



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2019-2020

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

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

FRIDAY, 28 JUNE 2019

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

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

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

APPEARANCES

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Privilege statement

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.31 am.

Appearances:

Stephen-Smith, Ms Rachel, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Disability, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Employment and Workplace Safety, Minister for Government Services and Procurement, Minister for Urban Renewal

Community Services Directorate

Mitcherson, Mrs Bernadette, Acting Director-General
Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Acting Deputy Director-General
Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Group Manager, Strategic Policy
Pappas, Ms Helen, Executive Group Manager, Children, Youth and Families
Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Branch Manager, People Management
Gibson, Ms Sally, Executive Branch Manager, Quality, Complaints and Regulation
Donley, Ms Mandy, Executive Branch Manager, Senior Practitioner, Quality, Complaints and Regulation
Robinson, Ms Jodie, Executive Senior Branch Manager, Practice and Performance, Children, Youth and Families
Barbato, Ms Claire, Executive Branch Manager, Out of Home Care Strategy and Governance, Children, Youth and Families
Saballa, Ms Melanie, Executive Branch Manager, Children and Families, Children, Youth and Families
Parker, Ms Katherine, Senior Director, Child Development Services, Children, Youth and Families
Charles, Ms Lisa, Executive Branch Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Strategic Policy

THE CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to the 11th day of public hearings of the Select Committee on Estimates 2019-2020. The proceedings today will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Community Services Directorate in relation to budget statements G and then the ACT Electoral Commissioner.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live.

When taking a question on notice it would be useful if witnesses used the words, "I will take that as a question taken on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

Witnesses are asked to familiarise themselves with the privilege statement provided on the table and before you speak please confirm that you have read and understood the implications of the privilege statement.

As we are not accepting opening statements, we will proceed straight into questions. Minister, how is the ACT Senior Practitioner legislation being enacted and how well is it understood?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I acknowledge the privilege statement. I will call the Senior Practitioner, Mandy Donley, who has been doing a great job ensuring that her role is well understood across the various sectors she works with to reduce and eliminate the use of restrictive practices across the disability sector, out of home care, child protection and education.

Ms Donley: I acknowledge the privilege statement. During my time as Senior Practitioner the act came into being on 1 September 2018. We have done numerous information sessions which have been open to the public and which have generally been run on a weekly basis. We have engaged with all sectors included under the Senior Practitioner Act. There has been great progress in people's understanding of the implications of the act and what reportable restricted practices actually are.

Next week we will transition into the NDIS commission and today we are handing over the authorised positive behaviour support plans which we have had to panel to date. We will continue to work with the three sectors covered under my act.

THE CHAIR: Are you aware of any changes in the use of restrictive practices in the ACT as a result of the introduction of the legislation?

Ms Donley: There is a greater understanding around what constitutes a restrictive practice. Of the 52 plans brought to panel to date only 24 plans have been authorised. The remaining plans have been ceased because when alternatives have been discussed at panel it was realised that the restricted practices were no longer required. So there has already been a reduction in restrictive practices through engaging in the panel process for authorisation.

MS CODY: Minister, I want to ask some questions about the NDIS implementation. There are around 6,500 Canberrans, something like that?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Something like that, yes.

MS CODY: Does the full scheme agreement give them more certainty of supports and services they receive?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am not sure I would say the full scheme agreement gives individual participants more certainty. We have been very clear and we have been clear in our discussions with the commonwealth that the NDIS is an uncapped scheme in that if you are an eligible participant you are an eligible participant and you should have access to the scheme. That has consistently been our position and that has been agreed with the commonwealth.

However, it provides certainty more broadly to the community that the ACT government is 100 per cent committed to fully funding our share of the NDIS. Of course, in full scheme we will continue to fund approximately 50 per cent of the scheme for the ACT in terms of those projections. There is a risk of excess costs in the scheme above projected costs and the commonwealth will take that.

We have a shortage of people from the Office for Disability today because the two

people who mostly work on the NDIS are representing me at the disability reform council today, but Ms Evans will ably answer any questions.

Ms Evans: The position of the ACT has been to bring us to the point where full scheme for us looks very similar to what the preceding couple of years did. The purpose of the period before full scheme was to get all those providers who might be interested in providing services for people in the ACT registered and engaged in offering services. Probably for the people in our community who are in the NDIS, nothing will seem different about full scheme. That is really about the arrangement the territory has made with the commonwealth.

MS CODY: What has the ACT government done to cater for future participant growth of the scheme?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Future participant growth in the NDIS is really factored into full schemes. We have a very concrete commitment in relation to our financial contribution, and that is indexed at four per cent per annum for the next 10 years and the commonwealth bears any extra costs above. So if participant growth is higher than the projected additional 500 participants over the next four years the commonwealth will bear any extra costs associated with that.

In terms of providing certainty to the community, going back to your original question, the other thing to bear in mind is that our budget measure provides certainty around some of the other services that are no longer NDIS eligible in-kind services: rehabilitation and community supports in the health space, the taxi subsidy scheme, the child development service and the children and young people equipment loan service. That is subject to review, but we will continue to provide those services that are no longer NDIS eligible to ensure that Canberrans with a disability get the broad range of supports they need.

MS CODY: What is the government doing to advocate for participants to ensure that the NDIS is delivering on their behalf and meeting their needs?

Ms Stephen-Smith: As I said, we have got two officials in Queensland today at the disability reform council. The ACT has been a strong advocate in relation to issues like pricing and sustainability of the scheme. We have heard from providers that pricing has not been sufficient in some areas, particularly around participants with complex needs, to provide the quality of service and to ensure that all participants will be able to access a service. In areas that are described as thin markets for complex needs we have been strongly advocating for that. We have seen the commonwealth move on pricing recently a couple of times, including in the therapy space, and it has been very welcome that the commonwealth has taken that seriously.

I have had two conversations with Minister Robert since he was appointed the commonwealth minister responsible for the NDIS. He has made some very clear commitments around transparency and also around addressing some of the significant issues that have been hanging around in the scheme over the past couple of years, particularly around the interface with the mainstream health system and also for children and young people who are not able to live at home as a result of a complex disability. Those two issues have been very significant interface issues between

mainstream state services and the NDIS over the past couple of years. I think we can expect some real progress out of the disability reform council today on those two issues.

MS CODY: I am assuming that the disability reform council is where you go in to negotiations and where you would bring up any review that might be required moving forward. As you have stated, you have already built in a certain expansion and then the commonwealth is liable for anything above that. Surely there are other opportunities to negotiate?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, the disability reform council is the COAG ministerial council that looks at these issues so there is a constant review process in terms of that council overseeing the experience on the ground. From that point of view the ACT has a lot to offer as the first jurisdiction where all eligible participