutledge to answer first, and then Mr Cilliers.

Mr Rutledge: Mr Cilliers will take you through the process, but we have seen a large number of development applications over the past couple of years, and that has led to a backlog in some instances. What we are seeing here is that the city is booming, as

you would know, and people's choices are changing. If you look at, say, the 1991 to 2016 census, housing formation is driving a lot of that growth. In 1991, 17 per cent of people lived alone; now that is 25 per cent. In 1991, 44 per cent of people lived as a couple with a family; now that is down to 33 per cent.

We are seeing these market forces driving changes in dwelling type. There is a drive towards more less-detached dwellings because fewer people are couples with children, so we are seeing a lot of multi-use and multistorey development applications coming through. And the population growth continues. As recently announced, we are now at 423,000, with 7,600 new residents last year. All of that feeds into the need for new dwellings. That has seen not only a large number of dwellings but, as I say, very complex and multistorey, multi-use dwellings.

Mr Cilliers has done a number of reforms within the team to try to get through the large amount of work that we have got.

Mr Cilliers: I will start off by adding to what Mr Rutledge confirmed. The reasons for the backlog relate to the quantum of DAs, the scale of DAs and the complexities, but also the level of community interest in DAs we have found. That all contributed to it. The last two, the complexity and community interest, mostly related to infill development. There are now a greater number of people affected by these more complex DAs and there is a greater impact on infrastructure that we need to be more carefully concerned about because it is existing infrastructure that needs to be either upgraded or accommodated within development.

What have we done about the backlog? Fundamentally, we commenced a stage assessment process in August 2018, last year. The number in the backlog peaked around October. As part of the stage assessment process—I will walk you through the stage assessment process in a sec—we reviewed and refined the stage assessment process again in April. We trialled it between August and April and then bedded it down in April this year.

We also implemented target overtime sessions. We engaged some very limited staff, additional staff on short-term contract arrangements, where it was particularly hard to find those sorts of people whilst maintaining our independence as the planning authority. They are mostly retired assessing officers, for example.

We have also spent some time revising our assessment templates, combining three templates into a single template to reflect our stage assessment; and we have revised our notices of decision to make them less complex. That was also in response to a request from industry—industry is concerned about the complexity of our notices of decision—for notices to be more plain English notices of decision that are easily understood. Then, obviously, there is the budget that resulted in the additional positions. That is what we have done.

I can walk you quickly through what the stage assessment process is. The stage assessment process is based on the statute considerations and the steps in the Planning and Development Act. Previously you had a DA assessed by a single officer. We split it up into six little microstages, and any officer could assess any of those six stages.

The first stage would be pre-assessment and review. Fundamentally, we ask the question: is the land suitable? That is a question we have to ask in terms of the act; it goes back to not just permissibility but zone objectives and those sorts of things. The second stage is basically consideration of entity advice, again a requirement under the act. The third stage is for consideration of representations. The fourth stage is the technical assessment against the Territory Plan; we actually look at the drawings, assess them against code requirements and see whether they comply.

The fifth stage is a sort of in-between stage, what we call the preliminary decision-making stage. Before we start drafting and making a decision, we have a senior officer look at the DA: take a step back and look at all the previous stages, what the recommendations were and what the decision should be. That stage also gives you the opportunity to escalate it to the major projects review group or to the landscape review panel if there are any issues in relation to that.

The last stage is the drafting of the actual notice of decision and the final decision by a delegate. In addition to that, we have bundled our pre-lodgement services with our gateway team. They undertake a range of duties: things like inquiries, pre-lodgement advice, pre-application meetings and completeness checks. I have also introduced the role of coordinator. This particular person's role is to make sure that a DA keeps on progressing through those stages. Then there is a small team responsible for post-decision review. They are things like ACAT reviews and those sorts of things.

The reasons why we have gone with this stage assessment process relate to the volume of work. It enables the DA to progress through incremental stages. It is not unlike processes in other industries. It is production processes as well. Probably the most important reason relates to enhancing the integrity of the process. Where you previously had a single officer, now you have at least three people. An officer can handle more than one stage if they want to, but there are probably at least three people looking at a DA, and it could be up to six people looking at a single DA. So it is not a single person's call as to what the outcome of a DA would be. There is still a single delegate signing off on it, but it is more a team effort.

Related to that is consistency in decision-making. We previously had some feedback from industry that some of the decisions could be perceived as inconsistent where there were individual officers involved. With the stage process, because they are dealing with a particular stage, they are more likely to be consistent in their decision-making.

It also helps us to identify pressure points and trends, and vulnerable DAs that we can handle more efficiently. It helps us to deploy our resources with greater efficiency: I can move people between stages and, most importantly, rotate staff to make life a bit more interesting for them.

Lastly, it is about the wellbeing of staff. Because we have at least two officers in each stage, it enables people to take leave if they need to and not come back to a workload with a stack of DAs waiting for them. Somebody else can step in and take over that workload.

The challenges we have with the stage assessment process are largely in relation to

communication. Applicants or industry were used to contacting a single DA assessing officer. Now, it is very difficult. What am I doing about that? We have centralised the communication part with our gateway team, and we currently have two duty planners at any stage. This has led to what I referred to earlier: the need for a coordinator to maintain a level of fairness. The way we are dealing with overdue DAs is to deal with the old ones first; obviously that leads to some complaints from people whose DAs are getting older while we are dealing with them. Another challenge is dealing with amendment applications. We discussed that earlier. Something else is that the quality of applications and documentation we receive still, in some cases, leaves—

Mr Rutledge: Let me go to the feedback we have. Let me go to proponents that did make a change, particularly proponents who, as Mr Cilliers said, were used to ringing up the single assessing officer, to the point where they were sometimes ringing the assessing officer so often that they had no time to do any assessment because they were kept talking to the one proponent. Centralising those phone calls has allowed the assessors to work in teams on each of the stages. I think, too, you will have seen in the budget that the government has made a major change to staffing, so we will be able to put on an initial six new assessing officers out of this budget. And we have done a change to the fees so that it will be, in effect, industry funded.

I think that we are in a really good spot because of the staff reforms and the changes that we trialled from August to April. We have got them running smoothly. We have addressed some of those challenges. When we are recruiting new people into the team, they will know what they are coming for; they will know what to expect; and they will be able to just fit into that staged DA assessment process.

The other thing that we have heard, without wanting to pre-empt the outcomes of the other committee looking at DA engagement processes, is that the government has also funded us an additional engagement officer to help the DA assessment team to work with both industry consultation and community consultation. So we are managing that.

We have seen a significant investment—nearly \$4 million over four years—by the government to not address the backlog but really keep up with that. As I said, the city is booming, and we need strong quality assessment teams to deliver a quality product to our community.

Mr Gentleman: Recruitment for those officers is underway now, and I expect to see a reduction in time lines next year.

Mr Cilliers: I might add one little statistic to that. We keep a close eye on the success of our stage assessment process because it is a new thing. In October, 462 DAs at that given point were under assessment. We are currently down to the 350 mark. It does show that it works. We would like to be around the 200 to 240 mark for it to be a healthy level of work.

MR PETERSSON: With this stage process, you mentioned that you can more easily identify pressure points.

Mr Cilliers: Yes.

MR PETTERSSON: What are some of the emerging trends in regard to pressure points in the process?

Mr Cilliers: What I meant by pressure points is possibly things like common or topical DAs. It could relate to a number of dual occs in the same suburb or environment. If we bundle those together with a particular team in a particular stage, it makes it much more efficient, because you do not need to revisit the same issues over and over again. That is just an example. It could be things relating to parking; it could relate to even community issues. You quite often see a common thread in terms of the concerns of a community in a particular locality.

MR PETTERSSON: One of the other things that I think I caught was that targeted overtime had been undertaken. Can you expand on what that involves?

Mr Cilliers: It peaked in about February this year. We asked officers if they would voluntarily agree to overtime twice a week—that was totally voluntary—and some on Saturdays as well. That would have been for about two to three hours. We would focus on particular backlogs within the stage system.

A stage system exposed where bottlenecks were. For example, with entity advice, we had a significant bottleneck there for quite a few months. We would take the overtime staff and get them to focus on that particular stage, and get that moving through the system to the next stage. It could also be where we see a bundle of applications in the same area that are similar; we would ask them to deal with the same issue, just for efficiency purposes.

Mr Rutledge: As you would appreciate, Mr Pettersson, having our assessing team work overtime is not ideal, but we needed to respond. That is why I am thrilled that the government has supported some new permanent officers. With the additional six assessing officers, I am sure we will not need to do overtime. We have efficient processes in place now, and, with the additional staff, as Mr Cilliers said, we hope to get those DAs assessed in a quality and timely manner.

MR PETTERSSON: That was one of the most thorough answers I have received in two weeks.

MR PARTON: The ACT land and property report of December 2018 noted that there was a large settlement of lower priced blocks in Taylor compared to relatively fewer transactions in higher priced estates like Throsby and Denman Prospect. In fact in 2018-19 the average median price per square metre in Taylor was \$774, compared to \$953 and \$983 for Throsby and Denman Prospect. Is price point an issue in selling blocks in Throsby and Denman Prospect?

Mr Gentleman: Certainly, it is a market that varies. People may want to live in a particular area. The market normally drives what the price point is for that particular area. You have highlighted the difference between Taylor and Throsby. There are some unique advantages that people see in Throsby. Mulligans Flat is a really good example of being close to nature. In fact some of our most revered species sometimes wander across the road into the suburbs. That is probably the main reason for it.

MR PARTON: My question is: is price point an issue in selling blocks in Throsby and Denman Prospect? Are we having problems selling those blocks?

Mr Gentleman: I will take that on notice. It is more of a question for the minister with responsibility for the suburban land authority. I will take that on notice and come back to you with an answer.

MR PARTON: I do not know if you will want to point me in the same direction here: the biggest obstacle for people acquiring their ideal property is price point, pretty much. That has not really changed at any point in the past 100 years. That has always been the case. With that in mind can you explain why the price per square metre of land keeps increasing at such high rates? The median price per square metre in Moncrieff was \$520 in 2015-16. In 2017-18 it rose to \$1,103. Why would it more than double in such a short time frame?

Mr Gentleman: I will take that on notice, talk to my colleagues in the Suburban Land Agency and come back to you with a detailed answer.

MR PARTON: You do not have a position on why the price for a square metre of land would more than double in that short period of time? That is not something which is—

Mr Gentleman: It is not information that I have in front of me, Mr Parton. It is not my portfolio. I will take that on notice. I will go to the relevant directorate officials and come back to you with a detailed answer.

Mr Ponton: It is important to note that the analysis and the setting of the price, within the requirements of the legislation, are managed through the Suburban Land Agency. It is best that we get that response, as the minister said, through the Suburban Land Agency. We are happy to take it on notice, work with our colleagues and come back to you.

MR PARTON: All right.

Mr Gentleman: You mentioned Denman Prospect in that question. That is private—

MR PARTON: What strategies have been implemented at this end regarding reducing the price of land released or at least keeping it at an affordable rate? When I say affordable, I am not talking about the definition of affordable housing. I am just talking about keeping it at a rate which is going to be affordable to more Canberrans.

Mr Gentleman: The directorate gives advice to the Suburban Land Agency on land that will be forthcoming into the future; then the agency make their decisions.

Mr Ponton: Again we could talk about the affordable housing policy, but it would probably be better to have that conversation in the next session. As the minister said, the price of land, as we have suggested, is a matter for our colleagues in the Suburban Land Agency.

THE CHAIR: When was the strata reform consultative group established and who

are the members of the group?

Mr Ponton: I might ask Dr Brady to start; then perhaps we will ask our colleague Mr Power to talk in more detail. The consultative group was established late last year or early this year. Why don't we go straight to Mr Power, who has all of the details in terms of exact timing, the work program of the consultative group and who is sitting on that group?

Mr Power: We started, at the beginning of this year, looking in detail at how we might engage with the community and industry better to enact the reforms to strata this year. We had some wide consultation at the end of last year about who might constitute the best group of people to inform us on the detailed changes. Through that process we ended up with a consultative group, through wide consensus, which included a wide range of industry, resident and community representatives.

On the consultative group we have the leaders of the MBA and the HIA in that ACT, as well as the Property Council, the property industry. We have representatives of the Real Estate Institute. We have tenants' representatives and representatives of the Owners Corporation Network, in addition to groups of surveyors and other professionals, including the Law Society.

We established the first meeting in February this year. The idea was to set a program and understand how we could undertake some reforms over the next year or year and a half, and how we might prioritise those reforms to get as much happening as quickly as we could. Since then we have had three subsequent meetings. The purpose of those meetings was to triage the issues, identify how we might resolve some of them and set a plan for the remainder of the whole program.

THE CHAIR: What are the terms of reference?

Mr Power: I can take that on notice about the terms of reference. They are fairly light. The idea was to establish, through the leadership and the secretariat of the directorate, a set of talking points that might engage each of the groups, to get their views on all of the significant issues, with an understanding that, obviously, we were not going to please everybody with all of these changes. Some changes will be beneficial to residents and might require an imposition on developers; some may not. Under the terms of reference we were very clear that we did not expect unanimity but we certainly hoped for consensus.

One of the outcomes of the process was a slight change to the way that we triaged the issues. We used some very up-to-date online methods to get views and responses from all of the constituents of the consultative group. Off the top of my head we had 68 individual reforms that we wanted to discuss. We knew that it would be practically impossible to get those down to a manageable number in the short term. We had offline sessions where people could respond to online surveys and send their submissions in. The idea of the consultative meetings was to try to rationalise those into a group of reforms that we could present to government this year. That is the situation at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Can we expect a report this year?

Mr Ponton: Rather than a report, we are proposing a series of short, medium and longer term actions. Our intention is to simply proceed with those reforms. There are things that we are hearing that we can do very quickly, and we would like to get on and get that done in the next few months. There will be other items that will take until towards the end of the year, next year and beyond. In terms of a report as such, I would say no; we will just get on and seek to deliver. Part of that would also include further and broader engagement with the community and industry. Some are fairly straightforward and we would just seek to get on with them.

THE CHAIR: Can you provide the terms of reference on notice?

Mr Power: Yes, of course.

MR PARTON: Is it pre-emptive at this stage of the process to canvass any of the issues that have been raised or potentially to canvass some of the reforms we are talking about?

Mr Ponton: I more than happy for Mr Power to run through some of the more immediate actions that we think we can deal with and then perhaps flag the others that we think will require further discussion.

Mr Power: One of the things the government may end up doing this year is amendments to the Unit Titles Act and the Unit Titles (Management) Act—

Mr Ponton: Whilst we are exploring these, we have not yet briefed the relevant ministers—I make that abundantly clear—and not all fall within Minister Gentlemen’s portfolio. To other ministers who may be listening, we will come and talk to you soon. But I do not think that there are any surprises here.

Mr Power: I am sure I will find out if there are. One that is relatively topical is around the ability for buyers to be aware of changes to development while it is in train, which was mentioned earlier. One of the suggestions through our amendments to both pieces of legislation is to compel developers to advise potential purchasers and people who have paid deposits of substantial changes to the development and give them an opportunity to resolve that.

Some of the changes are fairly prosaic and they deal with the ability for owners corporations to deal with real changes and distribution of costs. Some of them will have a quite significant impact. For instance, we are proposing—and there is relatively wide consensus on this—a change that will allows owners corporations to alter the way costs are distributed for things that might accrue on common property.

At the moment there is a fairly simple, one-size-fits-all set of rules. They are fairly well fit for purpose, if you like, for a single-use building such as residential or commercial. With a lot of infill development going ahead, the impact of those rules on the ability for mixed-use developments to operate effectively is affected. So a number of the changes in the first round will deal with the way that owners corporations specifically can amend the rules.

Mr Gentleman: In regard to reporting, I will be making a statement to the Assembly in the not too distant future about where we have got to, and I think Mr Ramsay will be as well.

MS CODY: Minister, at the start of estimates I was talking to the Chief Minister about a budget initiative to look at moving away from insecure work and moving away from labour hire firms and contractors to more permanent employment. How is EPSDD going to implement that and move to a more permanent workforce?

Mr Simmons: On staffing arrangements and the number of people we have on contract or temporary employment, with the exception of the minister all of us here are included in that, so all executives are recorded as being temporary staff rather than permanent staff because of the nature of our contracts.

We also have a group of people who are funded for very particular projects. Healthy waterways has just finished up, and that money was given to us by the commonwealth. That was a multi-year project and we do not permanently employ people for projects that are purposely funded for a particular time. In some of these the nature of our contingent labour force is driven around how the funding source comes to us.

If it is from the commonwealth we bid for that work. If we get it then we can use it for the time we have it but we cannot extend beyond that. Similarly, when government decides through a budget process to fund a particular project for a particular period then the funding is only for that time. There is always at some point going to be an element of our workforce which sits in that temporary category.

In terms of the total number of staff we have on contract at the moment, it depends where you look. In the parks and conservation service, for example, the fire season draws in more labour so that is another area where there is some inevitability that the employment will always be of that nature.

The other thing is seasonal activities. One of our colleagues likes talking about this subject: at particular times of year our kangaroos have more exciting interactions with vehicles than at other times. We need extra in those times to help get those unfortunate animals off the roads and things like that.

Overall we are moving to a more stable workforce around both permanent and part-time workforces. Whilst we have a reasonable percentage of temporary and contract workforces they are largely around those elements I have described. Given the nature of our funding sources and the seasonal nature of some of our work, they will be somewhat inevitable for us.

Ms CODY: Is it common practice to use labour hire firms to fill those contracted positions or do you advertise a non-ongoing contract?

Mr Simmons: We do not use labour hire very much. Contractor Central is provided out of CMTEDD as a central resource for people who have particular skills. Some of these skills are cyclical in their nature, so we go back to a pool of people. When we look to recruit around the parks and conservation service we might do a bulk round of recruitment and find a group of people who are suitable and then we will use that list

and run through that. The advantage of that is that if you need people for a few months at a time but on a regular basis they are skilled up and you are not bringing people in and acquainting them with the systems every year; you are actually using a pool of people you have. Sometimes that is the way people like to work.

I remember when I was a union official many years ago—it is a very dim memory—I had people who were ski instructors and lifeguards. When they were not doing ski instruction they would work on the beaches of New South Wales as lifeguards. That was their choice. It is a pretty extraordinary choice for a while; apparently you cannot do it forever, but it is pretty good when you can.

Ms CODY: Can you provide the committee on notice a breakdown of staffing: contractors, permanent, part-time, FTE?

Mr Simmons: Yes.

Mr Gentleman: Is there a particular point in time you are wanting?

MRS JONES: From the start of the financial year.

MS CODY: Yes, to 30 June, which is on Sunday. And can you also break it down by gender?

Mr Simmons: Overall I can tell you that it is a 52-48 female-male split across the directorate as a whole. There are pockets where the percentage drifts. The parks and conservation service tends to be more male and some of our admin tends to be overwhelmingly female. But our largest group, which is our senior officers, meets the overall 52-48 female-male split.

MS LE COUTEUR: I want to check: is this the right place to ask about entertainment precincts and music and the like?

Mr Gentleman: Sure. If we do not have the information we will get it for you.

MS LE COUTEUR: As you clearly would be aware, there was an urban sounds discussion paper put out in 2016 and there was a lot of agitation about it. That was in 2016. When is the government going to do something as a result of this? I have been looking through the summary of options. There is one that claims to have no disadvantages, which is option 9, to work with the NCA to develop standard procedures. When are you going to do all or any of these?

Mr Gentleman: We have been doing some of that work and the project has examined how to balance supporting a lively night-time economy in appropriate locations and also maintaining amenity for residents who choose to live near hospitality and recreational businesses. There is no simple fix to finding a good mix of activity and life in our cities and living in more urban environments too.

We are engaging across the city with different demographics and different people and there is a range of actions we can see across planning, leasing and environmental protection that we are examining at the moment. There is further investigation, in

particular around whether it is appropriate to have special entertainment precincts, how they might be and how they might operate into the future. I ask the director to give you the detail.

Mr Ponton: I will make an observation and then ask Dr Brady to provide further information. As the minister said, we have taken the urban sounds project and we have started to split that work out, similar to what we have done with the strata reform work. There are a lot of things that we can do but not all of it fits within one portfolio neatly. We are now starting to work through where each of those actions neatly fits and what can be done in the short, medium and longer terms and not wait for a package of reforms that can be undertaken and that might take 12 months; things that we can do now. We are looking to see what we can do now. I ask Dr Brady to provide further information in relation to that work.

Dr Brady: There has been work going on, particularly over the last year. We have got an internal working group that works across the directorates. As Mr Ponton and the minister said, it is not really an issue that we can just deal with, with one piece of regulation or one particular area of planning. We have been looking at it in terms of mixed use development, which touches on the strata reform, which is also within our area. We have been looking at whether there are any building policy matters that can be addressed—and that is probably a little less so—but a lot of the building reforms will improve other building quality matters.

We have been working with the EPA on the noise measures and looking at whether there are opportunities for us to maybe change some of the hours, particularly on weekends, in the urban areas. We have been looking at whether there are certain things, particularly around mixed use, where we need to let people be more aware that they are moving into an area that has a mix of uses and is a different environment to a suburban area. You might expect more noise, you might expect more activity, you might expect noise at different times, making people more aware of those sorts of things. We are looking at different measures.

On the entertainment precinct area, we have been working with CRA, EPA—to name a few of the various acronyms for all the different directorates—but we have been looking at whether, through zoning, there is anything we can do. Are there leasing conditions that we can put on? We are looking at that range of different actions.

While the discussion paper that went out had a range of options—and we have been following up on all that—it definitely has not been lying still. It fits quite neatly with some of the work we are doing on the planning review, the strata reform and the building reforms. We have definitely been looking at different ways we can deal with that.

With regard to the entertainment precinct area, we have been looking at other jurisdictions and what they do. The city of Sydney has done work in this area, on the night-time economy and those sorts of things, previously. We are also looking at what other jurisdictions do as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: When was your last consultation with MusicACT?

Dr Brady: I think as recently as last week.

Mr Ponton: And before that, I certainly met with MusicACT, or a representative of MusicACT, with my colleague Mr Rutledge. I think that was late last year. I do not have exact dates. We are in semi-regular contact with that interest group.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is good to hear that some work is happening but the question is: Mr Ponton has suggested that you are looking at a package which might take 12 months. Appreciably, this discussion paper went out in 2016—

Mr Ponton: Sorry, just to clarify, I said that we are looking at things that we can do. We do not want to wait for a package in 12 months. We are looking at doing work in the short, medium and longer terms.

MS LE COUTEUR: I was trying to be polite in giving you 12 months. The point is that you are suggesting that things could be done fairly quickly. The question is: given that the public consultation was in 2016 and there are things that could be done quickly, as you have just said, why have they not been done? It is half way through 2019.

Dr Brady: Not to go against what Mr Ponton said, it is not that they can be done quickly; they might be at a point now where they can be done quite quickly but we have been working on them for quite a while.

Mr Ponton: I think that that is an important point of clarification. Given the work we have been doing, we are now at a point that we can make changes as opposed to these were always easy things to do. The work has been done and we can now give effect to some of those things.

There are other aspects. For example, if we were looking to amend the Territory Plan we have to factor in potentially six months for a committee hearing. That adds to the 12 months. There were some things we might need to do that would take longer but, as Dr Brady has said, it is not that we have not been working on this; we are now at a point that we can start to see some change.

MS LE COUTEUR: You suggested that some things might happen very quickly. Would you be able to give us any idea on that?

MRS JONES: What are the ones you have been working on for some time?

Dr Brady: Some of the items that I just went through around the possible amendment to noise requirements—in the evenings, on the weekend—are matters that we are going through with the minister at the moment. There is the possible identification of an overlay of an entertainment precinct which would probably be a bit of a trial and, as I mentioned, some of the buyer-beware information, those sorts of things. There are a few other things but they are some of the things that at the moment we think we might be able to introduce, hopefully, soon.

MRS JONES: What other things have you been working on? You said there has been quite a lot you have been working on.

Dr Brady: The broader planning issues are a bit more complex in terms of whether we look at zoning, changes to zoning and leases. That is a bit more complex and we will probably look at that a bit more through the planning review work that we are doing on the Territory Plan and looking at zones.

On the strata reform work, we have been looking at whether there is anything through strata reforms and building management plans—those sorts of things—that we can incorporate there. Again, some of it is about making people aware that they are in a different precinct and the noise levels might be different.

We are talking with EPA about whether there is scope to actually change the way noise is measured. But then some of that goes into Building Code territory as well. Are there different ways of measuring noise in these areas that we might see as entertainment precincts?

MRS JONES: Has any thought also been given to building to a certain scope to cope with noise?

Dr Brady: The Building Code sets the requirements for building.

MRS JONES: And where does that sit?

Dr Brady: With us as well.

Mr Ponton: Just on that, building policy sits with the directorate. The responsible minister is Mr Ramsay, but the National Construction Code is a national document, as the name would suggest. There is the Australian Building Codes Board. I am a member of that board but it is a national board. That is a three-year cycle in terms of any amendments. That is something—

MRS JONES: A three-year cycle to get an amendment through?

Mr Ponton: For the National Construction Code, yes.

MRS JONES: Is there anything we can do at a local level? If you are building, for example, a hotel in an entertainment precinct and there are apartments on the top of the hotel, can you make them more soundproof or something like that?

Mr Ponton: Yes, there are things that we can do, but we need to be mindful of the fact that there is an intergovernmental agreement in relation to the National Construction Code. We seek to implement a number of variations to the National Construction Code.

MRS JONES: Yes.

Mr Ponton: We can certainly look at that and we can work with our colleagues on the Australian Building Codes Board. If we got to the point where we thought there was a variation that was critically important, we could explore that with the minister. But I think we would need to do some more policy thinking around that in terms of the

impact of having different building requirements in the ACT in relation to noise. Noise is certainly an issue that is being considered by the Building Codes Board at the moment.

Mr Gentleman: I think we gave you a corresponding example that is occurring in Sydney with their night-time economy. They started to do their consultation work back in October or November 2017. It is moving into a document that they are preparing which is called “Making Sydney a sustainable city by 2030”. It is even a much longer time. It is a much bigger city than we are, but there are a lot of people that want to have a say and who have a view. There are a lot of people that could be affected by changes that we make. It is really important that we bring the community along and listen to their comments and submissions along the way.

THE CHAIR: Can you quickly expand on what you mean by there being different ways of measuring noise?

Dr Brady: I might be treading into territory that I am not as sound on here, pardon the pun.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think that was a pun not intended.

Dr Brady: The measurements of noise are often at the boundary of a use. There are different measures for what is called a city precinct area or more a suburban area. We have been talking with the EPA about whether different levels should be used perhaps in some of the inner city, more urban areas, where there probably are different noise levels. At the moment, some of the levels cut off at 10 pm; so we have been asking whether on a Friday night or a Saturday night they could be extended to midnight, for example.

Say, for example, it had to be 70 decibels at the boundary. I am not sure what the level is. Assume that that kicks in at 10 pm on a Friday night. If people thought it was louder than that and made complaints then someone could be asked to stop the noise. If we extend that, acknowledging that the area is one where there is entertainment and there might be more outdoor noise, that at least gives a bit more scope to acknowledge that there is noise and activity that is going on past 10 pm on Friday and Saturday nights, which is really pretty normal in urban areas.

MRS JONES: In a city area, yes.

Mr Gentleman: As another action, I will be also writing, of course, to the design review panel to ask them to consider acoustic measures when reviewing development proposals.

MS LE COUTEUR: You suggested that there were things that were almost ready to go. You talked about months. When is that going to happen that there will be some more public “something”?

Mr Ponton: I think the short answer is that we will settle our advice to the minister. Then that would be a decision for the minister in terms of what we are recommending. I do not think I would look to make announcements around what and when until we

have settled that advice. But we are talking short term.

MRS JONES: Have the activities in Civic the other day prompted a renewing of energy into this area?

Mr Ponton: No, this work was progressing well.

MRS JONES: Yes, I am sure, but to be able to announce something—

Mr Gentleman: We did meet with the proponents. I thought it was quite a hearty meeting. I think they went away with a bit more hope to see their music activities continue in the city. It was a good meeting.

Mr Ponton: As I said earlier, we have been having semi-regular meetings with interested parties over the last six or seven months. I think the short answer to your question is: no, the activities of last week have not prompted this work. This work has been progressing at a pace that we would expect and—

MRS JONES: I was not talking about the work; I was talking about any possible announcement.

Mr Ponton: No, we were in the process of settling our advice to the minister. As I said, we would not want to make an announcement until the minister has received and considered that advice.

MRS JONES: I turn to the eighth dot point on page 8 of your budget statements. It talks about improving development approvals through enhancement of the merit assessment team and its online presence. Does this mean a change to the definition of the merit track classification, with more applications being reclassified to the merit track?

Mr Ponton: No, that relates to the additional resources that Mr Cilliers was talking about earlier—

MRS JONES: That we discussed before, yes.

Mr Ponton: including one for engagement activities.

MRS JONES: On a related issue, at what stage will we be able to see development applications for which the consultation period has lapsed? They are currently taken off the website once the consultation period closes.

Mr Rutledge: Mrs Jones, we have heard that feedback from a number of sources. I spoke at length when we talked about this before the committee, looking at engagement in DA processes. When we established the DA app finder, it is fair to say, and I am quite happy to admit, we kind of put it together quite quickly and quite cheaply. We tested it to see whether or not there was any interest. I think we have been pleasantly surprised, and maybe shocked, at how much interest there has been in that.

MRS JONES: In DAs, yes. I think there is quite a lot in Canberra.

Mr Rutledge: And the use of the app too. I think it has become very convenient. People are going on their morning walks and they see a DA. They either want to lodge online or get information online. It was designed for that purpose. What we are seeing now is that, after the DA is approved, people are going on their morning walks, looking at the built form and then wondering whether they missed something. They want to look back at a DA that has been approved, and therefore is currently not on the app itself—

MRS JONES: Development shock, you mean. Do you mean with development shock?

Mr Rutledge: I do not.

MRS JONES: We have been talking about bill shock this week.

Mr Rutledge: I think sometimes even the colour of the façade is enough to get people excited on their morning walks. They have tried to look back at the original DA approval.

Mr Ponton: I am more than happy to talk about the difference between white and off-white, if the committee is interested.

MRS JONES: There have been comedies based on the difference between beige and off-white.

Mr Rutledge: Mr Ponton and I want to hit morning tea by 11.15; so if I get you started on colours—

MRS JONES: The beige, the white, the off-white, the bone and the ivory, yes.

Mr Rutledge: We have heard that feedback both from the community and from the committee. That is why we have sought an additional resource.

MRS JONES: But does that include having the ability to see applications for which the consultation period has lapsed?

Mr Rutledge: We have heard that and we are just trying to work out whether technically that is possible. I think there is a great demand for that.

MRS JONES: So is there an intention to do that or—

Mr Rutledge: Yes, there is intention at least to scope it up because, as I say, we know that that—

MRS JONES: What is the time frame on that work?

Mr Rutledge: I would not want to give a time frame, Mrs Jones. The budget announcement was made a couple of weeks ago. We are recruiting a new officer, and

we will get them to scope up that work.

MRS JONES: We will probably come back to it at annual reports.

Mr Rutledge: Yes, and hopefully have an update.

MR PARTON: Why would it technically not be possible?

Mr Rutledge: It would be technically possible. The challenge would be the current app. We did that, as I say, with not a lot of money and not a lot of time. It is whether we can bolt on that possibility at the back end or whether we need a total refresh.

MRS JONES: Or you have to start again.

Mr Rutledge: Obviously, it is not technically impossible; it is just how much work it is to get to there.

MRS JONES: Finally, what is the process for obtaining a copy of a DA whose consultation period has lapsed?

Mr Rutledge: You just contact us and we would be able to provide that.

MRS JONES: By what means?

Mr Rutledge: Email, the gateway team, the shopfront. We would provide both the notice of decision and any formal documents.

MRS JONES: As in the government shopfront?

Mr Rutledge: Yes.

Mr Ponton: Access Canberra, which is in our building.

Mr Rutledge: We are happy to provide that. We are hoping to make it easier.

MRS JONES: It might save time.

MR PARTON: I want to go to the indicative land release program and the fourth dot point in regard to due diligence studies of urban renewal and greenfield sites. What is involved in the due diligence studies for the indicative land release program that is mentioned at page 2? I understand that is quite a broad question but—

Mr Gentleman: “Quite a lot” is the easy answer, but I will ask the directorate to give you the detail.

Mr Ponton: I may ask Dr Brady and Mr Rutledge to add to this. In terms of due diligence, there is due diligence for urban renewal sites and then due diligence that relates to greenfields. They are managed out of different parts of the organisation. It is important to note that due diligence is different from planning work. We were talking earlier about the western edge studies. That is not due diligence; that is planning to

determine whether or not the land is suitable for particular types of uses. Once we get through that planning work and we have a greater understanding of the potential suitable uses for that land, the due diligence is going to the next stage.

It might be that due diligence will look at more detailed infrastructure servicing requirements in terms of getting down to the nitty-gritty of what the diameter of a pipe needs to be, whether we need to upgrade particular substations for electricity, or what further infrastructure works might need to be done in terms of augmenting road networks. It looks at all of that more detailed analysis in terms of what needs to be done. It may also then deal with the planning report and Territory Plan variations.

If you think about it on a time continuum, you have the strategic planning work moving to due diligence then moving into delivery. That work is, as I said, managed out of two parts of the organisation. There is a dedicated urban renewal team. We have a session tomorrow to talk about the detail of urban renewal, but I have the relevant officer here for any particular questions you have on that. The greenfields areas, likewise, are managed out of the land policy team.

MR PARTON: That is a good answer. Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a lot of questions. I would like to talk about the rezoning and deconcessionalisation of several recreation facilities. At previous hearings we were told about a review that was being undertaken after a wave of applications for rezoning in the restricted access recreation zone. Where is that review up to?

Mr Ponton: Thank you for that question. Ms Kaucz will provide us with an update, but I will make some opening remarks. That work has commenced because we were receiving quite a number of applications, particularly for more traditional community facilities or recreational type sites, particularly golf courses. We were concerned that we were being asked to consider the request to deconcessionalise and to rezone parts of those facilities without a broader policy context. We wrote to each of the proponents, and we were advising others, to say that we were just putting those particular requests on hold to allow us to do that more detailed policy work. I will hand over to Ms Kaucz, who can provide more detail on the status of that work.

Ms Kaucz: As has been discussed, we have been doing a review looking at PRZ2, which is restricted access recreation, and CZ6, which is leisure and accommodation. We are getting to the end of the internal work that we have been doing. We have done a review of all the different blocks. One advantage of looking at those two zones is that there are not as many of them as other zones in the ACT.

We have looked at them and what they have currently, for the ones that have approached us already. We have done a lot of data collection. We are putting that together now to have a look at what recommendations we might make as to how we consider that. It could be that we just say that they are all so different—due to size, what they have on them, the area that they are in, and what resources and facilities they already have in the area—that we do continue to look at them case by case. That is what we are looking at at the moment, to say, “Are there some things that we take into consideration holistically or are they are all so unique that we need to look at them case by case?”

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you have an idea of when that work will be finished, and will it come out in any way to the public in terms of potential change to the processes for deconcessionalisation?

Ms Kaucz: We are hoping in the coming month or so to make some internal recommendations following that, depending on what that is and how it leads on to the consultation we will do. It is still a bit early to say what the next steps will be, because we have not finalised our recommendations and obviously the level of change will then lead to the level of consultation that we will do. If there is no change, it might be more of an informing process rather than an engagement process. If it is a significant change, obviously we will take that into consideration. At this stage it is a little early to talk about the next steps.

MS LE COUTEUR: Right now, deconcessionalisation of these blocks is on hold, is it?

Ms Kaucz: When we have been looking at the blocks, we have listed which ones we are aware are concessional leases, but that is a separate piece of work to look at how they are dealt with. At the moment we are just looking at the blocks and the zones, and how we look at the future use of those blocks: if we are requested to consider them or if we look at the zone itself. The separate component to that is, if they are a concessional lease, how that is dealt with.

Dr Brady: The work might be something that we would package as part of the consultation we will be doing on the planning review. There are a range of different internal pieces of work we will do as part of the Territory Plan review that is looking at zoning issues. We will probably be packaging some of those things and consulting further with the community on more specific topics later through the year. It could be one of the topics we package into that.

Mr Gentleman: Chair, I have an update on Mr Parton's earlier question on the land release program. We saw the planning strategy 2018 estimate that one scenario could require about 100,000 new dwellings by 2041. The most recent indicative land release notes that we expect we will have approximately 32,000 people coming to Canberra by 2023. That averages about 8,000 people per year. That is what we are seeing in population growth.

Based on the assumptions of household size—who requires housing for example—we anticipate we will need approximately 3,076 dwellings per year. Based on that 2018 strategy, it is another scenario of closer to about 4,000 a year. We will monitor this land release program annually and look at the land supply.

MR PARTON: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: We will suspend there and return at 11.30.

Hearing suspended from 11.15 to 11.31 am.

Appearances:

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

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

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

Fitzgerald, Mr Bruce, Executive Group Manager, Urban Renewal

Suburban Land Agency

Dietz, Mr John, Chief Executive Officer

Bulless, Mr Neil, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Gordon, Mr Tom, Executive Director, Development Delivery

Gleeson, Ms Jody, Senior Manager, Community Development

THE CHAIR: We will recommence. I remind officials, when they first speak, to confirm that they have read and understood the privilege statement.

Minister, could you please explain your suburban land development role compared to that of Minister Gentleman? Do you have oversight of the indicative land release program? What role does that play in relation to the Suburban Land Agency?

Ms Berry: In answer to the second question, no, I do not have any direct role in the indicative land release program. Of course, like all cabinet ministers, we discuss the indicative land release program. The Suburban Land Agency's role in that, and my role as minister with responsibility for the Suburban Land Agency as well as for housing, is to ensure that the policy direction of the government with regard to the release of land that includes affordable community and public housing is included in the indicative land release program. That is very much in Minister Gentleman's portfolio. Was the first question about the difference between what I do and what he does?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

Ms Berry: My responsibility is for the Suburban Land Agency and suburban land development, which is basically the delivery arm of suburban land in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: What responsibilities do you exercise in relation to deciding the mix of residential land categories flagged for release under the indicative land release program?

Ms Berry: That is really with Minister Gentleman. Mr Ponton is here. He can probably give you some more information on that.

Mr Ponton: I might expand a little on that, given my responsibilities as Director-General of the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

Directorate. The simplest way to describe the split is that Minister Gentleman is responsible for the policy aspects and Minister Berry is responsible for the delivery aspects.

In terms of the indicative land release program itself, we will start that work now for the next indicative land release program, looking at a range of factors that we touched on this morning, in terms of population trends and a range of other considerations. We work with our colleagues in the Suburban Land Agency because developing policy without an understanding of what is happening on the ground is not particularly sensible. We do work very closely with our colleagues in the Suburban Land Agency. Of course, we also need to make sure that we are talking through that process with our colleagues in treasury.

Over the last 12 months we have refined the process for the development of the indicative land release program. Mr Dietz and I are working on how we can further improve the efficiency of that process. What will ordinarily happen is that the agencies will work together, led by EPSDD from a policy perspective, and supported by the Suburban Land Agency from a delivery perspective. We will prepare the draft and we will take that through the normal cabinet process. That is when Minister Berry and, in fact, all other ministers, are given the opportunity to influence the final indicative land release program. EPSDD does provide that policy advice in settling that. We talked earlier about how that then links in to the ACT planning strategy 2018 and the like; so it is all linked together.

THE CHAIR: As the minister responsible for affordable housing and homelessness issues, are you able to set the affordable housing targets in the land release program or is that all decided before you proceed?

Ms Berry: No, the housing targets are set through the housing strategy. The targets are set at 15 per cent, which has been announced, and it is part of the strategy for providing affordable community and public housing in the land release program, in both brownfield and greenfield developments.

MR PARTON: When you speak of those targets being set at 15 per cent, can you just clarify that for me? When you say that target is set at 15 per cent, 15 per cent of what?

Ms Berry: Fifteen per cent of the land release program is for community housing, affordable and social public housing, not just in greenfields but in brownfields as well.

MR PARTON: Are you confident of that target being met over time? Is it measured on a city-wide basis or on a development-by-development basis?

Ms Berry: No, it is across the city. It is a new target that was set through the development of the housing strategy. Yes, I am confident it will be met.

Mr Ponton: The indicative land release program, of course, is mindful—it has to be—of the government policy set through the strategy and then passing that through to the Suburban Land Agency in terms of their delivery of the program and making sure that those affordable housing requirements are met.

MR COE: It is 15 per cent of what?

Ms Berry: Fifteen per cent of the indicative land release—all land that is released.

MR COE: Are we talking about land, blocks, units or dwellings?

Mr Ponton: Dwellings.

Ms Berry: Dwellings, yes.

MR COE: You could have 1,000 blocks of land, but as long as over here somewhere you have 150 or a bit more—165-ish—units and apartments, that is all right?

Ms Berry: It is across the whole indicative land program, not just within a particular development.

MR COE: How many—

Ms Berry: It is not 15 per cent within a development. It is not 15 per cent within Taylor, Throsby or whatever. It is across the ACT.

MR COE: So it is a “yes” to my question then.

Mr Ponton: As we work with the Suburban Land Agency, and Mr Dietz might want to talk a little bit more about this, we are working to make sure that we do not end up—I think this is where you are heading with this line of questioning—with a whole lot of one-bedroom apartments at this end of the development.

MR COE: Yes, that is right.

Mr Ponton: We want to make sure that we have affordable housing meeting those requirements that is a mix of housing types.

MR COE: How many standalone detached dwellings or blocks have been set aside in the last 12 months?

Ms Berry: When Mr Dietz responds to this he can also go to the affordable housing register, which matches individuals and families with the types of dwelling they want to purchase, whether that is a unit, a townhouse or a standalone dwelling. It is helpful in the context of this conversation to understand what people are actually looking at purchasing in the market as an affordable home.

Mr Dietz: I have read the privilege statement. Mr Coe, we work very collaboratively with EPSDD in coming up with the notifiable instruments which define which areas and blocks of land we release for affordable housing. We look for a mix of one, two and three-bedroom houses and ensure that the land we provide lends itself to the delivery of that product. That means we sell multi-units, and you are right that they tend to lend themselves probably more to the one bedrooms. We sell some compact lots with zero lot boundaries which probably lend themselves to more of the integrated product. We also have detached single dwellings which lend themselves to

the larger type product. This year the multi-units have probably been higher released throughout the earlier part of the year. However, we have 128 detached blocks due for release today.

MR COE: So literally today or they were made available some time earlier and they are still available now?

Mr Dietz: No, literally being released today.

Mr Ponton: I think it is tomorrow.

Mr Dietz: Sorry, tomorrow; I apologise.

MR COE: How many detached blocks have been released since 1 July?

Mr Dietz: We can take that number on notice.

MR COE: Are we talking zero or are we talking a hundred?

Ms Berry: We will take it on notice.

Mr Dietz: We can take that number on notice.

MR COE: So probably zero or close to zero?

Ms Berry: We are taking the question on notice.

MS CODY: Minister, the mingle program is very popular in Wright and Coombs. What has changed for the program this coming financial year?

Ms Berry: The mingle program has been very successful program across the Suburban Land Agency in new parts of the ACT. Jody Gleeson coordinates the program, which is about building strong communities and engaging new neighbours with each other in different kinds of ways. Ms Gleeson can take you through all the different kinds of programs, but it is anything from a barbecue and a coffee to a yoga class.

MS CODY: I note that a recycling program was launched last year sometime.

Ms Berry: And a recycling program. In Molonglo it has been brought around Stromlo Cottage, which is a great place for people to come together and think of new ways they can connect.

Ms Gleeson: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The big changes we have seen in the last 12 months include that we have tripled the number of activities delivered across Canberra over five suburbs—Wright, Coombs, Taylor, Throsby and Moncrieff. We have also tripled the attendance levels since last year.

The reasons for that have been the increase in partnerships and collaboration not only across government but in the industry. One of the big achievements this year is

through the Canberra Institute of Technology, where we have partnered with the community development students to deliver a whole program of activities. Those students are having real-life experience to then send them out into the workforce with.

As we are a resident-led program, we put out a lot of information to the residents to see what they would like to see delivered. We did a huge Diwali event, the Festival of Lights, in Moncrieff, which achieved over 2,500 residents on a single night. We have also delivered many projects at Stromlo Cottage—over 185 activities in the Molonglo region this year, at an average of one every three days.

The other big one we have done in the northern part is that we have just launched a trial of the live life, get active program, which is a free 12-month program relating to fitness. That is free fitness classes five days a week for 12 months. The big outcomes are tripling the numbers and tripling the attendance and also focusing on the things people need. We look at sustainability, safety, cultural awareness and information.

As early as Monday we received the annual results for mingle to represent the figures we needed to report on in the Suburban Land Agency's statement of intent. The results indicate that over 75 per cent of residents feel more connected through the mingle program and 89 per cent, on average, believe mingle has made them feel more informed about both government and their community. We are very proud of that and we will continue to work with the residents to build that program and information and connection back to government.

MS CODY: You spoke about the collaboration with the CIT. Can you expand on that?

Ms Gleeson: They have a community development class and there are about 30 students in that program. Part of the work we have done is that we had one of their student work in our office for an 80-hour program as a full learning mentor program. This year we have delivered five activities with groups of students. We have mentored them on how to deliver events, how to research, how to work with local communities and also how to share their learnings in communities around cultural awareness.

Most recently we delivered a storytelling with food event at CIT in Reid, where the students told the history of the recipes and the foods they had cooked. There was huge positive feedback. For us it is a real partnership within government and also puts students in the position where they are getting real-life experience.

MS CODY: You said mingle is predominantly resident run. Are things coming up that residents have already identified for the coming year?

Ms Gleeson: There are a couple of things. We are looking at a feast event to celebrate the end of Ramadan. Diwali again is going to be very popular. We have received a number of inquiries about doing Christmas or end of year celebrations. They are also very keen to connect over things that might be challenging them within their own suburbs—how they can improve sustainability and recycling or how they can work together with the police and create a Neighbourhood Watch that promotes and improves safety within their community. We mentor through that program as well.

Another one is local markets in the Molonglo Valley, which will be delivered on 29 September. Again, that is a resident-led initiative and we are hoping this year to partner with EventsACT and link in with Floriade.

MS CODY: I know that, obviously with new suburbs, a whole bunch of people move into these strange areas. I use that term kindly. It is strange for them because it is a new suburb, often with not a great deal of infrastructure. Some of our older suburbs are going through rejuvenation and changing demographics. Is there a view to maybe doing something like a mingle program in some of those areas?

Ms Gleeson: At the moment there is not. I guess the Suburban Land Agency's role is to focus on the new communities that we are building. What we are doing—and we are trialling Gungahlin's, which will be this financial year coming—is working with the local residents associations created for all those existing suburbs, some of them being Forde, Crace, Casey, Ngunnawal, to try and connect those people, actually share the learnings of mingle, work together and collaborate on how we can work with the community councils and those local stakeholders and suppliers to get that general consensus of building community within the region, not only within the individual suburb.

Whilst we focus on an individual suburb—Moncrieff, for example—we are working very closely with Amaroo school. We know that a lot of those families come to these activities. No-one is ever excluded from the activities. With the live life, get active program we have got 95 registrants and we know that 30 per cent of those are from other suburbs around Moncrieff. Yes, there are parts that are integrated. I guess from a budgeting and a resource point of view, to roll it out in every suburb in Canberra would be quite intensive. But where we can, we certainly integrate.

Ms Berry: With some of the work that mingle has been doing, when the new park was opened at Moncrieff—and it is very well utilised and mingle holds different activities and events there—it brought in people from other parts of the city as well and gave them the opportunity to see what is happening in that suburb. They could go and learn from what is happening with mingle and then do something within their own areas as well.

We have not only the mingle program but also, through Ginninderry, the spark initiative, which is also about building community in those newer areas, bringing people together in different kinds of ways and forming those really strong relationships from the start—more than just bricks and mortar but actually building strong communities across the city.

I think there could be opportunities to learn from the work that mingle does in building those communities in new suburbs and how we could replicate that in some way in older suburbs. Maybe we can do that through different grants programs across the government. People are always saying they miss talking to their neighbours or people do not get out in the street and play cricket anymore.

MRS JONES: Some of us do.

MS CODY: Yes, some of us do.

Ms Berry: Yes, some of us do, but not everyone. I think it is a chance to get people together. There are the Neighbour Day initiatives, which is not in my portfolio areas, and those kinds of things. The work that Mingle has done in bringing complete strangers together—we could do the same kinds of things across our city.

MS CODY: The reason I asked was that sometimes in the interaction between the newer suburbs and the older suburbs that I am referring to—Molonglo and Weston Creek mainly, because I know it and I experience it—there is not as cohesive a community feel between the two areas as I feel there could be. I am just thinking of ways that we can get better interactions: see how the Gungahlin interactions go, and it might be something that we can use to bring people together.

Ms Berry: Yes.

Ms Gleeson: Yes, and we are also planning to go to the Weston Creek Community Council within the next six weeks or so, if we can, to work out ways that we can work together and collaborate a little better across Molonglo Valley and Weston Creek. Where we know things are happening in Weston Creek as well for those residents—the dog parks and things like that—we certainly promote that to all the local residents to try and get that combined, shared knowledge. In a lot of areas we are using things like Communities@Work or Neighbourhood Watch. We are tapping into resources that are in Weston Creek already. I hope that will grow as we grow.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that you were talking about potential expansion into older suburbs, have you looked at restarting the parties at the shops program, which was, I think, very successful and also not a huge budget event?

Ms Gleeson: The difference with parties at the shops—I have been in contact with the organiser over the past couple of years—is that that was something that was put forward as an application to government by somebody and, again, was a community-led program. There was somebody who was running that and was partnering with all those individual shops like Lyneham. Bonner was another one.

MS LE COUTEUR: It was the centenary year and we had it everywhere.

Ms Gleeson: Yes, in the centenary year. At this stage it is not in the mingle program, but whether it is in anything broader we are not aware of yet.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am concentrating on Molonglo. The land release program for 2020-21 has a local shop site in Coombs, just behind, depending on which way you look at it, the current vacant shops. It fronts John Gorton Drive. What is intended for this site?

Ms Berry: I am not sure which one you are talking about. The existing shopping centre?

MS LE COUTEUR: No, between it and John Gorton Drive. It is on the indicative land release program.

MRS JONES: The back end of the current shopping centre.

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: You will need someone who knows the area.

Mr Dietz: I call on our Executive Director, Development Delivery, Tom Gordon.

Ms Berry: Yes. I know—and you would, Ms Le Couteur, as well as the other members of that electorate—the challenges in that community around the shopping centre.

MS LE COUTEUR: You have got three members from Murrumbidgee here. We know that, and that is one of the reasons I am asking this series of questions about what is happening.

Ms Berry: It is a good question and it is why the Suburban Land Agency and the mingle program have their community events there, to give the community a chance to discuss these concerns, and we can try to work a way through for the community. In fact, one of the initiatives that the SLA did following conversations with the community was put in a pop-up coffee van, because the community told us what they most wanted was a place where they could get a coffee and catch up with each other. We trialled a coffee van, which I know is in Ms Gleeson's area. She can come back and talk later if you are interested in learning about that.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am very interested in the coffee van, yes.

Ms Berry: But with regard to the shopping centre and that particular site: Mr Gordon.

Mr Gordon: I acknowledge the privilege statement. The land release program sees that parcel of land being released in the year 2020-21 and it will allow for a local shop and residential. The number of residential at the moment is estimated at around 37. The intention is that it will run through a program of releasing that to the market, more than likely through a tender process to assess suitable purchasers of that site.

MS LE COUTEUR: How are you going to work out what is the shop requirement for that area, given it is clearly—how should we put it—an under-tenanted, to be polite, existing site? Over the road there is Koko Black. Have you done analysis that suggests there is space for another commercial site there or are you giving up on one of the existing under-tenanted sites? I am just wondering: what is the thinking behind this?

Mr Ponton: If I could comment before Mr Gordon continues, in terms of that analysis we were talking earlier, in the previous session, about part of due diligence and, before that, the planning work that the planning authority undertakes. It looks at expected population for particular areas, catchments, and then looks at what retail needs might be required. And then that finds its way into, firstly, the Territory Plan, then into the precinct codes, and then it finds its way into what you see in the indicative land release program. That work is done as part of the detailed planning work and the development of the indicative land release program for the Suburban Land Agency to deliver on the release of the sites.

MS LE COUTEUR: My question is: given that you have done all that work, what do you think is going to happen on that site and how does it interrelate, given the other currently underutilised commercial sites next to it?

Mr Gordon: The utilisation will obviously pick up as the population increases in that area. Currently we have roughly 2,500 square metres of land that is used for supermarket space. You mentioned Koko. We have the Coombs site itself and Denman Prospect. On the current population basis—there is a rule of thumb; it is roughly 330 square metres of supermarket space per 1,000 population—we have a population of around 7,000 now, which equates to roughly 2,500 square metres, which is where we are now.

As we progress through the next few years there will be further demand, just through the natural progression of the population at Molonglo, for further commercial opportunities. The development will not occur immediately; it takes at least 12 months, two years sometimes, to progress to the ultimate outcome that appears on the site. The lease purposes will allow the uses that are available within the CZ4 zoning.

MS LE COUTEUR: Continuing with supermarkets, the people of Molonglo, and possibly equally the people of Weston, are very keen to see the main Molonglo commercial centre built so that there are more shopping opportunities and the pressure on Coleman Court is reduced. It is not scheduled for land release until 2021-22; presumably, it will be five or six years before any shops are actually opened there. As you alluded to, it does take time. We are probably talking about 2026-27 before something is happening with the Molonglo group centre.

I have had representations from a wide range of people suggesting that the solution to Molonglo's problems—not the only solution but part of the solution—is to have the group centre start sooner rather than later. Are you thinking along those lines? Could it be brought forward?

Mr Gordon: Currently, with the commercial centre, a concept planning process is being undertaken to see what is capable of being developed there. That is sitting with EPSDD. It is forecast that we will be in a position in the next year or so to look at how that release can occur. The release is forecast in a year. It is an indicative program, so possibly there is opportunity to progress it. It really depends on when that land is planning ready for the SLA to take it on. We will then look at what opportunities we have to progress it.

Mr Ponton: As part of the midyear review of the indicative land release program, Ms Le Couteur, I am happy to have a look at where that planning work is at. I have not been briefed on the detail in recent times. With the work that my team has done—the planning work, the due diligence that needs to be undertaken before the release of that site—it determined that placing it in that year was most appropriate. If you are suggesting something a bit different, certainly we can have a look at that as part of the midyear review, which is a normal process.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you. Certainly, there is considerable public discontent, as the minister has said, about the commercial opportunities in that area.

Ms Berry: Yes. Everybody would have liked the current shopping centre to be fully operating—all of those leases let and people able to have a shopping centre there. There has been significant engagement with the owner of that centre to try to encourage them to do more. That is where it is. With the agency, and through the indicative land release program and planning, if there is any way that it could happen any faster, with all the due diligence that is required, we can consider that.

Also, it needs to be kept in mind that other delays often occur that are not government initiated. It might be by the community or others. It is right for them to be able to do that, but it means that sometimes these things take a bit longer than we would all like.

MS LE COUTEUR: In the land release program there is Molonglo 3, which is appreciably a new suburb. I assume this is on the north side and east of Coppins Crossing Road?

Mr Gordon: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you doing any planning for the transport options for this—a trunk road or provision for future light rail?

Mr Gordon: I can answer to some degree. There is a planning design framework which sets out the structural elements of Molonglo 3. There is further work being done by EPSDD on how the transport routes operate through Molonglo 3, in the sense that Molonglo 3 is the several suburbs that sit on the north side of the Molonglo River.

Mr Ponton: That is the longer answer. The short answer is, yes, we are doing that work. For example, the early planning work that is being undertaken for the bridge across the river will—

MS LE COUTEUR: I was going to ask about that.

MRS JONES: Yes, when will that bridge design come through?

Mr Ponton: That work is currently underway. It is being considered by the design review panel. We talked earlier about the design review panel. That is not just for new buildings; it is for infrastructure as well. It is so that our infrastructure has appropriate design and is not just chunks of concrete. We want to make sure that we have infrastructure—

MRS JONES: What is the time frame, please?

Mr Ponton: It is in early design, in terms of the work that we are doing. In terms of when it is scheduled for—

Mr Gordon: I am not sure that there is a clear budget commitment to the construction—

Mr Ponton: No, there is not.

Mr Gordon: but I think they have a commitment to early design. It is a design that will inform a design and construct tender process.

Mr Ponton: It is in the very early stages of that design. As I said, it has only gone to design review in the last two months or so.

MRS JONES: I know that you do not like to pre-empt decisions that are to be made by cabinet, but as I am sure even the minister would be aware, there are people all over those suburbs who constantly ask us when that bridge is coming. We even have an indicative idea of when the shopping area will come. Do we have an indicative idea of when the bridge will come?

Mr Ponton: I will defer to Dr Brady.

Dr Brady: We will have to take that on notice.

Ms Berry: Yes.

Mr Ponton: Because it is in the early stages of design, I have not been briefed on the detail of that.

MRS JONES: But there will be a plan, I presume?

Mr Ponton: Of course. We can certainly provide that to you on notice.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

Ms Berry: With all of these things, it will be a significant project for this city. That will be a big bridge.

MRS JONES: Absolutely, yes.

Ms Berry: With that planning, that is when all of those different issues could be identified that have to go into the whole design of the bridge.

MRS JONES: It has to work; that is right.

Ms Berry: That is right. We would like it to work.

MRS JONES: Already this week there has been an accident on Coppins Crossing Road, which stopped all of the traffic. As you can imagine, people then call us and ask when it will be resolved. It is not an unreasonable question to ask for a rough time frame.

Ms Berry: No.

Mr Ponton: The government has committed funding for the design work.

MRS JONES: Yes, I heard that; thank you.

Mr Ponton: That has kicked off. We will come back to you in terms of more detailed timing.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Continuing on with Molonglo 3, what work will be done to ensure that there are community facilities there at around the same time as people move in—or, at the very least, that they have ways of getting to them? Where will the school be? How will you have school provision for these people? Will there be provision for shopping centres that are reasonably accessible?

Ms Berry: The whole planning process for new suburbs also involves various directorates. The Education Directorate and the Transport Canberra and City Services directorate are involved in the planning of new suburbs, to make sure that those facilities are available and are built into the whole suburb design.

Mr Ponton: Minister, I was going to add to that.

Ms Berry: I was trying to look for a picture, but I do not have one.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am sure they are part of a design. I do not doubt that. My question for you, given that it is about indicative land release, is: how will you make sure that when the people are there, the facilities are actually there, and not just planned?

Mr Ponton: I think the minister was touching on that. As part of the early planning we make sure that the land is appropriately available. Then we continue to work with our colleagues in other directorates in terms of their modelling to make sure that we have allocated land for particular types of uses. At the high level, we do a needs analysis of what we think in general terms would be required. We make sure that there is sufficient land available. Then we start to go into the finer grain of understanding, for example, what type of school would be required, whether it is government or non-government. That involves a lot of work with our colleagues in Education, who undertake modelling.

We work with other parts of government—the Community Services Directorate, for example—to understand what land might need to be released over that four-year process. I guess that is a long way of saying that land is available. We continue to refine the work to understand the exact need and then make sure that the land is available in the land release program.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will you be doing work to ensure that there are bus services, that at the same time as people move in they have a public transport system.

Ms Berry: Yes, all of that.

Mr Ponton: That is—sorry, minister—part of working closely, as the minister alluded to, with our colleagues in other directorates. We have the city cluster, which is a monthly meeting of directors-general and deputies where we deal with these issues at the higher level to make sure that we have a complete understanding in terms of city

issues and to make sure that we are managing all of those concerns.

MS LE COUTEUR: I guess my question is not really—

Mr Ponton: The short answer is yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: whether there is an understanding. My question is whether there are going to be the bus services there at the same time as the people. I am sure there is an understanding—

Mr Ponton: We work with our colleagues but, of course, I cannot make the decision to put a bus route into a new suburb. But I will work very closely with my colleagues. Then Transport Canberra and City Services would brief the minister appropriately. But the short answer is that we know that we need to get bus services into new estates as early as possible. We work with our colleagues to make sure that that happens.

MS LE COUTEUR: I asked a question before that got slightly diverted to the bridge. What work are you doing to ensure that the future east-west main road is suitable for trunk public transport and possible future light rail?

MRS JONES: Do you mean John Gorton?

MS LE COUTEUR: I am talking about the other side.

Mr Ponton: East-west?

MS LE COUTEUR: The north side.

MRS JONES: The north side, stage 3, yes.

Ms Berry: Stage 3 of what?

MS LE COUTEUR: Stage 3 of Molonglo. I do not know if it is stage 3 Molonglo, but there is a new suburb, Molonglo stage 3. It is on your indicative land release, which is why I figured I could ask about it now. Are you doing any planning work? There will presumably be a future east-west main road between that and—

Mr Ponton: Yes, I will again kick off. The short answer is yes. We are making sure that in the early design we have factored those considerations in. That is why I made the reference to the bridge. I know that we are making sure that the bridge has capacity at some future point potentially for light rail or some other type of transport.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good.

Mr Ponton: That work is underway. Of course, that needs to link into any other infrastructure. When you say “east-west” in terms of that trunk that is probably more north-south.

MS LE COUTEUR: Presumably it would be—

MRS JONES: Presumably the suburb stretches right out to the west, does it not?

MS LE COUTEUR: Presumably there is going to be one suburb on each side—

Mr Ponton: I think what I might need to do is make sure that we have a map of the Territory Plan behind you for future hearings.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Ponton: I am very spatial and that would certainly help.

MS CODY: Because I am even lost.

MRS JONES: There is a new main road being built through there up towards Belconnen—

MS LE COUTEUR: Which is north-south—

MS CODY: Yes.

MRS JONES: Does that have an east-west route that is planned through it?

Mr Ponton: There is—

MS LE COUTEUR: Presumably there is. There is Whitlam on one side and Molonglo 3 presumably on the other—

Mr Ponton: No, there is a direct east-west and then there is a north-south going towards Belconnen—

MRS JONES: Ms Le Couteur's question is about public transport planning for that east-west road

MS LE COUTEUR: For the east-west, yes.

Mr Ponton: Yes.

MRS JONES: I think we are wanting to move on to the next questions.

Mr Ponton: The short answer is yes.

MRS JONES: Before I ask my next question, I want to ask again about those suburbs that matter so much to us as local members. I get asked a lot about non-government schools in Denman Prospect. Has land been set aside for that?

Ms Berry: There is land set aside for a non-government school in Wright and there is a new public school being built in Denman Prospect.

MRS JONES: Does Denman Prospect get a private option as well? I have had people tell me that they were told at the time of buying their houses that there was going to

be.

Ms Berry: No, I do not think so but it is literally—you have seen it; you know where it is.

MRS JONES: Yes, I know that. I am just reflecting what people have said to me; that is all. So not at this stage. Also, land for churches; I have again had representation that there is no land yet being offered for churches to build and that the only churches meeting are meeting in homes.

Ms Berry: Sorry, it is not my—

Mr Ponton: As I said, we certainly work in terms of making sure land is available and then we would work with—

Ms Berry: Can we take it on notice?

MRS JONES: Please do. It seems like there is as much confusion in the community as there is here.

Ms Berry: No, it is just that those community services spaces are with Mr Steel. We can take it on notice and find out for you.

MR COE: When will that non-government school block of land release be issued and how—

MRS JONES: For Wright?

MR COE: Yes, for the non-government school. How will you determine what school goes there?

Dr Brady: The land in north Wright is proposed to go out for an expression of interest within this financial year or very soon after the end of this financial year.

MR COE: So 2020, more or less?

Mr Ponton: Within the next month.

Dr Brady: 2019.

MR COE: Sorry, the current financial year?

Mr Brady: The expression of interest will go out soon, yes.

Mr Ponton: If not this week, next week.

MR COE: Okay.

MRS JONES: The expression of interest is about to go out: is that what you are saying?

Dr Brady: Yes.

Mr Ponton: Yes.

MR PARTON: I might get back to an area that we were attempting to cover in the last session, in regard to the ACT land and property report from December 2018 that notes that there was a large settlement of lower priced blocks in Taylor compared to relatively fewer transactions in higher priced estates like Throsby and Denman Prospect. Understanding the non-government aspect of Denman Prospect, is price point an issue in selling blocks in Throsby? That was the question from the last session.

Ms Berry: To put the whole topic around price and land into perspective, I will ask Mr Dietz to talk through the whole market assessment of land price, how the government's policy and legislation provide for the SLA to sell land at a certain price, and how different suburbs have different values depending on what the market said at that time. That does not preclude the government from looking at ways that land could be sold at slightly less than the market price, but you have to be very careful when you consider those adjustments, because making any radical changes to the price of land, different from what the market says the land is available for, could have very dire consequences for the broader building and construction community and other private developments in the city.

MR PARTON: But by the sound of it, they are discussions that have been had.

Ms Berry: Yes. The affordable housing policy provides for that, so how we address the situation of making sure that land can be provided but does not interfere with the market so much as to have those radical consequences on development—builders and other developers—is something that needs to be carefully constructed.

MR PARTON: Let me understand. When you say that there have been discussions about potentially offering blocks at a slightly lower price than had been determined by the market, are you only referring to affordable housing blocks or are you referring to regular release blocks?

Ms Berry: I think a couple of things are happening with regard to making sure that we can provide housing at a more affordable rate. There are some initiatives that the SLA has been doing around removing some of the cost to people who are buying into a new affordable home, and also there is the affordable housing register and making sure that people are matched up to the product that best suits their needs. There are a couple of things that we are doing. But if the question goes to “Why don't you just drop the prices,” that has to be carefully considered.

MR PARTON: Of course.

Ms Berry: I will get Mr Dietz to run you through the valuation process and the differences between Throsby and Taylor.

Mr Dietz: Thanks for the question, Mr Parton. There are a couple of topics there that

I might touch on briefly and then we can go into more detail if you would like.

Firstly, it is important to understand that it is very hard to compare prices, not only within estates but between releases, across estates, and in different regions within the ACT. Each block, each release, has its own orientation and its own location. There are the issues of how close it is to amenity and the topography of the site. All of those impact the price that it is valued at.

Minister Berry mentioned a bit about the ACT economy at the moment, which is slowing. The exchange rates that we have observed over the past six or nine months have been slowing.

With regard to your comment specifically about Throsby, Throsby is one of the estates that we have seen continue to sell at relatively appropriate levels of exchange. That shows how important it is to have a diverse product across the ACT that is being offered. We have product available now in Taylor, in Throsby, in west Belconnen, and in Molonglo.

The minister talked a bit about how important it is that when we price land, we do it through an appropriate policy. That policy ensures that we have independent valuations from at least two independent valuers. We take that input from the valuations to determine what the price is, to ensure that we are releasing it at a price which is considered at market value.

The last point the minister raised was that we are going through a bunch of initiatives to ensure that in this slower market we are providing land release in a way that is appropriate, is competitive, and is providing a product that the market is really questioning.

MR PARTON: You said, and rightly so, that sometimes it is difficult to compare land in completely different areas and from different releases, but—again, I mentioned it in the previous session—the median price per square metre in Moncrieff in 2015-16 was \$520; in 2017-18 it had risen from \$520 to \$1,103. Why would it more than double in that short time frame?

Mr Dietz: I will hand to Mr Bulless to talk about some of the detail there, but again I talk about the difficulty of comparing like with like product or not like with like. Moncrieff, situated in a different area, is a different type of estate from that in Throsby. By comparing Moncrieff in one year with product in Throsby in a latter year—

MR PARTON: No; this is a Moncrieff on Moncrieff comparison.

Mr Dietz: Then we can talk through the fact that even different types of product within the same estate will have differing pricing. Depending on the location of the site and the orientation of the site, the actual size of the block has a significant determination on the price per square metre. I might hand to Mr Bulless to give a bit more detail on that.

Mr Bulless: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

Mr Parton, I can address that question in a couple of ways. The difference between the prices you have cited is that Moncrieff was released effectively as a full suburb in almost two years, partly to provide an economic stimulus to the economy at that point in the time frame. You are comparing Moncrieff prices—effectively the release of a whole suburb, priced in about 2012-13-14—with Throsby, which was sold in 2016 and settled the year after. You might recall that when Throsby was released, there was a lot of demand for that product. In fact, most of those blocks sold at 30 per cent above reserve, so well above the prices that the former LDA had priced that offering at.

Just for a bit of context, at the moment, if you look across the SLA's entire inventory—as of Saturday we will have 612 blocks for sale across four estates—the average price of those blocks is \$429,000. The average size of those is 550 square metres. On a dollar per square metre basis, because I know you like to look at that, it is \$801 across the whole estate. That includes estates, as we mentioned, in Taylor, which is probably our most affordable estate. It would probably be good to also understand, as Mr Dietz said, the type of blocks we sell. We will have available blocks from 315 square metres to almost 1,200 square metres across the four estates. The price points for those will start at \$295,000, and they will go up to \$670,000 across those four estates.

As you can see, there is a very diverse product range and very diverse product pricing across those four estates. If you compare us with our competitors—we often hear comparisons with some of the competitors in Denman Prospect—you would probably find that north Wright and north Coombs are very similar, but our block sizes are slightly bigger. If you compare, say, Taylor to Googong, yes, Googong is a bit cheaper, but it is also a lot further out from Canberra and it does not have the amenity that Taylor offers by being a part of Gungahlin. As you know, Gungahlin is 80,000 people with very good transport, amenity, shopping and other services, whereas Googong is virtually in the middle of a paddock. If you look at our other estates, Throsby, as Mr Dietz said, has continued to sell even though the market has been soft in the past year. That is probably our best performing estate out of all the four estates.

One of the things to talk a bit about is why the market is soft. You have obviously read reports about what is happening in the housing market more generally. We have not been immune from that. We talk to other developers in Canberra. We talk to our agents, our valuers, other people in the industry, builders. Everyone has experienced the lull in the market at the moment. It is universal across all greenfields developers. We are not unique in having a bit of a reduction in sales rates.

Another important aspect is that this is not a supply issue; this is about access to credit and the amount of credit. It has been widely publicised. Particularly over the past few months, we have seen the effects of Sydney and Melbourne really having an impact on Canberra. What I mean by that is the negativity that has been emanating for almost a year out of press about price drops.

MR PARTON: It eventually flows through.

Mr Bulless: It is starting to flow through. If you look at CoreLogic, which is probably one of the most informative sources of housing data, you will see that our prices have maintained their levels from a year or so ago. We have not had that price reduction yet, but there is certainly a lot of pessimism in the market.

Having said that, now that the election is out of the way, some of the banking prudential requirements have been loosened by APRA so we are starting to see more interest in the market. That is pretty universal across Canberra, whether it be units or greenfield. I think Mr Nicol mentioned last week that there is a much more positive sense now than there was probably six months ago.

What are we doing to leverage that? We are obviously investing more in marketing our product against our competitors. We have been trialling a landscape rebate in Throsby for the past three months, which has generated quite a bit of interest and some additional sales. We will look to roll that out into other parts of our inventory. We are working with Evoenergy on incentives around solar. We are working with industry—MBA, HIA, and the Property Council—around ways that we can work with industry to try to support the industry through this tough time. We are forecasting a return to a more normal market through the rest of this calendar year, hopefully picking up to a better level next year.

MR PARTON: Let us hope so.

MR COE: Are you saying the development of Throsby has not been stalled because of a miscalculation in the price point a couple of years ago?

Mr Bulless: I do not think the development of Throsby stalled at all; the suburb is built. There are still blocks available in Throsby; there are about 100 blocks available today. The price point was not determined by the former LDA or the SLA; it was a price point determined by the market. As you would appreciate, when new blocks are offered in a suburb valuers will look at the transactions in the history of that suburb.

MR COE: When you say the market, they had reserves though.

Mr Bulless: They had reserves. As I mentioned, the market paid 30 per cent above those reserves on average.

MR COE: How many of those were handed back? How many settlements did not go through?

Mr Bulless: We would have to take that on notice. If you are talking about terminations and rescissions, we have data we can provide.

MR COE: Yes. At the time of Throsby coming on line for the first auction, which was in 2016, when did you at that stage expect the last block to be sold?

Mr Bulless: That was before my time, Mr Coe.

Ms Berry: We will take that on notice.

MR COE: But is it your thinking that it is later than originally thought?

Mr Bulless: It would be hard to attribute that to the prices in Throsby three years ago because since then we have had the issues with the housing industry which are impacting on people's ability to purchase.

MR COE: Have the prices in Throsby today increased at all?

Mr Bulless: I think on average the prices in Throsby are probably slightly lower than they were three years ago. That is based on the product and the composition of blocks that have been offered.

MR COE: Does that mean that anybody with a house there should have a decrease in their land value?

Mr Bulless: No, we are saying that the blocks we have been offering most recently may have been valued slightly lower because it is a different product. The blocks we have been offering, for example, in the past few months are very close to Horse Park Drive in the southern part of the estate and they are different to the blocks abutting, say, the reserve.

MR COE: But that have been on the shelf for a couple of years though.

Mr Bulless: Some blocks were returned to us last year from builders who acquired them under put and call options. However, since that time the government has announced that it is building a school in Throsby. There is the major investment in football in the northern part of the estate. There is the environment centre which had its sod-turning in the past week or so. So there is a lot of other investment going into the suburb that will help support the value in that suburb. When you drive through there, there is also spectacular housing in that suburb. People are investing significant amounts into building product there.

Mr Dietz: The housing market has variability through time. The ACT housing market has actually been relatively non-variable over time when you compare it to some of the other markets around Australia.

MR COE: Yes, but that is in part due to land supply.

Mr Dietz: I think at the moment we have 400 and soon to be much more than 400 available over the counter.

MR COE: That is right, but that is not the way it has been for the past 15 years.

Mr Bulless: The ACT government through its various land initiatives has released close to 40,000 dwellings over 10 years. If you look at the population growth in the ACT, which has been about 75,000 people, on a two-people household formation rate that is 80,000 people accommodated from the release of those 40,000 blocks. That suggests to me that—

MR COE: That is 40,000 dwellings, not blocks.

Mr Bulless: 40,000 dwellings, yes.

MR COE: They are separate markets, though. You have to treat the detached market as being quite separate to the apartment and town house market.

Mr Bulless: But we are also seeing a change in people's preference for housing product. Flemington Road is a classic example, and that is why the government is looking at options around additional schooling in north-east Gungahlin; there are so many families living in apartments. The compositional mix of our demographic suggests that people are being attracted to different housing product.

MR PARTON: By price point, though?

Mr Bulless: It is not based on price point. I can go into Gungahlin today and spend the same amount of money for a three-bedroom apartment in the GTC as I could by buying a 420-metre block in Taylor and building a 200-square metre home. If you want to talk about cost per metre, buying an apartment is relatively more expensive than buying a house and land package.

MR COE: Per metre?

Mr Bulless: Per metre, yes.

Ms Berry: Chair, we have a response on the provision of land for possible use as a church.

Mr Ponton: If I may, just before that, given that line of questioning, Chair, in the previous session Mr Gentleman took that question on notice, so presumably we do not need to provide a response to that one.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

Dr Brady: With regard to the question about whether community land was being released where a church might be a potential use, there is a piece of community facility zoned land due to be released in the coming days. Within that a portion is allocated for a use that could be a church. That could be one of the uses of a portion of that site. That is in Wright.

Hearing suspended from 12.30 to 2.00 pm.

THE CHAIR: We will resume. Mr Parton, would you like to ask the first question?

MR PARTON: I am always happy to step in, if required. Minister, no doubt you will consider implementation of the public housing renewal program to be an outstanding success, in terms of redistributing public housing tenants into better dwellings and into less concentrated housing estates in the suburbs. I think that, in terms of the raw arithmetic, that is the case. I know that is not a question, but I—

Ms Berry: I was not sure what it was. Are you part of the fan club or something?

MR PARTON: No, but the raw arithmetic shows that that part of it has been extremely successful. In relation to a question to you during a committee hearing on 30 April last year, you gave me several responses regarding engagement of tenants and consulting them on their individual needs in preparation for their relocation. I have them here; I will refer to them if I have to.

After we have gone through this process, and I understand it, because you outlined all of the things involved in the relocation process—the tenant relocation officers working with the tenant prior to the move to the address, any concerns and otherwise, why am I receiving—and I am sure your office is as well—pleas for help from public housing tenants and others in the suburbs who have now seen, from their perspective, an upsurge in antisocial, violent, intimidating behaviours, they say as a result of relocations under the public housing renewal program?

Ms Berry: I do not think I am getting the same kind of correspondence.

MR PARTON: Are you serious?

Ms Berry: I am serious. The correspondence that I get from public housing tenants—from tenants in particular—has actually gone down slightly over the past little while. This is more in the housing area; this could be as a result of the change to the total facilities management provider program. They are very new; they are only eight months in, so we are still working through the data to see what is going on there.

From conversations that I have in my community, in my own neighbourhood and in my own suburb, with public housing tenants who have moved into newer, better homes that better suit their needs, it has been a very positive outcome for them and it has changed their life in a very constructive and positive way.

Across our community there will always be individuals—not primarily within public housing but other members of our community as well—who will need extra support. The government is the place that people might come to, and perhaps to the opposition as well, if they are tenants who need extra support or if they are living within a neighbourhood nearby or next to a tenant in public housing or other housing, as a private renter or owner. They might have some complications in their lives that they need extra support with. Those issues are raised from time to time but I have not seen an increase in my office in complaints or correspondence from people with regard to public housing.

MR PARTON: I get concerned about a number of the complaints in regard to the assessment process. According to these individuals, it leads to decisions to locate people with certain needs who have demonstrated violent and threatening behaviour in the past. In a number of cases these people have been located alongside what we might call vulnerable individuals.

Ms Berry: Mr Parton, if there is a particular individual or someone who has contacted you that you have not forwarded on to my office, could you do that; then we can try to sort through it. On the question with regard to the process for transfers or public housing allocations, it might be better to ask that this afternoon when public housing

officials will be here that can take you through the process, which you probably understand anyway.

MR PARTON: I do. I found it interesting that we had half an hour dedicated to this.

Ms Berry: To renewal?

MR PARTON: Yes.

Ms Berry: It was not me.

MS LE COUTEUR: Agreed.

MS CODY: The committee chooses the time frames, Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: Excellent. When it swings around to me, I am sure I will have more for you. You know me.

Ms Berry: Okay; and we are happy to help.

MS CODY: By the sound of it, we are not sure when to ask about a few things; this might be one of those.

Ms Berry: It is just about having officials here that can help a bit more, regarding public housing. This is more about the renewal task force. This is the program that will be finishing, as the new one begins, on 1 July. This is about that renewal program.

MS CODY: What about the new housing strategy? Is that in the next section?

Ms Berry: Probably in the next section.

MS LE COUTEUR: With the 1,288 dwellings, I understand that there was a real mix of apartments and built; and, in particular, you did quite a bit of spot purchasing. I am aware of at least one place where you purchased the whole block, as I understand it. What feedback have you had from tenants in terms of the comfort of the apartments in particular? I am concerned about the phenomenon throughout Canberra of newer apartments not doing very well in the really hot summer we have just had. What sort of feedback have you had from your tenants about that?

Mr Fitzgerald: Unfortunately, we do not necessarily get the feedback, because we are on the construction end of the program. Again it is probably a question best asked of Housing ACT. We are aware of situations where the orientation may have increased the heat load within the property. Certainly, as we progress through the program, for starters, the program allows for six-star energy rating apartments, and we have consistently got that. Our units are actually seven-star. Combined with that, we are now going back and retrofitting window treatments to a lot of our properties to avoid some of the situations that I am aware are occurring. So we have heard some of that feedback and we are looking at how we can address that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will you be looking at more than window treatments? Will you

be looking potentially at split air-conditioning systems where they have not been installed?

Mr Fitzgerald: From February 2017 we started installing split systems. The first 500 properties—just over 500 properties—that we constructed as part of the renewal program had heaters only. We have now replaced them with split systems. The remaining 800, just under 800—

MS LE COUTEUR: Because the first 500 only had—

Mr Fitzgerald: They only had heating installed.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you going to go through and change that?

Mr Fitzgerald: It is not something that we have contemplated at this stage. Again, much like what we have done with the window treatments, we will listen to feedback. Our main source of feedback is Housing ACT, as the interface with the tenants. We will make an assessment as to whether we can do that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that you will not be in existence very soon, are you—well, sorry; I realise I did not put it quite—

Mr Fitzgerald: You would not be the first person—

MRS JONES: Mr Fitzgerald will not be teleporting, though.

Mr Fitzgerald: They will be passing the card around later.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that you, in fact, will be in existence in the future—

MRS JONES: Personally, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: will you and your colleagues be moving into the next phase of public housing renewal?

Mr Fitzgerald: The renewal program will be based in Housing ACT. A number of my team will transition across to that team to assist in that process. The renewal program itself was linked to the asset recycling initiative. That program is complete. There is a transition. Some of those staff have been retained with that knowledge to go forth on the next program.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good. Are you going to be giving those people the lessons learned in terms of consultation both with the tenants who are affected but also the communities in which they will be residing?

Mr Fitzgerald: Yes, absolutely. Part of the work we are doing in the evaluation stage is developing that set of guidelines as to what we have learned through the program so it is not lost. Our audit committee has been specifically targeting—asking for us to have that piece of work that we can hand over. There has been quite a long list of lessons learned through the process.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good. This is something you will need to take on notice, but is it possible to have a final list of locations? I am not asking for street addresses but district locations. What proportions are apartments, townhouses, stand-alone, dual occupancy, small multi-unit developments?

Mr Fitzgerald: We can do it by region. I cannot break it down to housing type at this point. In Belconnen we had 94; Gungahlin, 531; inner north, 217; inner south, 2; Molonglo, 226; Tuggeranong, 173; Weston Creek, 36; and Woden, 9. In total it was 30 suburbs.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will you at some stage in the future be able to break it down by physical type?

Mr Fitzgerald: Yes, I will take that on notice.

MRS JONES: Presumably you have also been working with asset recycling as part of that project. Where are we at with payments on the asset recycling system? What is required for us to prove before that money comes across? What is the process?

Mr Fitzgerald: Yes, in respect of asset recycling, our last settlement was on Thursday of last week. That was the last settlement on Northbourne that actually enabled all of the incentive payment to be paid. I think that the commonwealth will later this week actually make the final payment, which is just over \$10 million.

MRS JONES: How much money have we received from the commonwealth in that process?

Mr Fitzgerald: It is \$67.14 million.

MRS JONES: What were those payments requiring from us before they could be made? What was the process for basically showing that our work was done?

Mr Fitzgerald: It was on contract signage. On the sale of the asset itself we received a payment and then further payment was on settlement. So at that point in time it was not linked to the actual physical works.

MRS JONES: So none of the commonwealth money was linked to the completion of the replacement housing?

Mr Fitzgerald: No.

MRS JONES: Was it linked to the numbers of dwellings that were going to be created?

Mr Fitzgerald: We had to deliver like for like.

Ms Berry: Roof for roof.

Mr Fitzgerald: That is right.

MRS JONES: What was the process for proving that you had produced like for like?

Mr Fitzgerald: The commonwealth Treasury has not approached us yet for that work.

MRS JONES: They have made all their payments but they have not asked us for the evidence?

Mr Fitzgerald: Not that I am aware of, no.

MRS JONES: Do you want to take that on notice?

Mr Fitzgerald: I can, yes.

Ms Berry: We have got the money now, Giulia.

MRS JONES: I am just fascinated by the process, yes.

MR PETTERSSON: Yes, who cares if we have got the money?

Ms Berry: Yes, somebody will.

MRS JONES: I think probably tenants would be keen to know that there was like-for-like replacement.

MR PARTON: I do not know whether I can engage the members of the committee on this; whether there is an appetite to continue with questioning in this space or whether we can actually start the second area earlier.

Ms Berry: I do not think I have the officials here.

THE CHAIR: The next session is actually sport and rec.

MR PARTON: Is it really?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR PARTON: Sorry, I am getting ahead of myself. I was all ready for 4.30.

THE CHAIR: You were hoping it was going to be public housing.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is a bit bizarre how we have it lined up.

THE CHAIR: If there are no further questions, the committee will suspend and return at 2.30.

Hearing suspended from 2.15 to 2.30pm.

Appearances:

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Kelley, Ms Rebecca, Executive Branch Manager, Sport and Recreation, Economic Development

Bailey, Mr Daniel, Executive Group Manager, Property and Venues, Commercial Services and Infrastructure

THE CHAIR: The first time witnesses speak, can you confirm that you have read and understood the privilege card in front of you. Straight into questions. On sport and recreation expenditure, the total cost allocation at point 3.3 is expected to grow by \$984,000 from 2018-19 to 2019-20. What is driving that growth?

Ms Berry: There are a number of things that are driving the growth, and I ask Ms Kelley to provide some detail on that.

Ms Kelley: The variance of \$984,000 relates to the introduction of 2019-20 initiatives, specifically the rugby league centre of excellence accounting for \$1.25 million as the first instalment under that deed, the support for our Australian Olympic and Paralympic teams being \$100,000 and making controlled sports safer with \$160,000. And we also have some rollovers relating to our indoor sport centre provision and also the Stromlo Forest Park enclosed oval.

MS CODY: Speaking of the Stromlo Forest Park, there is \$200,000 I think for the playing fields. What will that fund?

Ms Kelley: That will specifically be utilised for the design of the district playing fields. That is a fairly standard approach that we have for the design of new facilities of that nature that are multiple-unit grounds. In a sense, that is what the cost will be for.

MS CODY: How does the timing of the actual ovals fit in with the broader development of the Stromlo Forest Park precinct and the surrounding residential areas?

Ms Kelley: On the time frame around the design, we are looking at probably a 12-month process because there will be significant consultation involved with the user groups to ensure that we have a regional analysis of the sportsground provision because this DPF will not be able to cater for all codes. That is the time frame we are working towards.

MRS JONES: You have got to decide who—

Ms Kelley: Yes, and to undertake that analysis. We then went through the bid process

to seek construction funds. I will not really be able to give you an indicative time frame. However, that will certainly be kept in mind with the plans for Stromlo Forest Park and further delivery of the master plan.

Ms Berry: The Stromlo Forest Park fields are also delivering on an election commitment as well.

MS CODY: How is the pool going?

Ms Berry: You will be happy to know that the 50-metre pool has some water in it but it is not the water that is going to be used for swimming in. It is just being tested at the moment. That is exciting. That tells you the stage that it is up to. Yes, it is very exciting. I was hoping to bring a photo to show you but we have not got one. Just imagine a 50-metre pool with water in it

Mr Bailey: I acknowledge the privilege statement. Yes, it is going well. As the minister mentioned, the 50-metre pool is constructed. They are water testing it at the moment. They are well underway with the rest of it. We are currently doing the splash pool. The gym is also being constructed as we speak. Yes, we are on track.

MS CODY: Sorry, the gym or the gym pool?

Mr Bailey: The actual pool itself will have a splash park, a gym. It is sort of a kids splash park/gym and a leisure pool in it as well. That will provide a range of options there for exercise and activities. At this stage we have lost a little time with weather. With projects like this, it is always rain. We have not had a lot of rain but it is hot weather and things like that that have delayed it. We are on track for a mid-year completion next year, end of June, at this stage. It is going well.

MS CODY: Apart from those other things, the seating and—

Mr Bailey: You are correct. There is extra seating. There is extra capacity so that they can conduct swimming carnivals and things like that and carnival events at the actual pool itself.

MS CODY: I know that there were a bunch of different organisations involved in the consultation process and those views were taken into account for swimming carnivals, for triathlons and for other things. At the Stromlo Forest Park we have got the mountain bike tracks, we have got the cycling track, we have got the soon-to-be constructed football oval for some code. Those sorts of things are also—

Mr Bailey: You are correct. We went out for consultation and there were over 700 submissions. The five most popular additional facilities, aside from just the original 50-metre pool, in order were splash park, gym/health club, hydrotherapy pool, outdoor playground and dive pool. Obviously we have not been able to meet all those but the good part about this pool and the design of it is that it can be added onto down the track, should the need be. Yes, we have been able to accommodate some of those aspects there and yes, it is going quite well.

MRS JONES: It is a very interesting topic. You said “hydrotherapy”. Can you outline

what will be in the facility?

Mr Bailey: Yes, I can. That leisure pool itself will be heated to a temperature of 32 degrees. Within that pool itself we will provide a number of hydrotherapy options. That will include exercise classes and some rehabilitation classes will be able to utilise that pool. There are a number of pools around Canberra now that already have that facility in their set-up. What it will not do, though, is provide exclusive hydrotherapy services. That is the issue. And it will not be able to get the water up to 34 degrees.

MRS JONES: I think the issue actually was more about the temperature.

Ms Berry: Yes.

Mr Bailey: Yes. That is that 34 degrees that you are looking at. People who have arthritis and things like that may require that extra temperature. The pool facility is simply not designed to do that. There is a lot of engineering behind that. For instance, you could say, "Why can't we just heat it up to 34 on the days we need it?" It takes—

MRS JONES: I am not asking that.

Mr Bailey: No, but it takes—

Ms Berry: It takes a while.

Mr Bailey: In one hour it goes up a quarter of a degree. It would take eight hours to heat it and then to get it back down to the 32 degrees would take us two days to reduce it because you can only reduce a certain amount per time to reduce the thermal shock that you can get on the actual facility. It is just not feasible. And then there is also the ambient temperature that you would have to have in the room. It would have to sit at 36 degrees. If people were in there doing any other activity it just would not work.

Ms Berry: It is too hot.

MS CODY: With the temperature of the 50-metre pool, is there a temperature that that has been agreed to be set at?

Mr Bailey: A standard pool that you do laps in will sit at around 27 or 28 degrees; so there is a bit of a difference.

MRS JONES: Just to clarify the hydrotherapy stuff, there was never an intent to have it at 34 to 36 degrees?

Mr Bailey: No, it has never been designed to be at 34 degrees.

MRS JONES: I am curious as to the definition of hydrotherapy and how that happened. The definition that I have definitely been hammered with is 34 to 36 degrees for actual—

Ms Berry: For that type of hydrotherapy.

MRS JONES: wellness, recovery, joint problems et cetera.

Ms Berry: Some people would do aqua aerobics, for example, for a type of hydrotherapy, which is perfectly able to be done in a 32-degree pool.

MRS JONES: It is done in pools all over Canberra, yes.

Ms Berry: Yes. I know Health has commissioned some work into hydrotherapy pools more generally. The definition is probably something that could be clarified better as well, with respect to what we are talking about when we are talking about hydrotherapy.

MRS JONES: Yes, definitely.

MR MILLIGAN: Regarding your top five, can you repeat those for me?

Mr Bailey: The five most popular were a splash park, gym/health club, hydrotherapy pool, outdoor playground and a dive pool.

MR MILLIGAN: Is there still scope for the potential for a dive pool to be included in this? Has the government consulted with the community as to what they would expect to see and what they would require there?

Ms Berry: The dive pool community were obviously quite engaged in this consultation process. That played out in the top five outcomes that that particular community wanted to see with this pool. The pool has space and facility for future development, which could include a dive pool. There is currently still a dive pool in Civic, and that is the case at the moment.

MR MILLIGAN: Is there a date? Have you considered when you can build a second stage or upgrade—

Ms Berry: No, we are still building this one. We will get this one done and—

MR MILLIGAN: Is there any investment going into the dive pool here at the Olympic pool—upgrades?

Mr Bailey: Yes, there certainly are. At the moment we are dealing with a bit of a joint issue there. There is some leaking in the dive pool—the Civic pool.

MRS JONES: Only the dive pool? I thought the whole thing was leaking.

Mr Bailey: Yes, there are some large leaks in the Civic pool, but with one of the expansion joints there, at the moment we are scoping up to fix that. We have identified that it has failed, and needs to be repaired.

MRS JONES: It has expanded, yes.

Mr Bailey: Expanded maybe too far. We are fixing that in the dive pool at the moment.

Ms Berry: It is a good time of year to do that.

MR MILLIGAN: Is there money allocated in this budget for this particular upgrade, specifically?

Ms Berry: It is more about maintenance and repair work, which is funded generally across the directorate.

Mr Bailey: Yes, that is correct; the annual budget that we have for upgrading pools.

MR MILLIGAN: Last year there was \$805,000 towards a pool improvements program. This year, Manuka pool was due to receive \$800,000 for upgrades. I am curious as to what money is available for the Olympic pool and what type of upgrades go there. Is this figure spelt out specifically anywhere?

Ms Berry: With the Civic pool it is more about repairs and maintenance. The Manuka pool, as you know, is having a fairly rigorous upgrade around the tiling and—

Mr Bailey: Gutters and the filtration plant.

Ms Berry: There is a bit of work at Manuka. It is an old pool. With the Civic pool it is more about repairs and maintenance. In winter, that is when we do it, because it is empty.

MS CODY: Manuka pool?

Ms Berry: Civic. And Manuka as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a supplementary on Stromlo. When are we likely to see a regular bus service to it, so that people can—

Ms Berry: To the pool?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, to the pool, so that people can use these wonderful things?

Mr Bailey: I am not sure. We will have to take that on notice and get some advice from TCCS.

MS LE COUTEUR: That would be great, because the more there is there, the more you need it. As you know, I am a member for Murrumbidgee, and Woden is at the centre of Murrumbidgee. I refer to a letter that you sent to Woden Valley Community Council. They wrote to you about the future provision of a multipurpose sports hall. You said that you did not support their \$30 million purpose-built suggestion.

I have a few questions. Firstly, there is a question about the need for Woden to have more facilities. Maybe what I should be asking, secondly, is: you said that the “peak bodies are responsible for setting the strategic direction for their respective sports,

including prioritisation of sports infrastructure projects, that consider the needs of all of their members across Canberra”. This seems to be an incredibly hands-off approach. How is the government trying to ensure that all of Canberra has some access to sporting facilities if you just say, “You guys do whatever you feel like”? I assume that the government is giving some level of support to these sports facilities. If so, why aren’t you ensuring that it works for all of Canberra?

Ms Berry: There are a couple of parts to that question. I can start by saying that in the ACT we have a history of sports-centric, multisport facilities. They are not owned or operated by the ACT government; they are generally operated and owned by private clubs or others. There is a Queanbeyan one and a Kaleen one. The Southern Cross Club has a basketball stadium out at Tuggeranong, that kind of thing.

That has always been the way that the ACT has run its multisport facilities. It has not been anything that the ACT government or any government has actually owned or operated on its own. There is government support, though. At Throsby, there is a good example of where the government is supporting a home of football outcome. There is also a contribution by Capital Football, and it will provide indoor facilities as well as a community facility for all of the community to use.

Yes, we do focus very carefully on individual sports’ strategic plans and where the growth areas are that they see, because that is the most reliable source of information that the government can get about where sports are growing in the ACT. That does not mean that when you build a facility on one side of town, the rest of Canberra gets left out of that whole picture, because Canberra is pretty accessible, having regard to accessing sports facilities across the board.

Sport and rec talk to sports clubs and associations throughout the year about their capacity and growth areas. We just talked about it with Stromlo: will it be an oval or a rectangle? Which sports does it need to cater for in that area? That happens as a matter of course across the year, all the time.

For these particular facilities that were discussed as part of this narrow scope, in the indoor sports study, which is what I think you are referring to, that was not a holus-bolus study of all facilities, for all of Canberra. It was a fairly narrow study. Sport and recreation worked very closely with particular sports who had growth on the areas of growth, and where the focus needed to be. That is the outcome that the government will deliver there. That does not mean that that is the end of it for the future. In fact I understand that there is interest by a private organisation—I do not want to speak for them—in building a facility in Woden.

MS LE COUTEUR: What sort of support does the government give to these various facilities? You say that they are ACT government owned and run but I assume that some level of support in terms of concessional leases has been given. It is probably more than that.

Ms Berry: Multi-sport facilities are one thing; then there are other indoor facilities or other sports facilities. In respect of multi-sports facilities, the government would provide, if it was required—I am trying to think of an example; I cannot think of one off the top of my head. It could include some funding to start with, to grow it. But we

have not done one for a very long time, have we?

Ms Kelley: Phillip Oval might be a good example where we had a co-contribution from both AFL and cricket. As part of that, there is a recurrent flow of the capital works from government that was injected into that facility. If we were developing a sportsground that were to be owned and managed by the ACT government, there would be a recurrent provision for maintenance. In the instance of Phillip, that recurrent maintenance flows to the AFL and cricket groups which now has some responsibility for the maintenance of that oval.

MS LE COUTEUR: There will be some government support for these. Given that you are supporting them, how much do you look at where they are from a Canberra point of view? This is the most recent proposal. Clearly, you are interested. You did a study; so clearly it is something you are interested in. How much do you look at the provision of sporting facilities throughout the ACT? I have had a lot of feedback from women in Woden who say that they have fairly limited time. They want to exercise or play sport at night. We all know that in winter that is not that attractive. People feel that it is unsafe playing outside at night. That is a value judgement perhaps but that is the perception when the facilities in Woden are being closed.

Ms Berry: Private owners have decided to close them. I know that that has had an impact, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Over the past 10 years there has been a significant reduction in facilities in Woden. What is the government's role in fixing this problem?

Ms Berry: We can play a role, but there is, as I said, some interest by a private organisation to develop possibly in Woden. That is good if that goes ahead. Across in the education portfolio, with support from sport and recreation, we are looking at opportunities to open up school halls and gyms so that they can be used outside of school hours by different groups. For example, the Woden Dodgers Basketball Club are now playing at, and have their home at, Alfred Deakin school. The Hedley Beare Centre is also opening up. There will be a new school in Denman Prospect as well.

Education and sport and rec are carefully working together to ensure that the gyms are just not gyms plonked in the middle of schools. They are working to make sure that they are accessible, that they take account of those sports like roller derby that need a bit of extra space, bigger than just a basketball sized court. They need a bigger space around the outside. It is making sure that when we are building new schools, the gaps that are identified through sport and rec's conversations with the sports across the community are taken into account. If we can meet those needs in those developments, that will happen as well.

MRS JONES: Is there a centralised register of what is available to sporting groups from school facilities?

Ms Berry: No, it is not; it is still being worked on as far as the availability of gyms is concerned. Some of the funding two budgets ago was about rather than having to get a key, you could access through a pin pad or something like that—

MRS JONES: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: We talked about that in education.

MRS JONES: Yes, right.

Ms Berry: It is that kind of thing. That work is still happening across some of our older schools. We are still working with sport and rec to find out where the gaps are and what schools we can open through that process.

MRS JONES: What I am wondering is this: if a sporting group has come to you and said, “Can we use X hall?” of course, that is an easy process. But if there are groups that are maybe thinking they could operate, for example, more in Woden, in Weston Creek or somewhere, can they come to you and say, “What do you have available?”—

Ms Berry: Yes.

MRS JONES: at the time when they are planning what they might do?

Ms Berry: Yes, they can do it through sport and rec, but the school facilities are currently managed by each individual school.

MRS JONES: Yes, but what I am saying is that in order to have those conversations—it might be something we can put in a recommendation—in order to facilitate those conversations between active sporting associations or emerging ones it would be great if there were one central point of contact for that conversation. Then we might be able to see much more occurring in these areas where facilities are.

Ms Berry: I would suggest that sport and rec is the central place for people to find facilities, because they are aware of facilities that are available or school halls—

MRS JONES: Across the board.

Ms Berry: but also at sportsgrounds and other places.

MR MILLIGAN: The government is spending \$20 million of government money and Capital Football is putting in \$4.5 million for the Throsby proposal. It is for one particular sporting code and that is it: football, or soccer. Does that meet community expectations?

Ms Berry: There are a couple of things with regards to Throsby. It will still be a community football facility and will be available to and accessible by the community when it is not being used by Capital Football. It is not a private, for-profit association operating a multi-sport facility.

Ms Kelley: Aside from being for community sport use it is a recreational greenspace for residents in that area. Beyond that Throsby is also part of a regional strategy for the user groups in the area. It is not that football is the only winner there; by virtue of the Thorsby development and movement of football from Harrison as the example, that will be converted into two fields to open up space for AFL. We also have Taylor

district playing field development, of which stage 1 is nearly complete. It has two units which will cater for union, league and cricket.

It is very much a Gungahlin-wide approach that has been taken. Notwithstanding the fact that it is a significant amount of money going into Throsby, it is a significant facility for our most significant participation sport in the ACT.

Ms Berry: Adding to the freeing up of other space, futsal also use Lyneham at the moment and freeing some space at Lyneham will provide opportunities for other sports as well.

MR MILLIGAN: Will the million-dollar facility at Throsby be open to other sporting codes to use apart from futsal?

Ms Kelley: That will be contingent on Capital Football's modelling at the time and the usage they will have around it. We understand that they have a high need at this time so the early demand will be for futsal. I think that there will be scope for use beyond that once they understand what their operations will look like.

MR MILLIGAN: Given that, who is responsible for the operation and ownership of the facility at Throsby? Is it a government-owned asset or is it an asset owned by Capital Football to operate and manage?

Ms Kelley: The intention is that it will be an ACT government asset subleased to Capital Football. They will have the day-to-day operational management for the indoor centre for futsal and also the outdoor grounds.

MR MILLIGAN: And maintenance and upgrades?

Ms Kelley: They will rest with Capital Football also.

Ms Berry: That is similar to the pools.

MR MILLIGAN: The indoor feasibility report came out in September last year but it has only become publicly available now. The government has known about this for quite some time but has not allocated any funding towards further feasibility studies for a multi-purpose indoor facility as recommended in the report itself. Can you explain why the government did not take on that recommendation and provide funding for what I think the community desperately needs most of all: a multi-purpose indoor sporting facility?

Ms Berry: The main reason is that, as I explained in the very first part of this question, the ACT has a history of multi-sport facilities being privately operated; not operated by the ACT government. Our focus has been working with sports organisations that have significant growth and high participation rates where we can facilitate further growth and free up other opportunities for clubs and sporting groups, as Ms Kelley has talked about, in other areas.

As the report refers to, the ACT government will work with Basketball ACT and Gymnastics ACT around their aspirations for the north side and Belconnen and with

Capital Football on the home of football in Throsby, which includes the indoor sports space specifically for futsal. That can be used for other uses if there is opportunity. I expect that that will free up space at the Lyneham netball centre.

MR MILLIGAN: So you chose to consult with gymnastics, futsal, soccer and basketball only in this feasibility study because of membership and people participating? Why did you choose those groups and not include others like table tennis or netball or any other sporting groups?

Ms Berry: Those four organisations were identified in the first study that led to this one. That was done under the previous sports minister, the indoor feasibility study of 2016.

MR PETTERSSON: There is funding for improvements to Manuka pool. Can you expand on what they are?

Mr Bailey: Manuka is coming up for a bit of an upgrade this year. We have had a bit of work on the filtration system and as part of that we have to also replace the existing guttering system in the main pool so we can allow the water to turn over at a higher rate. To replace those gutters and things like that we have to take out a large section of the tiles. So we will re-tile the pool and we have sourced those tiles. This work will bring the pool up to current standards of filtration. We are underway now with those works while the pool is closed and it will be open by the summer pool season.

MR MILLIGAN: The Gungahlin Leisure Centre has been operating for five years and is due to have its tiles replaced. Is tiling of a pool meant to last longer than five years?

Mr Bailey: Yes, it is; it is normally expected to last a lot longer than that. But in saying that it is good practice to close the pool every five years and do maintenance. That is what we would like to get to with all the pools, close them every five years and give them a good service.

We have encountered a bit of an issue on one wall within the Gungahlin pool where the tiles are coming off at a rate that should not happen. So, through this process we will be fixing up that side wall and testing the rest of the pool to make sure we do not fill it up again and it happens again. We will be doing a comprehensive test of it all, recorking the joints and some other minor repairs. It is eight weeks of work and hopefully will be reopened and ready to go.

MR MILLIGAN: Was there a cost estimate?

Mr Bailey: No, because it looks like these have failed because of the agent used on one of the walls. Under the model we delivered the pool with the contractor will be funding the repair.

THE CHAIR: We are now out of time.

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

Wood, Ms Jo, Coordinator-General for Family Safety

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Group Manager, Strategic Policy

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Group Manager, Housing ACT

Aigner, Mr Geoff, Executive Branch Manager, Client Services, Housing ACT

Loft, Ms Catherine, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure and Contracts, Housing ACT

Foulcher, Ms Deborah, Executive Branch Manager, Policy and Business Transformation, Housing ACT

THE CHAIR: I welcome the new witnesses who are appearing before the committee. When you speak for the first time, can you confirm that you have read and understood the privilege statement?

Minister, two of the initiatives that are losing safer families funding after the next financial year are enhanced child protection and case management and coordination, as well as stronger police support for family violence victims. This is covered on page 423 of budget paper 3. Can you outline what services these programs deliver?

Ms Berry: Yes. I saw all the questions that were asked in this space of the Attorney-General. This gives us a chance to clarify the purpose of the family safety levy and the work the family safety levy is designed to do. Some of the work that has been happening leading up to this budget is around making sure that the family safety levy actually does what it was intended to do, which is about making sure that we funded innovation in the prevention of domestic and family violence, understanding that that it is a complex issue.

The information and advice that is coming from across the world and from across the country around how domestic and family violence is addressed is changing almost every day. Making sure that we are keeping up to date with that is the work that has gone into the family safety levy right now; making sure that we can keep up with that change and making sure that we have innovative responses to the prevention of domestic and family violence.

Some of that has meant that there are some changes, which were identified in the budget. They are very well described on page 421 of the budget papers. This gives a very good explanation of the innovation that is happening through the family safety levy, that it was never designed to be a business-as-usual funding resource. We always wanted to make sure that the community were very aware of where their contributions were going. That is why it is detailed very clearly in the budget papers and has been since it was implemented.

One of the things that we could have done was leave the levy as it was. Then we would not be making any change or have any innovation. But the main purpose of this levy is to address domestic and family violence in new and evidence-based ways that actually change people's lives. I will ask the Coordinator-General for Family Safety to go into some more detail about the two specific matters that you have raised.

Ms Wood: I have read the privilege statement. You identified two initiatives. A short version of the safer families enhanced child protection case management and coordination did enable the establishment of some case analysis capacity within the care and protection system, which is about improving practice over time and learning from actual cases.

The stronger police responses to family violence initiative specifically funded some support liaison officers. So it supplemented the family violence unit in ACT Policing to work with people who are considering, or going through the process of, applying for family violence orders.

I would note that the police are just one of the organisations that support people with family violence order processes. The Domestic Violence Crisis Service and Legal Aid also do that work. There is a range of support organisations and also support from organisations like Women's Legal Centre; so it is one part of that support system.

I guess the important point to note is that this change has deliberately given a 12-month transition period for directorates and agencies to look at those functions, review the impact, review the way they are being delivered, and to look at what the best approach is for the future. So it has deliberately signalled the change that will come in 2020-21 so that we do actually have time to work through that process in a more considered way.

MRS JONES: As a supplementary to that, these positions have only been in place for three years; is that correct?

Ms Berry: Next year will be the fourth year.

Ms Wood: We are entering the fourth year.

MRS JONES: Next year will be the fourth year. Yes, so it is for three years. As much as practice changes and evolves, it seems that there is going to be the need for these assistance personnel that were obviously identified as being something that the community would benefit from. I think when people pay their family violence levy in their rates, this is exactly the kind of thing they thought it would be used for, to actually support people to get through the court process. Are you concerned at all that with these positions going that that job might not be done?

Ms Berry: I would not expect these jobs to go.

MRS JONES: Two of them already have gone. We have had that confirmed with Mr Ramsay. There are two positions for workers in the courts that have already gone. That is just in the courts. There are four additional who are going in 12 months time. They could not give us any idea of how that might continue to be funded.

Ms Wood: Can I clarify that what has happened with the courts is that there has been in 2019-20 a reduction in funding for that initiative in the courts. I do not think that the reduction in funding constitutes two positions. The courts need to look at how they continue the function. I guess that is the point about this change. The change is not to say necessarily that a function needs to cease; it is to say that it is moving out of the safer families package of funding.

The package for the safer families package and the safer families levy is \$24 million over four years. The levy provides \$20 million of that funding. The safer families package cannot possibly cover the government's full response to domestic and family violence, because we know that across a whole range of services it is much bigger. It is about saying that these initiatives would not be funded from this source after 2019-20. So there is time to work through what the future arrangements need to be.

THE CHAIR: So where are they funded from then?

Ms Wood: That is why we have a deliberate 12-month transition, to work out how these functions can be supported. Are they achieving what they are intended to achieve and how can they be supported in the future if they need to continue in a similar vein?

Ms Berry: Within the directorates, this funding, the family safety levy, is supposed to be flexible enough that we can actually implement innovation without having to go through a budget process across each different directorate. Different directorates already fund a whole lot of different programs that address domestic and family violence in a whole lot of different ways. This levy was never supposed to be a set-and-forget funding source for ongoing directorate funding of positions. It was always supposed to be used around innovation, which it already has been through the room for change program. That is unprecedented.

MRS JONES: I am sure it is. That is right.

Ms Berry: It is an unprecedented approach to supporting the families who have experienced domestic and family violence and their children to stay safe at home, as well as the perpetrators to change the behaviour.

MRS JONES: Yes, just to clarify what I said before, the chief financial officer yesterday said that two staff positions are to be cut, or have been cut. One is in the courts and one in the DPP. That is where the two positions come from. That was the evidence we received yesterday.

Ms Berry: I would not expect that that funding for those positions would change in future years, but the idea of the levy is that it will no longer fund those positions.

MRS JONES: So there are two positions gone already and four positions that they say they are going to try to find the funding for, I believe.

THE CHAIR: It also says in the budget that these initiatives will be reviewed by directorates in 2019-20 to determine the best approach in the future, as you have also

just mentioned. But in hearings yesterday, we heard from the acting director-general of JACS that the government will decide. Who exactly is deciding if these front-line services are going to be fully funded beyond 2019-20?

Ms Berry: Sorry, I did not hear that last bit.

THE CHAIR: Who is actually making the decision as to whether these front-line services will be fully funded beyond 2019-20?

Ms Berry: I do not believe that those services will lose funding in future years. But the decision that we have made through the safety levy is that the funding will no longer come from the safety levy.

MRS JONES: When the safety levy was announced in 2016, the government said—maybe you were the minister at the time; I am not sure—that it would strengthen case management, and that that was one of the major thrusts of the safer families levy. You have said now that the main aim is prevention, which obviously is a laudable aim, but that is a significant change. Maybe that is why we are moving people out of these case management roles.

Ms Berry: No, it is not a focus on prevention; it is a focus on innovation. There has been a significant amount of work done with expertise in the sector, also with people who have lived experience, about what is the best way forward for managing domestic and family violence in the ACT.

Some of that has gone to the program which I have just talked about, which is room for change. The other important work that is happening through the funding of the family safety levy and through that innovation and co-design with the community is the justice health partnership, which is about providing legal support in health settings: in community centres, child and family centres and hospital maternity wards, places like that, where women will feel safer, and in a place where they can get legal advice, where maybe they would not have been able to access it previously.

Those are the kinds of programs that the family safety hub is working on and co-designing with expertise from the community, from people who have lived experience, to identify the gaps in our service responses as well as within support services; then it will fill them with pilots and trials of programs which can later be adopted by the government.

MRS JONES: One of the other positions pointed out to us as not being funded into the outyears is—

Ms Berry: Under the safety levy?

MRS JONES: Yes, that is right. From what we can see in the budget documents, it does not state how those positions will be funded, so that is the information we have. It says that a support position at the hospital for women expecting children will be cut. That is another one that was of concern to us. I know you have stated that it will not be funded from the levy, but the reality is that, presumably, you do not have control over whether these positions will or will not be funded, given that they will then be

handed over to departments. In the current budget they do not receive funding past next year.

Ms Berry: From the safety levy? Yes, from the conversations that I have had across directorates with all ministers who have previously received funding out of the family safety levy, they have all agreed that the family safety levy's purpose is for innovation, and not for baseline funding across government. We will work with the directorates, with other ministers and with their portfolio areas around whether or not the funding that was provided for these particular services is delivering or whether another service needs to be developed and funded in future budgets.

We deliberately gave a 12-month period to make this change, and that is why it is clearly identified here in the budget papers and across other directorates, so that everyone could see that we are making some changes about where the funding comes from to provide these services.

MRS JONES: I am assuming that you cannot guarantee that these positions will continue?

Ms Berry: I would not expect the funding to change for those services. It just will not come out of the family safety levy.

MRS JONES: Can you guarantee that those positions will not be cut?

Ms Berry: This is the issue that I am talking about.

MRS JONES: That is the issue we are talking about, too.

Ms Berry: I am saying that the family safety levy will no longer fund these positions, and the family safety levy has enough flexibility in it so that we can address different innovative ideas across the community in addressing domestic and family violence.

MRS JONES: So there are no guarantees.

Ms Berry: We have had to show—

THE CHAIR: You cannot guarantee—

Ms Berry: Your interruptions are not helpful, Miss Burch. I am trying to—

THE CHAIR: I am asking you to answer the question.

Ms Berry: I was answering a question from Mrs Jones, and you interrupted. What I can say is that the funding for services to address domestic and family violence across the directorate which are currently being funded by the family safety levy will not continue, and directorates will have a conversation with the family safety coordinator, who has the expertise in this area, about what kinds of services are needed, whether these are meeting the needs of our community, and whether that service needs to change.

MRS JONES: So things may change as well?

Ms Berry: A particular service might change.

MRS JONES: As in a totally different way of delivering the outcome?

Ms Berry: Possibly, in the co-design with the sector and with people who have lived experience. We want to make sure that they are always involved in the conversations that we have in addressing this issue. It is complicated.

MRS JONES: So it will take 12 months to work it out?

Ms Berry: For some it might, but for some it might be sooner than that. In fact we have been having conversations with Legal Aid and John Boersig for quite some time about what funding Legal Aid need to provide services. I would not expect there to be a cut to Legal Aid, but they might change the way they provide their legal aid services, in conversation with the coordinator-general.

Ms Wood: I would add that Legal Aid is one of the organisations that we have funded for the health justice partnership. They have some additional funding to do that more embedded service delivery in the health and community setting. One of the points of that pilot is to try a different way of working, and what we learn from that could potentially be applied back into other parts of that service as well.

MS CODY: Minister, what is the health justice partnership? Can you expand on that a little bit for me, please?

Ms Wood: I can expand on that. The health justice partnership has an embedded legal service in the two hospitals and in the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre. What is different about it is that it has legal and health professionals working in a really integrated way to identify and support women—parents, but primarily women, because we know the prevalence of domestic and family violence is much higher for women—who are at risk of or experiencing domestic or family violence.

That is based on an understanding that we have from the insights work we did to design the family safety hub that a lot of people are experiencing domestic and family violence who are not coming to our crisis service, who are not coming immediately to Legal Aid or a legal service. They are disclosing where they have a trusted relationship already. In the case of someone who is pregnant, that could be their midwife or in that health setting.

We are using the fact that they have a trusted relationship there, building some capability with those trusted health professionals, and in the child and family centre as well, so that they are more confident to have the conversation with that person and know what to do next. Also, by having the legal service actually embedded, they have an immediate service and support that they can offer.

The importance of the legal service, which may seem a little bit counterintuitive because we know that people are often fearful of a legal response to domestic and family violence—

MS CODY: I know I was absolutely petrified, yes.

Ms Wood: A lawyer actually offers a safe conversation because it is a 100 per cent confidential conversation. A lot of people have said to us that they want an opportunity to talk about what is happening to them, to know what the options might be before they feel rushed into action. It is actually a really safe conversation, and that is one of the ways we are promoting it, so that people can have that safe conversation and consider their options.

MRS JONES: On the announcement of the levy in 2016 the government committed to about seven outcomes, and none of them seemed to be particularly about innovation. Is that a change in how you are administering this fund?

Ms Berry: Since the implementation of the family safety levy and the contributions by the community, the coordinator-general was engaged, and even in this short time there have already been changes in the way government and communities respond to domestic and family violence. This is one of them, and the other one I referred to is room for change. More are being co-designed through the family safety hub and the conversations with the community and people with lived experience.

MRS JONES: So it is a different way of doing justice advice basically? Rather than embedding people in the courts it is about getting them into the health setting and dealing with both the psychosocial situation as well as the legal stuff all at once?

Ms Berry: It is a safe place where people feel comfortable with trusted relationships so they are not having to seek out legal advice; it is coming to them. Did you want to talk about the data?

Ms Wood: Yes, the early data from the health-justice partnership shows that those services have referred more women than we expected in the early days. In the early days a lot of the work is building the relationships and the model between the legal and health professionals. They have had referred into the program about 70 women. Those women between them had about 250 different legal issues. Importantly, those 70 women were not clients of those services before so we are reaching people who were not getting that kind of help.

About a quarter have been women from culturally diverse communities and about a quarter have been young women under 25. We are seeing it as an important and different way to reach people who might need support who would not otherwise be coming in to some of these services.

Ms Berry: Mrs Jones, you might recall that in previous estimates committees we talked about what the family safety hub was going to look like—was it going to be a shiny, new door. When the government and the coordinator-general talked with the community the community said, “No, we don’t want a new door. We want a place where we can develop together new and emerging ways of addressing domestic and family violence.”

MRS JONES: That has predominantly been settled on as being those health centres

because they are less confronting and more accessible?

Ms Berry: Yes, it is taking the service to the women rather than women having to go out and get the service.

MRS JONES: What about male victims of domestic violence? Is the family health centre a place where they would come?

Ms Wood: One of the first things we did at the family safety hub—we called it a challenge—focused on early intervention for pregnant women and new parents. We were looking broadly including men, particularly men as fathers. There is continuing work looking at the best options for engaging men in that early period of parenting, and the evidence suggests that the maternal health setting is probably not the right place.

We have been doing a piece in the background looking at the evidence about the best way to engage and support men so we can find the right way to do that. That work is currently in progress, but we understand that there is not a one size fits all and we need to tailor that.

MRS KIKKERT: Are you consulting with any male victims about what they would like as a service provided to them?

Ms Wood: In our insight gathering work we have reached out to organisations that support male victims. It is harder to get male victims to come forward and share their stories, so that is something we are continuing to do; find the right way to create a safe space for male victims to come to talk to us. We have been working with community organisations about how we do that.

MS CODY: There has been talk of frontline worker training. When will we start to see that happen and what is involved in that?

Ms Berry: The frontline worker training will go to some of the issues Mrs Kikkert raised about how we engage men in this conversation. It will be able to inform a whole lot of people about what domestic and family violence is, what the services available are and what are the supports people can get.

That training of 20,000 public servants in the ACT and going beyond that into the private sector should contribute to a significant change in the culture in the ACT about how we talk about and support people who have experienced or who may be perpetrators of domestic and family violence. It could assist in drawing out what we can do to engage with men who have been victims or in providing support in the early years maternal space we would normally provide for women.

Ms Wood: The commitment to front-line worker training has evolved as we have done that work. One of the things that emerged really early when we started to talk to other large employers with major service delivery about their approach to training their frontline staff is that we have to put staff wellbeing at the centre of that approach and to ensure that our workplaces are safe places for people to potentially disclose before we equip them to deal with domestic and family violence issues in their

professional practice with clients and in their engagement with members of the public. That is why we have foundation level training for all public servants as a first stage.

Foundation training and specific manager training started this month and that is being progressively rolled out across directorates. That is providing that foundation piece. We then have training for 13,000 frontline workers in total and that will be two levels of training with different levels of intensity. At the top level, what we are calling tier 2, there is five-day intensive training. That is equivalent to the training already delivered to care and protection case workers and ACT Policing. We are spreading that intensive training across other areas, for example social workers in the hospital and our paramedics.

Our tier 1 training is for people who need more than a foundation level. That is a day of training all up. It is more than foundation but for people who will not be dealing with domestic and family violence on a daily basis in the normal course of their practice. That would be our teachers who have a wellbeing obligation to support young people and to connect with families and have a relationship over time which is really important.

We are equipping them to support wellbeing and support people over time and have good referrals pathways to more expertise. For example, in the education system the school psychologist will have the tier 2 intensive training and will be an important first point of referral for teachers.

We are trying to equip people to better deal with these issues within the current scope of their role. No-one is extending their role, but they will have more support and better capability to deal with these issues. When we talk to people in frontline roles the most common message we get is that they know that there is more they could do but they are not confident about how to do it.

MS CODY: Is there a risk assessment framework around this?

Ms Wood: Yes, that is right. We are working through developing a common risk assessment and risk management framework for the ACT. There is a range of tools people use to manage risk, but the framework is a bit of a tool itself to have a common approach to how we assess risk in different settings.

We have drawn heavily in that work on a big review being undertaken in Victoria, which is up to the second iteration of its major common risk assessment framework, work that has happened in WA and also work that has happened nationally. So we are able to draw on the experience of others to design that for the ACT.

That framework will give us a common set of shared understandings about what domestic and family violence is and people's experience of it and then some common approaches to basic things like screening questions—how we identify people who might be experiencing or at risk of domestic or family violence—and then some common approaches to how we respond.

We are starting that framework as a draft that we can trial in a number of settings to work out if it is working for us in the ACT and what we need to do to refine it. We

know that with these kinds of frameworks and this kind of work that we can start somewhere but the reality will throw up some issues we will need to deal with. We are really keen to see that framework be used as a tool for people across a whole range of services—it could be in a school, in corrections or in the context of the health-justice partnership—so we start to get some common practice across really diverse services.

MRS KIKKERT: Minister, in your ministerial statement this year you talked about ACT public servants receiving this special training. But then you added that more intensive training for front-line roles would be delivered in the following year. Could you explain to me the priority? You want to provide special training for public servants but then people who are actually working with domestic violence victims are put into the following year for this domestic violence training. Can you explain to us the meaning behind the priority?

It is actually going against the Domestic Violence Prevention Council who recommended that, beyond ACT government front-line workers, domestic and family violence training be expanded to non-government employees who work in those roles in places that come into contact with children and young people. Why are ACT public servants being trained before those people who are actually working with domestic violence victims?

Ms Wood: I can expand a little on what I said before about designing this training. One of the things we learnt was that we actually have to have a foundation level for everybody because when we train our front-line people we are going to have more disclosures in the work place. One of the things that this training does—and it has been a shared experience across a number of organisations that have trained their staff—is that often the training itself causes people to identify that they are experiencing domestic and family violence or the training and the conversation that happen around it in the organisation make them feel safe to actually disclose that.

We know that we will see more disclosures in the workplace. We have more people identifying in our own workforce that they have had that experience. We need managers and colleagues to be ready to understand and respond appropriately. And we need to do that first.

One of the important pieces of advice we received when we talked to the Royal Women's Hospital and also the federal Department of Human Services was that if we did not do that piece first we actually created risks. They pointed us to some organisations where they started with training the front-line workforce and then had to pull that back because they realised they needed to train managers.

MRS KIKKERT: That was a study?

Ms Wood: This is feedback from other large organisations about their experience in rolling out training to their front-line workforce. Where that foundation piece is not done, where managers are not trained, that has actually created issues and they have had to go back and do that piece of training before they could continue training the front-line workforce.

We have learnt from that and that is why we are doing the foundation piece. All our front-line people will also get that foundation training. Everyone will have that piece first but then the more intensive training will come after.

We are developing the content for that more intensive training now, through a partnership with the Domestic Violence Crisis Service who have seconded someone to work with us directly on the content so that we will have the best local expertise in actually designing that more intensive training content.

MS CODY: You are drawing from other jurisdictions as well, I would imagine, on what they have delivered and how that interacts with what you are learning from them?

Ms Wood: That is right. We are connected through the senior officials. There is a lot of sharing across jurisdictions of the work that everyone is doing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is this training online or in person? There seems to be a huge amount of training, which is why I am thinking online.

Ms Berry: Some of it is online modules, depending on the intensity or the tier of the training. I will be doing a tier level of the training and I will be inviting all MLAs and staff to do the training. It is not compulsory but it will be an option for MLAs and their staff to do a more intensive level of training, if they decide to.

It might be good to talk about the type of training, the 45-minute version and then the three hours, and the different tiers. There are different levels for different levels of employees.

Ms Wood: The foundation training is a series of online modules which we think is about an hours worth of training.

MS LE COUTEUR: Haven't you already been through this? I think you have already been through the timings for them.

Ms Wood: Not today, no.

MRS JONES: Do you want to take that on notice and come back to us with the different levels of training and what is involved in them?

Ms Wood: We can do that.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is fantastic that the budget delivers funding to support a partnership between the government and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to develop community-led family-oriented responses that address the issues raised in *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded*—change our future and share what you know. Please tell us how you think this is going to happen, given that the first of these reports was over 10 years ago. How will this be?

Ms Berry: I was going to ask Ms Wood to talk about the Domestic Violence Prevention Council and the subcommittee that they have set up with Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander community members who have been working through this process with us, responding to the reports but also this initiative that has been announced in the budget.

Ms Wood: The Domestic Violence Prevention Council, in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, has established a Domestic Violence Prevention Council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group, and that brings together people from across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and some people who work in key organisations who are involved in the domestic and family violence response.

Our starting point has been a conversation with that group about how we start this work with the community to respond to those recommendations. We recognise that the long delay, particularly in responding to the *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* recommendations, means that there is work that we have to do to build credibility with the community, that this is a genuine process and that the contribution they make will be followed through. We have also invited other contributors to *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* to be part of this process if they would like to do that. We see the reference group as a core group that we are working with but we are open to other people who want to be part of it.

The conversation is still at an early stage with the reference group but what we are talking to them about is how we can support that group to lead a conversation with the community about what the first steps might be and the first priorities they actually want to work on. We are talking to them about how we resource them to do that, and they are considering that and they will be coming back to us with how they want to be supported. We are looking to use the funding that is being committed in the budget quite flexibly and really have it driven by what the community tells us they want to start with.

Obviously within *We Don't Shoot Our Wounded* there is a range of recommendations that are really comprehensive. We cannot work on everything at once. We are looking to the community's leadership on where they want us to start and what that might look like.

MRS KIKKERT: Are you consulting Winnunga on that issue?

Ms Wood: Yes, I have reached out to Winnunga as well and they obviously have a range of priorities they are working on. We are happy to have Winnunga involved. It is a question for them about their capacity to be in this process as well as, obviously, all the other important work that they are doing.

MS LE COUTEUR: Looking at budget paper 3, page 423, table J.2, the funding ceases in the last year, 2022-23. Is there a reason for this?

Ms Berry: For which initiative?

MS LE COUTEUR: "Safer Families—Delivering family-centred responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families impacted by family violence", which I assume is the budget line where I will find this. For the last year the amount is zero.

Why?

Ms Wood: This is an initial commitment of funding. We have to do the work with the community and support the community to set the priorities and the specific actions. We do not yet know what is going to be required. This funding will not respond to all the recommendations. This is a place to start, to have some funding that can support the community to get some things started. But we know that more will come out of it, and we will need to consider resourcing beyond what is here.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am really surprised that there is not a commitment to ongoing funding for this.

Ms Berry: That is just the co-design work, Ms Le Couteur, to make sure that we are getting it right and what kind of funding it actually might need.

MRS JONES: Can I just clarify the number of positions where the funding has been changed and where you are hoping that the departments will pick it up. What is the total number of positions, or total hours, or however you measure it?

Ms Berry: We might have to come back with the detail on that.

Ms Wood: We can take that one on notice.

MRS JONES: I have been told six or nine. There are different numbers out there.

THE CHAIR: On that, can you please provide on notice a detailed list of what the safer families levy is currently funding in this financial year versus what it will be funding in the next financial year, including the positions associated with those.

MRS JONES: This year and next year, because there is a change there.

Ms Berry: We will provide you with whatever information we have available.

MRS JONES: Thank you. Under the “enhancing access to justice for non-English speakers”, which was a part of the initial package of safer families, BP3 from 2017-18 shows that \$150,000 was spent on this initiative. In the 2018-19 budget, they were earmarked 438 for the initiative. According to BP3 for 2020, 238,000 was spent. Yesterday, Mr Glenn, the Acting Director-General of JACS, justified funding cuts to this service by saying that it would cost only between \$20,000 and \$40,000 per year. Who is correct?

Ms Wood: We can provide some clarity on that, Mrs Jones. This is the interpreting service?

MRS JONES: I presume so. It was under “enhancing access to justice for non-English speakers”. Do you know what has happened there?

Ms Wood: Yes, we do, but I would have to take on notice the questions about the previous spending, because those numbers do not fit with what I think was spent.

MRS KIKKERT: They were in the previous budget papers.

MRS JONES: They were published in the budget papers as being the actual spend.

Ms Wood: We will take that on notice and go back and check those figures. What we do know is that this initiative was originally designed without very good data on what the need for interpreting services might be. We have found that there has been a significant underspend in that program each year. With JACS, we have worked through what is the current level of demand. We want to see people using interpreters wherever they need them, and have been promoting that. The funding has been reduced to where we think the level of demand is, but with some capacity for some growth. That is more in line with actually what the need is, and the funds have then been applied to new things.

MRS JONES: So you are not able to say now whether, indeed, 150,000 was spent in 2017-18 and 238,000 was spent in 2018-19?

Ms Berry: What are you referring to, Mrs Jones? That might help us.

MRS KIKKERT: Page 420.

MRS JONES: Page 420 of BP3. It says that 238,000 was spent, unless I have read it wrong.

MRS KIKKERT: No, it is there.

Ms Wood: We will take it on notice and unpack what sits behind those figures. There were some funds that I think JACS used to promote interpreter services, some complementary initiatives in addition to the interpreter services themselves. That may account for some of that spending in 2018-19, but we can take it on notice.

MRS JONES: It says that estimated expenditure for 2018-19 was 238 but the budget was 438,000. That is in the middle of that table on page 420. In the left-hand column it says 438,000.

Ms Berry: There is also a footnote there.

Ms Wood: The footnote identifies that this initiative includes 200,000 in 2019-20 that has been reprioritised to another initiative.

MRS JONES: Understood, but the spend itself was still 238, and yesterday we were told that the spend is only between 20,000 and 40,000 per year.

Ms Wood: The 20,000 and 40,000 is the spend for the amount that is spent on interpreting services directly, I understand, but we will go and look at what other complementary initiatives have been—

MRS JONES: Are the other complementary initiatives going to continue?

Ms Wood: I think the complementary initiatives were getting things started in terms

of having some promotional materials around the use of interpreters. Some of those things will be one-off things that do not have to be funded each year.

MRS JONES: We would love a breakdown of what the 238 was spent on exactly, and how we are going to maintain the appropriate level of service for such a small amount.

Ms Berry: I think the issue is that all the information that was provided when this was initially funded was that this was the amount of money that was needed. But that did not happen, so it is making sure that we provide the best possible information and spend the money efficiently, because it is our community's contribution to addressing domestic and family violence—

MRS JONES: Of course.

Ms Berry: That has been adjusted based on the information that we have now on people who are using the service.

MRS JONES: If the whole program is changing significantly, then, from not being interpreting plus a bunch of other services—I do not imagine that you spent \$200,000 on—

Ms Berry: It is not services; it is things like pamphlets and advertising.

MRS JONES: But \$200,000 on pamphlets is a fair amount.

Ms Berry: It might be some coordination stuff as well.

MRS JONES: Coordination, yes. I am really keen to see the breakdown of that. That is a big difference.

MRS KIKKERT: Could you also please take on notice how many people actually used that service that rounded up to \$20,000, 30,000 or 40,000.

Ms Berry: We will go to JACS for that.

THE CHAIR: We will adjourn for a short break.

Hearing suspended from 3.47 to 4.02 pm.

MRS JONES: Over the past couple of years, based on some questions that I put to the Chief Minister and you, we have done an analysis of ACT departmental breastfeeding facilities. It has been brought to my attention that those same changes that we have achieved here, with making sure there is a lock on the door, a place to wash your hands, the ability to store breast-pumped milk and something to look at or do while you are breast pumping, have made a difference here in ACT government facilities.

Do you have any interest in raising the same topic with the new federal Minister for Women to find out if she would be willing to push the same sort of changes through

for the federal public service? As you know, there are many women in Canberra working for the federal public service, and if we can help to replicate what we have done here, I think it would benefit a lot of women.

Ms Berry: Mrs Jones, I would be happy to join with you and campaign and lobby for that to occur, for federal government public servants in the ACT.

MRS JONES: Fantastic; I will be in touch.

Ms Berry: Okay.

MRS JONES: I may put a recommendation in the report.

Ms Berry: I will commit to responding to that recommendation positively.

MRS JONES: Okay, thank you. That is a good start for the estimates committee, isn't it?

THE CHAIR: For many years the target for the percentage of women feeling safe by themselves in public places during the night has been 38 per cent. This is now set to increase to 42 per cent by 2021-22. What research have you undertaken to determine this new figure?

Ms Berry: Can I start by saying that I think that we all agree that that is a shockingly low figure for women to feel safe. It is not a figure that is developed by the ACT; it is a national survey that is conducted by the police. But it is the only thing we have to work with at the moment.

Here in the ACT, a few new things have happened. For example, we have the women's safety audit for events, and encouraging private events to use that women's safety audit to make sure they are providing safe places for women who are attending those. In fact Summernats last year conducted a women's safety audit at their event. It is a significant improvement for private events in the ACT to be conducting those audits, to make sure that women are safe when they are attending those events. Clearly, there is more to be done in the ACT and across the country. But that particular target is not set by the ACT; it is a national target.

After the last estimates, when we were discussing this issue, I met with the then Chief Police Officer—I have also had a discussion with the current police commissioner—about how we can do better in the ACT to make sure women feel safe wherever they are, whether it is during the day or at night.

THE CHAIR: Noting that it is set nationally by the police, do you have any information on how they have come to that figure?

Ms Evans: Yes. It is based on a survey of women around how safe they feel both in the daytime and in the night-time. Obviously, in the daytime women feel safer, and that is reflected in the figures. But in the evening we are finding that the national average for the period, the 2017-18 period, which was the most recent one, was 36.5 per cent, whereas in the ACT we had a result of 42 per cent. So we are adjusting

our indicator and trying to have a bit more of a stretch target over the next few years. We are doing better than the national average but we are aspiring to do better still.

MS CODY: Can you give me an overview of the diversity register, an update on how that is all coming along?

Ms Berry: The diversity register is going really well. We have been promoting it far and wide, encouraging people to sign up to it and getting the assistance of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women as well. We have found that so many other organisations, including, obviously, the government, are accessing the diversity register to fill positions on their boards. I will ask Ms Evans to give some information on actual numbers.

Ms Evans: It is only about a year since we launched the diversity register. We had 66 women registered at that point, on a previous iteration, if you like, and we are up to 911 people now registered. It is increasing every month. It is a good news story. Almost 70 per cent of those people who are registered are women. Just to give you a—

MS CODY: Seventy?

Ms Evans: Nearly 70 per cent are women. Also 10.8 per cent of the people who registered identified as having a disability, 3.7 per cent identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, 41 per cent identified as having been born in a country other than Australia, and six per cent as either currently serving or having been prior Defence Force members.

The fantastic thing for us is that that allows us not only to target particular people for particular roles on boards but also to ensure that we are getting a really good distribution across boards of all kinds of diversity. It has been a great outcome. The best thing about it is that people are opting in; 911 people have opted in across that period of time.

MS CODY: That is fantastic.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a question about the women's budget statement for this year. I think it is the first time that this has happened for—

Ms Berry: A very long time.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. I was going to be slightly more polite than that about it; thank you. I am curious about how this was actually put together. While some of the things in it might well be good things, they are not necessarily in any way a women's thing. Looking at the first page, in health and wellbeing, you are providing services to high-needs children and babies. Children and babies are appreciably both male and female. I am not quite sure why this money is all seen as women's rather than for people as a whole. With eating disorders, I believe males sufferer from that. I could keep going. Some of them clearly are just for women but quite a few of them are not.

Probably one of the less obvious ones on the back page is the money to reduce

recidivism in the ACT. I am totally in favour of reducing recidivism, but most of the people in the AMC are not female. The question is: how did you work out what went in the women's statement?

Ms Evans: Thank you for the question, Ms Le Couteur. As you mentioned, it has been a while since the minister has had the opportunity to present a women's budget statement. We have asked for feedback, very deliberately, and we will be putting a lot more work into it.

One of the biggest challenges with a budget statement is that so much of the material is actually cabinet-in-confidence right up to when it is released. What we were basing our initial report on was where a directorate that was seeking funding indicated that the impact on women was notable. In the case of the first example you gave, around support for high-needs children and babies, understandably, when babies and children are unwell, there is an impact on the mums who bring them in. Yes, of course, there is an impact on parents generally. It was not so much about the babies and children receiving services; it was around how that supports women, mothers, in the community.

With the dollar figures, there has been no splitting, if you like, around gender. That is the full amount for that particular project. What we would like to see as we go forward is more analysis, and we completely acknowledge that. This is not a piece of work that we have split up and said, "Okay, that particular project will benefit 57 per cent women and 43 per cent men." We have just said, "That project is worth this amount and it's a project that will benefit and have an impact on women in the ACT."

The next piece of work we would like to do is work towards a greater level of analysis around those gender splits in particular projects, and not just take it as having a significant impact on women. Everyone could say that light rail will benefit women, but it will also benefit men, and we could have included every single project.

MS LE COUTEUR: That is where—

Ms Evans: What we really tried to look at was where directorates, in their budget initiative statements, stated that they felt that their project had more impact on women, or a significant impact on women.

MS LE COUTEUR: Every footpath, every road—you name it.

Ms Evans: Of course; and that is the challenge, isn't it? Having said that, light rail could potentially benefit women in terms of safety. There are so many ways that you can cut and dice this information, and different states and territories do it differently. This, for us, was a beginning point.

MRS JONES: When the YWCA appeared before us on Friday a week and a bit ago they were concerned quite a bit about what is in the budget for women, once we have made our decisions on what we are going to do and how we work out what we are doing that affects women, rather than a process where you start with a conversation about women—and the prison is a perfect example; the facilities for women in the

prison are an afterthought, an add-on—and then talk about the fact that we are helping women. The prison was not initially set up properly. I understand what the YWCA is trying to say. Do you have any interest in perhaps trying to address that in the next budget?

Ms Berry: Yes. I think that some of the way that that is happening in that space that might support some of the work that the YWCA wants done is through the second action plan development which is being worked through by the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women. We can talk through that if you like.

The other thing that should be acknowledged as well—and because it is done in cabinet it is not as obvious—is that when business cases come to cabinet there is always a woman's eye over everything anyway. As Minister for Women I will always go, "There are not enough women on this board," or, "There needs to be more," or, "That is great, you have achieved more for women." There is already a bit of gender analysis on decision-making that government does.

MRS JONES: But that is once a proposal has been put to cabinet, whereas what they were pointing out—and I am not just talking about their wish list; but the way that they summarised it was like a moment of clarity, which is probably something I have been trying to explain my frustrations with for some time; the way that it was described was very clear, and it would be good to go back and look at the transcript of that probably—was that the question that should be asked well before we start planning for things is: what is it that we should be doing to change things?

This is a good city for women but it does not mean it cannot be better. The prison is the most obvious example to me of how the Chief Minister could empower you more to have more clout when these things are being developed, not once the idea has been settled on, and what it is they are trying to achieve—before we get to that point.

Ms Berry: I think one of the things that will also contribute, because it is not just us, it is a culture change for everybody in our community—

MRS JONES: But it is a big responsibility that you have.

Ms Berry: Sure. But I think the sorts of initiatives that we are doing in the domestic and family violence space with the front-line worker training will have some impact in our schools, in our education systems, working towards how we implement the curriculum and the respectful relationships parts of the curriculum in a way that actually changes culture within our schools, which is not just bringing in a program and then leaving. We are actually embedding it across our school communities. With teachers, students and everyone it no longer becomes a learnt thing; it is unconscious because everybody puts a gender lens over everything that they do. That is the purpose. That is where we want to get to at some point.

MS LE COUTEUR: It looks like you have only dealt with initiatives in this statement. Clearly the impact of the budget on women is vastly more than just initiatives. Given the size of the existing budget—clearly it is in the existing budget—do you have any process for actually having a women's budget statement which includes all the things that influence and impact on women and which answers the

question of how our budget impacts on women?

Ms Berry: I think there are a couple of things. The first thing is on the very first page. I have asked for feedback so that we can actually improve these statements in future years. That is the first thing. We are also doing significant consultation through the development of the second action plan and engaging the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women on that and, in fact, then going to the summit later this year. Did you want to say something more about consultation?

Ms Evans: Yes. Thinking about that impact, it is good that you mentioned the Y earlier, Mrs Jones, because we are working with them and with the Women's Centre for Health Matters and doing a piece of work which is looking at all the evidence we have around how Canberra works for women and what is going on, what initiatives are supporting women, what things are the gaps—I guess not just the gaps—what things we are not doing anything on at all.

We have been consulting with the sector, and those organisations are pulling together for us a piece of work that will actually identify some of the gaps and some of the strengths and some of the weaknesses, and the minister's intention is to take that information to a summit, as she mentioned, later this year which will have a broad range of women to say, "If these are the gaps and the weaknesses that we have actually identified, what are your suggestions for actions that will move those things forward?"

The intention is that we are getting a community-led and a community-owned, I guess, response to those weaknesses and to those gaps so that our next action plan makes a really significant difference for women rather than being a series of initiatives that do not necessarily move things forward for the broader community.

MS LE COUTEUR: I note that the government is planning to do a new series of wellbeing indicators. Is that going to replace the women's budget statement as far as women go? Clearly, by the look on your face the answer is no. How will the two interact?

Ms Berry: I think, with the work that is going on into the wellbeing focus in the budget, there is a lot of consultation on what that is going to look like and how it is going to play out in the community. My intention is that we have a women's budget statement that best suits the needs of individuals and groups of women in our community. But I am particularly wanting to make sure that the people who engage in this and understand this are not just the ordinary people who engage in this process. I am really wanting to get people who, in their homes, out in the communities, engage in what is it that they want to see and understand what is available and happening for women in the ACT. That is what we will be asking, through our consultations with groups like the YWCA, the Women's Centre for Health Matters and others, to go beyond your own group of usual people who are—

MRS JONES: The usual suspects.

Ms Berry: I was not going to say that—the usual submitters to this process. I really want to go further than that and engage other people in our community who would not

ordinarily do it and have a document that actually makes sense. It is not the kind of language that you were talking about earlier that is easily understood by everyone.

MRS JONES: Is there a way of going to the lower socioeconomic group of women very purposefully? I know that they struggle economically in the ACT. If you are not fully government supported but you are in that group just above that who are trying to survive—despite the great city that we live in and the benefits for very educated women—it is a really tough place to be and it is hard to survive.

Ms Berry: That is right. The intention is to go out, as I said, more broadly. I think some of the ways where you can target women who are on modest or low incomes or have poorer families and homes are sometimes through unions but also through different support services as well.

MRS JONES: Sometimes they are the not-working other half and we meet them when we are doorknocking. I met them a lot when I doorknocked in Gungahlin. They do not always have great English skills and it would be great to find a way to find out from them the one thing that would change their life.

Ms Berry: We have a fair bit of diversity on our women's advisory council, and that is important, to make sure that we get out to those communities as well.

MR PETTERSSON: Can you talk about the next step for the ACT women's plan and how you will engage the community to shape what the second action plan will look like?

Ms Evans: I am very excited to talk about consultation for the second action plan. As I mentioned before, those early pieces of work that we are doing with some of our sector community partners is starting to set us up towards the second action plan. The thing that the minister has been very keen on, as she has mentioned, is making sure that our broader community are engaged. That work will give us a bit of a discussion paper, if you like, that the Y and the Women's Centre for Health Matters are contributing to. We have had some guidance through ACTCOSS as well.

Once we have that discussion paper, we will put that out broadly. We will have women attend the summit. We will have some other consultation that, for instance, the ministerial advisory council might lead, that sort of low-key connection with women who might otherwise not get the opportunity to have a say. It is about a six-month process across this year. It also means that at the same time we are actually finishing up the first action plan and tying off those actions. So it is a good opportunity for us to kind of reset, if you like, for the second action plan.

The minister's intention is that that second action plan will be launched from about March next year, around International Women's Day. We expect to have a nice product of really clear, meaningful actions that also thinks about what the outcomes we are seeking are and how we measure them. That is something that in the past we have not always had. We have just had a great big list of actions but not what the outcome might be or what the impact might look like.

MR PETTERSSON: Excellent, thank you.

MRS JONES: I have a supplementary. I mentioned a few times today the growing concern that I have about women in the prison. As Minister for Women, is there anything that can be done from your perspective to really elevate the status of the women in that facility? I have had lots of different little reports to me about what goes on, some of them from quite concerned staff members. The close proximity of women to men is difficult for some of them. We have discussed some of these things in the committee. I have been told that while they are moving about, they are being catcalled and so on. I really wonder whether you, in your position and with your resources, can do something with the minister for corrections to elevate the situation. We are building a new facility outside the walls, but we have not increased the number of cottages to put the women back in the cottages. I am growing in concern for this group of people.

Ms Berry: Yes. Mrs Jones, a couple of weeks ago I visit the women in the AMC. I was accompanied by Marcia Williams from the Women's Centre for Health Matters because she had had a grant from the Office for Women to do some work with the women out there. I do not know whether you saw the stories that they told in—

MS CODY: Yes.

MRS JONES: No, I did not.

Ms Berry: We will get you a copy of it. Anyway, it was good to be able to go out there and talk to some of the people who had contributed to that magazine about their experiences and what I could do as Minister for Women, working with Mr Rattenbury, the minister for corrections, on improving a whole lot of things that the women were experiencing in the AMC but also before they arrived there, and when they were leaving as well.

MRS JONES: After they were leaving, yes.

Ms Berry: That crossed over with a number of my portfolio areas where we could—

MRS JONES: Do something.

Ms Berry: do some more with them.

MRS JONES: Some years ago, I visited Dillwynia, which is one of the women's prisons in New South Wales. It is a totally different facility.

Ms Berry: Yes.

MRS JONES: It has a totally different set-up. It is totally differently managed, by women for women. The guards are selected because they work well with women. It is a totally different situation. I felt sad, even back then, for our women that they do not have a set-up that is for women.

Ms Berry: Yes.

MRS JONES: I know it is about money to some extent but I encourage you to raise it.

Ms Berry: Yes, it is true. You are right. Women who end up in these places, for whatever reasons, often have experienced a lot of trauma themselves—

MRS JONES: That is right.

Ms Berry: and so they need a different response. I think that that is recognised. There is now a women's coordinator within the AMC to support women. The women whom I spoke to since they have had the women's coordinator have said that it has made a significant difference. So that is a good start for those women.

There is more that we can do in that space. I have had a good conversation with Mr Rattenbury following my visit to the centre about the different things that we could do together to make sure that those women are supported differently. They will have to be supported differently because they are women.

I was reflecting on your question, Ms Le Couteur, about this kind of gendered approach and putting that at the front rather than after the decision is made and seeing whether it lines up. In my portfolio responsibility of sport and recreation, that is exactly what I have done. We need that kind of thing across governments.

MS LE COUTEUR: Absolutely, yes.

Ms Berry: I have required sports clubs that get triennial funding from the ACT government to reach at least 40 per cent representation on their boards. That is happening. But it was not something that would have happened unless I had required them to do it. I guess that they are the kinds of things that governments can do to encourage a more gendered approach from communities and clubs.

I am hearing it all the time now. All these clubs are coming to us. Women that I have known around the place say, "I have been asked to be on the board of my club. I have never done that before. This is a new experience for me." I know it is because we have asked the clubs to do that, but what a great opportunity for these women to make some real changes in how these clubs include different people in their administration. There is an example.

MS LE COUTEUR: Great.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time.

Ms Berry: Sorry, I took up your space.

THE CHAIR: No, that is fine. We will finish there. I remind any new officials joining us to please confirm that you have read and understood the privilege statement.

MR PARTON: I would like to start with public housing waiting times and property numbers. We currently have a waiting list for public housing with, my understanding is, 2,134 apps at last glance and waiting times of up to 1,066 days. On page 47 of budget paper G we see a reduction of 109 social housing properties. How are we

planning to reduce waiting times for those in need if housing stocks are effectively being reduced?

Ms Berry: I can ask Ms Gilding to respond to that, although I should start by saying that the ACT has reduced homelessness despite the national rise in homelessness across the country. We have had a bit of an increase in the census figures in our rough sleeping cohort. However, that is steady and has not changed from the figures that I have been provided with more recently.

MR PARTON: Is it steady or is it increasing?

Ms Berry: It is not increasing.

MR PARTON: You just said that rough sleeping was increasing.

MRS JONES: Slightly.

Ms Berry: It had increased to 54 at census night. There were 54 individuals sleeping rough in the ACT then, and that number has not changed too much.

Ms Gilding: It is not a straightforward answer, Mr Parton. There are several components. There was a question on notice recently looking at stock numbers over a 30-year period. When we look at that 30-year period and we take our point in time data, which is often 30 June, we see that there has been a slight reduction, of about 2.5 per cent, over a 30-year period. That does not take into consideration the 130 houses that we transferred to CHC when they first started, to help them set up. It does not take into account the 53 houses that were transferred to Argyle community housing when they first came to Canberra to set up Common Ground. It does not take into account the respite care that we have built for Ricky Stuart House. It does not take into account the \$7 million investment into Project Independence.

When we take all of those numbers as a whole, we have actually had a steady number of between 11,500 and 12,000 fluctuating throughout that 30-year period. What we do have going forward, though, under growth and renewal, is that commitment to grow. Those numbers are clearly set out in the strategy and in the budget papers.

What we then have to look at is the point in time stock number shifts that happen. That is what that number there on page 47 of the budget papers is: those point in time fluctuations. There are about five—probably even six or seven—different impacts. I am going to ask Ms Loft to go through the ons and offs between the 2018-19 data and the 2019-20 data. That is impacted by our renewal program, by our transfer program, by a whole range of things.

Ms Loft: The difference that you will see, the variation of 109, is specifically made up of the ins and outs, as Louise was explaining, in the stock numbers. We count stock as a dwelling. Once we demolish it and it is vacant land, it is not considered stock. Throughout the year and throughout the years, you will always see those peaks and troughs as we are constructing.

Specifically, though, there have been some construction delays this year.

Seventy-eight houses transferred from the public housing transfer taskforce have been delayed, not delivered this financial year. They are coming early in the next financial year. We have 16 constructions in Downer, in Antill Street, that have also been delayed, predominantly due to DAs. We have 12 additions that were extra demolitions. We also did four additional sales. So there has been some increase and some decrease with the construction delay; the net variance is the 109.

MR PARTON: You are saying, based on all those things, that that 109 maybe becomes 20 or 15 when you take into account those other properties that will come online after DAs and so on?

Ms Loft: Yes. They will then get counted into the 2019-20 numbers.

MR PARTON: Bearing in mind that the question was specifically about applications and waiting times, and I understand that it is a very broad question, what strategies do we have in place to reduce waiting times?

Ms Berry: The first thing to note is that the ACT has the highest public housing per capita in the country and the lowest wait times. That is good, but we are always working on ways to improve how we support people who are experiencing homelessness.

Ms Gilding: I might hand over to Geoff to talk about how the social housing register works in terms of its priority lists, the high needs and the standard register.

Mr Aigner: I have read and understood the privilege statement.

We have three different groups in our register: the standard list, the high needs list and the priority list. In terms of working on improving wait times, the focus has been where we are trying to have social impacts, and that is with the priority list. Our target there is to keep that waiting time under 90 days. We do that 99 per cent of the time. That is absolutely the focus of where we are putting our efforts on the waiting list.

MR PARTON: Geoff, you may not be the one to ask, but my question is: what message does that send to those who are on the largest waiting list with a waiting time of 1,066 days, many of whom, I guess, have been squeezed out of a really tight private market? You cannot focus on everybody, but there is not a focus to move that list along, is there? If you are at the back of it, it is going to be a long wait.

Ms Berry: I can bring out the housing strategy. That is some of the work that the government is doing in providing opportunities for people to get into private homes or private rentals rather than applying for public housing, which might not actually be what they need. The things that have been introduced over the past little while include improvements to the rental bond process so that people can more easily access a rental bond and pay it off over a period of time that they can meet.

I am not sure if the Treasurer spoke about it earlier, but there are the changes to stamp duty for eligible home purchases to include new and existing homes for eligible home purchasers who will no longer have to pay stamp duty from 1 July this year. We are working with our community housing partners on providing opportunities for

investors who have spare properties that they might want to make a decision on. We were there at the opening and the launch of Community Housing Canberra's scheme. And we aim to provide housing to community housing providers through our public housing stock so that they can get a bit of a kickstart for increasing and building on their stock.

Our priority in the ACT is social housing, public housing. That is why we are keeping that at a high ratio. But our community housing partners are important to us. We do provide opportunities for them and provide stock. That includes stock from the future common ground, Kaleen and Oaks Estate.

MRS JONES: Minister, I have been having a chat to the blokes sleeping on the other side of CMAG at the moment, and they tell me that they are on the housing list.

Ms Berry: Yes.

MRS JONES: What does that mean? Where I grew up, there was a house for people who were sleeping rough, which would just take them in. It was run by a charitable organisation. We do not seem to have a great deal of that in the ACT. How are we addressing those rough sleepers?

Ms Berry: I will ask Ms Gilding to go to that. I have spoken to those men as well, and I hope they are being supported.

Ms Gilding: There are those people who will just take them in. They still exist in Canberra. If we look at those vacancy rates—

MRS JONES: What are they?

Ms Gilding: Toora single women, Toora family and women with children, Beryl and Doris. We have the Youth Emergency Accommodation Network; we have Samaritan House for men. Certainly, at Ainslie Village, there are a number of vacancies at the moment. Unfortunately, Havelock House has no vacancies. At the moment, when we look more broadly at our national economy, we have to understand that the ACT housing market sits within that broader national context.

MRS JONES: Sure. I do not think that there is actually any problem with us understanding that.

Ms Gilding: Yes. There is a tightening of the vacancy rate in the private rental market. We are now sitting at 0.6 per cent. That is incredibly tight. I think Hobart might be even tighter. When we compare that to Darwin, at the moment it is sitting on five per cent. We have an incredibly tight rental market. We will see that trickle down or impact all across the continuum, in terms of number of places and rough sleepers.

MRS JONES: The rough sleepers can go to Toora, Beryl or Doris, which I presume are all women's services?

Ms Gilding: Yes.

MRS JONES: The youth hostel, which is for young persons?

Ms Gilding: Yes.

MRS JONES: But that does not help our people.

Ms Gilding: Sorry, there is another list as well. Street to Home have properties.

MRS JONES: What is it called?

Ms Gilding: Street to Home, St VDP. As part of OneLink and the specialist homelessness housing providers, we have at least 600 properties that are head-leased to that sector to provide emergency accommodation, crisis accommodation and transitional accommodation.

MRS JONES: Are these people still on the streets because they are refusing that opportunity?

Ms Gilding: There are some times when it is difficult to engage, and people may or may not be ready for housing. That is what the Street to Home services do. My experience lately has been working with some folk down at the Kaleen shopping centre. I sat with one gentleman over several weekends, working through the housing application and working through what his issues and complexities were in order to get a roof over his head. He has no idea who I am or where I work; I am just a citizen who is helping him with that process.

MR PARTON: Good on you.

Ms Gilding: He is not interested in public housing. But several weeks in, he certainly has needed some emergency material aid and he has certainly—

MRS JONES: That is what Street to Home do as well, don't they?

Ms Gilding: That is exactly right.

MRS JONES: They spend time.

Ms Gilding: They spend time understanding somebody's needs. He has managed to find a private rental. Again, he is struggling to get enough work to actually then pay the rent. Homelessness and rough sleeping are incredibly complex. Each person has a different—

MRS JONES: I think there has been an increase in the visible rough sleeper numbers in Canberra, and it is a change since I first moved here. I just wonder what we are not doing.

Ms Berry: There are a couple of things. It is distressing and it is difficult—

MRS JONES: It is okay to be uncomfortable; I do not mind being uncomfortable seeing it, but is there something we could be doing?

Ms Berry: It is distressing, and it is difficult to understand how anybody could end up in that circumstance; or that, because of all the things that are going on in their lives, they might choose to be where they are. That is the great stuff about Street to Home with St Vincent de Paul, which is funded by the ACT government to provide services to these people where they are, and where they are most comfortable. Also, what we are finding now—and I agree with you, Mrs Jones—is that it is not happening just in the city anymore; it is happening across Canberra.

Ms Gilding: That is right.

MRS JONES: In town centres mostly?

Ms Berry: Yes; Belconnen, Kippax, Kaleen, Tuggeranong, Dickson. It is a whole lot of different places. Street to Home do not concentrate their work in the city; they go across the place. Just like Louise—I know Mr Parton does this as well—when I see someone—

MRS JONES: Have a chat.

Ms Berry: I introduce myself, have a chat and find out what is going on. Sometimes they are already existing tenants with Housing ACT and they are supplementing their very low Newstart income. They are still getting supported by Street to Home or Night Patrol, where they are, and with access to different services like dental, health, food vouchers or clothing, everything that they might need. Often, I have been finding that the people I speak to are not yet ready to engage with services. And that is okay. It is hard for many people to understand.

MRS JONES: You cannot force people.

Ms Berry: Making sure that they are given the supports where they are is the important thing.

MR PARTON: Mrs Jones, that facility that you spoke of in Hobart, I am assuming you mean Bethlehem House in Hobart.

MRS JONES: Yes, that is right.

MR PARTON: I can tell you, because I have investigated this since you spoke to me, that Samaritan House is run along very similar lines.

Ms Gilding: Yes.

MRS JONES: They are tenants, on the whole; they come and go a bit. Bob, Joe and Mary come and spend a bit of time there; then they go home.

Ms Berry: We were just discussing whether Samaritan House take dogs, and I think they do.

Ms Gilding: I am not too sure.

Ms Berry: We will find out. I will take my question on notice.

MS CODY: I want to talk about the new facilities management contract for ACT Housing which commenced last year.

Ms Berry: Yes. It is about nine months in, having started on 1 November.

MS CODY: How is it all going?

Ms Berry: The contract is with Programmed Facility Management and so far it is going well. This is a big contract for any organisation, and working through some of the issues that arise through the implementation of a new contract can always be challenging. That has been managed really well, and Programmed are obviously keen to get it right.

They are providing a service to public housing tenants in the ACT, making sure that they are respected and ensuring that their subcontractors are being paid correctly and on time. They are making an effort to do the right thing socially and ethically in employing people who might not ordinarily get an opportunity to get employment, so giving an opportunity to be employed by the organisation to public housing tenants, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with supported needs or challenges in their lives.

I will ask Catherine Loft to provide some specific data on where we are up to right now, given that we are not even 12 months in. But it is a positive start by Programmed in our total facilities management.

Ms Loft: The BAU is tracking very well. As with any new contract, you expect some teething issues. They have opened a call centre based in Canberra that offers 24/7 support. There was a very large increase in calls when they first started, compared to Spotless. We were encouraging tenants to call in, so that was to be expected. That has been headed off to quite normal levels compared to previous years' data.

We have also measured complaints, with a new provider after 12 years. Since they started on 1 November, Programmed have responded to 303 complaints, compared to Spotless, the previous provider, which had 438 in the same time. That is a reduction of 130 complaints and, considering that we are asking for the feedback, we thought that was a really good outcome.

The BAU is tracking well and complaints are tracking down. The biggest change in this contract is the social inclusion the minister was talking about. The cohort numbers for employment have increased dramatically. The target is 260 and they are currently tracking at 144. As of May, the figures are: Indigenous, nine; 14 for refugees; 32 for disability; 38 for young persons; 25 for ACT tenants; and 26 new apprenticeships as well. They have a full-time social inclusion employee and they have set up a social inclusion steering committee to look at employment, working with Housing, Programmed, Uniting Care Kippax and the SPARK program.

A good example of that is a start-up for a new business with one of our tenants; I will call her Ms A. Programmed are supporting her through this new business that was her initiative. She is a housing tenant who wanted to help women gain employment, so she started a gardening service. Ms A spent her own money buying tools—she bought a mower and some hand tools. She was paying wages herself and finding work for the company. Programmed have linked up Ms A with other employees through Kippax Uniting, and they are supporting her by providing white card training, access, asbestos card and WHS training.

The business is now insured and is working towards pre-qualification so that it can be engaged by Programmed. Two of the senior female leaders within Programmed have volunteered their own time at no cost to help this business and worked with them on some of the jobs when there was a labour shortage.

Programmed are offering any tenants the same opportunity in this space. They are funding resources and the purchasing of equipment, particularly around personal protective equipment. There are many examples, but that is one of the latest. We are seeing a rise in the targets and we are getting really good examples. Complaints are going down and BAU is tracking. We are very happy.

MS CODY: I am assuming with all the good work that Programmed are doing that they are also paying all their employees and staff and contractors according to the correct award systems?

Ms Loft: Absolutely, yes. I think this came up last year as well and we have been working proactively with the unions around that. I officially meet with them quarterly, but my senior contracts manager meets with them much more regularly and we are talking about any issues. There was one issue around a cleaning service, where it was rumoured they were not being paid award rates. We did a full investigation with the unions and everything came out as absolutely getting paid award rates. So that was a good outcome.

Ms Berry: Another thing that has changed is that previously the subcontractors used to get paid in 30 days, which meant that they were always behind. Now they are getting paid in 14 days.

Ms Loft: Yes, but the actual data shows they are getting paid within nine.

Ms Berry: That is really a great outcome for them as well.

MS LE COUTEUR: Page 48, “budget technical adjustments, supported accommodation for people with a mental illness” was not spent this year but you are hoping to spend it next year. Is that MyHome?

Ms Gilding: Do you have the amount?

MS LE COUTEUR: It is \$200,000.

Ms Gilding: We are working very closely with the stakeholders there. I will ask Ms Foulcher to talk about that technical adjustment.

Ms Foulcher: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. We are working with MyHome to develop a statement of requirements. One of the things we want to look at is who would be right for this accommodation, what the infrastructure would look like and what the service model would look like. We want to make sure we understand what other models are out there. For example, MyHome is in Queanbeyan, but there are other models across states and territories that we want to look at to make sure we develop a best practice model.

MS LE COUTEUR: So why was the \$200,000 not spent this year and what will it be spent on?

Ms Foulcher: It will be spent on two different phases. The first phase is research of that scoping I mentioned—who will this support, what are some of the needs, what are the links with the NDIS, what support will people need on an ongoing basis. The second phase will be looking at the infrastructure. We have a site.

Ms Gilding: Perhaps I could go to the heart of the question. One of the complexities in this is that we are working with the community. One organisation owns the land, which is not MyHome. That is a church organisation that has a national governance structure, so the arrangements between the organisation with the land and the organisation that has the vision for MyHome take some time to work through.

We regularly meet with them. We are being led by them and putting potential pathways forward as to how they might progress and what they need to know in order to fund this project, to de-risk the project and to understand how they go to a quantity surveyor and find out what it is going to cost to build. A whole lot of questions need to be asked before that, so we are working very closely with them, at their pace.

MS LE COUTEUR: When you talked about questions to be asked to fund the project, are you talking about funding the project from the ACT government's point of view or from the organisation's point of view? I could not quite work that out.

Ms Gilding: Again, these are questions that are still being worked through with the organisation. The organisation that owns the land is also looking at funding options themselves.

MS LE COUTEUR: Is it possible that something will be built there that the ACT government is not supporting? Is that what you are saying?

Ms Berry: No, they could fund it themselves.

MS LE COUTEUR: If they are funding it themselves, the ACT government would be supporting it, obviously.

Ms Gilding: In terms of financial support, I think these are the issues that we are looking at. You have your cost of capital. Then you have your cost of what the business model is. Then what is the support model? What are the different revenue flows that might come into the MyHome model? Is it for people who are on NDIS packages, for example? Is that support funding, alongside subsidised rental assistance,

for example, enough for that business model to be sustainable without government funding? That is a possibility. We are still helping those two organisations to explore those issues so that they can then come forward with a solid proposal.

MS LE COUTEUR: If you are waiting for them to bring the proposal to you, what are you going to do with the \$200,000?

Ms Gilding: No, we are working with them to use that \$200,000 to help them understand what are the questions that they need to ask so that we can use that \$200,000 to get them expert advice across a range of issues. That has taken time and we are working at their pace. Hopefully, we have scoped what those questions are. We are working with them to confirm that and then working with them to choose the right people to provide them with that advice so that they can then together, as two different organisations, make some decisions about the way forward.

MS LE COUTEUR: It sounds like from your point of view there is no particular time line; is that correct?

Ms Gilding: Again, when the Commissioner for Social Housing owns a block of land, I can be much more certain about what the time frames are.

MS LE COUTEUR: I guess one of the questions is, given that this proposal would fulfil a need, whether there a possibility that you are going to say, “Yes, we have been talking about this for X amount of time. We are going to do something else.” Is that a possibility?

Ms Gilding: We have explored multiple different options and asked what else, and what else, and what else, and what are the other ways that the two organisations might have a shared understanding and a shared outcome. Look, nothing is off the table in terms of how we might help deliver the vision. But what we do need is a robust understanding of what it is that needs to be built and how it will be funded going forward, and what is the business model and the support model going forward so that we can actually, if necessary, put forward a business case or another organisation knows what it is that it is actually being built.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you talking—

Ms Berry: Sorry, Ms Le Couteur, I think what is happening here is that Ms Gilding is trying very hard to not identify anyone.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. I know who we are talking about, however.

Ms Berry: Right; that is good. If you could have that conversation that would not identify anyone in here, that might be a better way to explain where things are up to.

MS LE COUTEUR: There will be a transcript of this conversation, which clearly people outside here are going to be reading. I think my final question is: are you talking to other parts of the ACT government? You mentioned NDIS. The clientele that we are talking about would presumably have support. Some of them, if they are NDIS clients, could have support from other parts of the ACT government.

Ms Berry: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Are you talking to these other parts in the ACT government?

Ms Gilding: Again, it is about working with MyHome to identify who that cohort is that they are wishing to build the facility for or the accommodational homes for. That would necessitate the pathways and conversations.

MR PARTON: I understand it is possible that some of this information might have to come to us on notice, but there is a chance you might know. Across the entire public housing stock, are you able to tell me how many properties are currently vacant?

Ms Gilding: I probably had that at annual reports hearings—

MR PARTON: Yes, but not necessarily here?

Ms Gilding: I am just looking. Actually, I think I am getting a nod.

Mr Aigner: Ninety-six per cent utilisation.

Ms Gilding: Do you want a percentage?

MR PARTON: Percentage is fine. So four per cent are currently vacant?

Ms Gilding: So 90 per cent is occupancy. That would be four per cent vacant. Again, there are multiple reasons why they might be vacant. I think you have seen that percentage change. It is one of our indicators. Occupancy rate is indicator (i). If we go to page 47 and we move down to (i), it is the occupancy rate for public housing. We see that our target there is around 96-97 per cent.

The 2019-20 target is around 96-97 per cent. We see that coming back up because of the changing nature of the growth and renewal program going forward. With the public housing taskforce renewal, with the 13 large complexes, we were holding on to much larger numbers of vacant stock as we relocated folk. That works into your denominator and therefore changes your percentage across your numbers in terms of that equation.

MR PARTON: Will four per cent vacant translate to 50 or 60 properties?

MR PETTERSSON: I think it is more than that.

MS LE COUTEUR: More like 400, I think.

MR PARTON: No, it would not be 400, Caroline. Is it 400 that are vacant?

Ms Berry: No, that cannot be right.

MS LE COUTEUR: My win for the day.

MR PARTON: I guess additionally—

Ms Gilding: I would like to take the actual number on notice. I am happy to talk about the percentage, but I would like to take the number on notice and make sure that we actually get that right.

MR PARTON: That is fine, because we are talking about rough figures. I am not going to hold you to that. Of course it is 400, yes. I wanted to get some idea of how many properties we were talking about as a ballpark. I know you will not know the answer to this, but I am going to ask: how many of those properties are currently uninhabitable?

Ms Loft: I cannot answer that part of the question, but a large bulk of the 400 would be new properties that have very recently been handed over to the task force—in the vicinity of almost 280 at the end of this financial year. They would be in the process of allocation but still considered vacant. In respect of the other side of the stock—your last question—I cannot answer that. I know that, due to delays in handing over recently constructed properties, 285 have been handed over very recently.

MR PARTON: I am assuming—

Ms Berry: We can break that down. Maybe the best way to bring that information back is to break down where that figure has come from and what it actually means.

MR PARTON: Yes.

Ms Berry: It is not just homes sitting there languishing.

MR PARTON: I take that on board. Again, I know you are not going to have the answer here and now. How many of those 400-odd properties, some of which are about to have keys handed over and everything else, are uninhabitable and have been vacant for some time? There must be a number. I do not suppose anyone is going to hazard a guess on that.

Ms Gilding: I think it is about understanding how the property portfolio works. We would have a churn of between 500 and 600 properties on an annual basis, where a tenant moves out and the property becomes vacant. Part of what we do under the maintenance contract is have a look at that vacant property. It is assessed for any work that needs to be done at that point in time, before it is turned back around and put back into stock for allocation. Sometimes that can take as little as two weeks.

MR PARTON: A churn, seriously, of only 500 or 600 per year?

Ms Gilding: That is in terms of the allocations that we do, yes.

MR PARTON: I had a vision that it might have been higher. I find that interesting. Along those same lines but with a little deviation, what on earth are you going to do with the vacant units in that complex that we spoke of in the Assembly in recent weeks? I know there are a number that are vacant. Good luck in allocating those.

Ms Berry: I think there are a couple of things. Housing ACT have been spending some time there working with Reclink and the police on the services that we need to put in place there: what are the kinds of physical infrastructure needs that we need to do there, things like improving lighting and working with Reclink and the tenants who are there now to improve the physical space of the dwellings there. As I said in a media interview, it is not lost. It has a lot of services now in place to work with those tenants who are currently there but also on what we can do to provide opportunities for other people to live at that place. Is there anything you want to add to that?

Mr Aigner: Yes. I think it is important to see it in context. There are 1,600 properties which we would classify as multi-unit properties—larger than 30 units in the one location. That is 13 per cent of the stock. Those properties have a higher utilisation than the general stock. People are enjoying living there mostly. Neighbourhoods and communities change; they are not static. Things happen and we adjust to them, but overall, apart from multi-unit properties where we are stocking because they are new, we have got better utilisation of those kinds of sites. I think it is important to see the whole picture, not just focus on one site at one time.

MR PARTON: I hear you about focusing on one site at one time. I understand that it has been flagged that there are a number of complexes on that particular street—and I am going out of my way here to not name the complex—

Ms Berry: I think you have done that already.

MR PARTON: I know. I know that there are a number of complexes that have been flagged, not just potentially, as renewal sites and that this is one of them. Is there any understanding by you, as minister, of when that might occur?

Ms Berry: Not in the short term. We have a significant renewal program that we are about to start rolling out. That will keep us busy for a while. It does not mean that we will not have a look at these other larger sites and the opportunities there, but I do not think we will be looking at it in the same way as we were looking at the current renewal program. I think there are different ways we can look at these sites. Some of these sites in Ainslie are heritage listed as well. We will have to consider all that. At the moment we are focusing on the next renewal program but also considering the opportunities for those sites as well.

MR PETERSSON: What work will be done in the coming year to advance Common Ground in Dickson?

Ms Berry: The first thing is that obviously the government is committed to building a Common Ground in Dickson and the site has been identified. Part of the work that is going towards developing that Common Ground is having a look at what it is going to look like. Who is going to live there? Is it going to be the same or different to the current Common Ground as far as the physical layout but also as far as the cohort is concerned? There is a bit of work that will need to be done at that site around Territory Plan variations and other planning work and there is some significant consultation that is happening with the community now about that whole site but particularly around Common Ground. I think everybody agrees that that is a good way forward.

Ms Gilding: As the minister has just said, the site has been identified but its zoning needs to change. Essentially, over the next 12 months it is going to be a process of continuing the consultation on that site, because we know that there has already been significant consultation on all of that section 72. We now need to proceed with a zoning change for that, conversations with the community around what the height, the shape, the scale of the development might look like and a decision, again, around the cohort, similar to the conversation that we were having with Ms Le Couteur around the MyHome model. You need to identify the cohort that you are actually building for. Once those processes are underway then the range of other studies—feasibility studies, procurements et cetera—can take place.

MR PETTERSSON: Is the design that is in place in Gungahlin the ideal design that you would seek to replicate or are these design constraint requirements a good thing?

Ms Gilding: Each site is different and I think we really need to be sympathetic to the location of every site that we build on. I think it would be a shame if in a public housing portfolio we were to say, “Here is our design brief and this is what we build exactly to on each site.” We know that there are so many factors, so many different variables, and there are different people involved. There are different communities involved. We really need to have those conversations and be sympathetic to that site, to that community, in terms of what we build going forward.

MR PETTERSSON: In terms of a different cohort, what cohorts would you be considering?

Ms Berry: We have been through the consultations that we did leading up to the development of the strategy with the community. Different groups were identified where there might be gaps in our public housing provision. That included older women, it included single-parent families and it also included younger men. There were three different cohorts. I guess what we are looking at now is what the physical layout of the site can actually house. That is what we will consider as we decide what is the actual cohort. Who is going to live there? Whose home is this going to be?

MS LE COUTEUR: Mr Pettersson mentioned the Gungahlin Common Ground. I understand that there is space there and the design was done originally for a bigger Common Ground. I have also been told that, from a point of view of efficiency and delivering services—obviously there are some economies of scale—you have already got a concierge there et cetera. What are you going to be doing in Gungahlin? Are you looking at expanding it as per the original plans?

Ms Berry: I think the first thing we will do is get on with this Common Ground, which is part of our election commitment, in Dickson, but we are always talking with the community about the future for that Common Ground. Governments will make commitments in the future about what they decide to do there. I am not going to make a commitment here to you.

MS LE COUTEUR: Do you look at the cost efficiency of service delivery in deciding what you are going to do?

Ms Berry: Yes. One of the things that we have been doing leading up to the development of this Common Ground in Gungahlin is having a look around at some of the other Common Grounds around the country. This will be our second Common Ground and it will be different from the first Common Ground because we have learnt from the development of that Common Ground how we could do things better, particularly around service provision, from talking to the sector here but also across the country about what is the best model for a particular cohort. Those are all being considered, as well as the physical layout but also what we do, how we support the individuals that live there.

MS LE COUTEUR: Given all those considerations, what actually makes something a Common Ground as distinct from all the other bits of accommodation which you run?

Ms Gilding: Common Ground, without being blunt about it, is a brand name and there is a Common Ground national body that looks at different Common Grounds and whether or not they meet their criteria. I am going to ask Deb if she can go through them. You probably know the list off the top of your head.

Ms Foulcher: Yes. Some of the aspects that make a Common Ground are that it is designed for people who are chronic homeless or have had entrenched issues with being at risk of homelessness. The other aspect is the security and the concierge. It is something that in other Common Grounds adds to the community, which is something that we have in Gungahlin. We have got a space. The Common Ground model which originated in New York was really about something that was a community but also reached out into the broader community in many different ways. But, essentially, the underlying principle is that it is a safe, permanent home for people who have experienced homelessness.

MS LE COUTEUR: Hopefully, all your accommodation is safe, permanent homes.

MR PARTON: In response to a supplementary from Mrs Jones earlier, Ms Gilding, you ran through a list of some of the providers of that last resort type of emergency accommodation, including Beryl, Samaritan House and a bunch of others. Despite the fact that I referred to you, Ms Gilding, I might direct this to the minister: when the government is considering those last resort accommodation options, albeit that they are very temporary—and I do not know if the *Canberra Times* quoted you correctly—why do you seem to be dismissive of Safe Shelter as an option in that space? You were quoted as saying that because it does not provide any longer term accommodation options it was not something that the government was considering giving any support to.

Ms Berry: We have been trying to work, and have been successful in working, more closely with Safe Shelter than has been the case in previous years. All of the advice that I have from expert homelessness services and others has always been that an overnight refuge where people wait at night and leave in the morning is not the best outcome that could be provided as a homelessness service for these individuals. I have taken that advice. I have looked at other refuge-type situations in other states and territories, and I do not see anybody moving through the refuge into more permanent accommodation. The ultimate goal is to get people off the street, if they are ready to,

and into accommodation of some sort.

MR PARTON: I would completely agree with you, but surely from a purely human rights perspective, if it is minus five and someone has nowhere to sleep, and there is an opportunity to sleep in a situation like this, irrespective of what the long-term outcome is, I would have thought that there—

Ms Berry: Yes, and Safe Shelter provides that service.

MR PARTON: But you do not see any need for any intervention from government on that?

Ms Berry: If the intervention from government is to make sure that when Safe Shelter has individuals who turn up at Safe Shelter for accommodation at night, they link them up with our services—

MR PARTON: Which they do.

Ms Gilding: They have only recently started doing that, after—

Ms Berry: Which is great.

Ms Gilding: It is fantastic that Safe Shelter are now part of our joint pathways. What we see internationally is shelters becoming very large, without any exit pathways. We have to look across our system, and we are constantly looking for the gaps in the service systems. Most recently, the minister announced two programs, one for older women and one for asylum seekers, so that we are providing that safe, secure, longer term accommodation.

Safe Shelter is attractive to certain cohorts. It is free. We do ask that people pay a certain percentage in our accommodation, at an affordable rate. Most folk in our support services and our wraparound services are there to help people link in with the income benefits that they are eligible for. We think it is fair and reasonable that people, according to their ability, pay for their accommodation or their rent in those various services, for however long they actually need them for.

Safe Shelter does not charge. Anecdotally, we know that often people will choose Safe Shelter so that they can save up some money to buy a bus ticket to go somewhere warmer, for example. Anecdotally, we also know that perhaps men seeking asylum who have no access to income were at Safe Shelter. That is precisely why we have another program that we have just announced and contracted for—to meet that actual gap.

Ms Berry: All of the advice I have is that considering better ways to get people off the street or off rough sleeping and out of a refuge-type situation is the best outcome. With regard to Safe Shelter, we just do not know a lot about the people that stay there, which is also why we have encouraged them to link them up, and they are now linking them up, to services.

MRS JONES: That will improve.

Ms Berry: I hope so.

MS LE COUTEUR: In answer to a question I asked in the Assembly which Ms Berry took on notice, I was advised that the study into the housing needs of tenants with complex needs would be released in coming weeks. This was on 16 May, which was five weeks ago. When will the report be released?

Ms Berry: Soon.

MRS JONES: Would you like to take it on notice?

Ms Berry: I can take it on notice.

MS LE COUTEUR: When did you get the report? Why has it taken so long?

Ms Berry: I guess it is because we have been continuing to have conversations, particularly with cohorts in the ACT, as well as the study being done by Queensland university.

MS LE COUTEUR: When did you get it?

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

MS LE COUTEUR: You said you have been doing some work on this. Has it been amended since it was originally given to you? If so, are you going to release the amended version or the original?

Ms Berry: We have been talking with cohorts in the ACT—working with people who are living in Ainslie Village, for example. That is the work we have been doing.

THE CHAIR: We will now adjourn. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank ministers and officials who have appeared today. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearing, when it is available. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice, could you please get those answers to the committee support office within five working days of the receipt of the uncorrected proof. If members wish to lodge questions on notice, please get those to the committee support office within five working days, day one being tomorrow.

The committee adjourned at 5.28 pm.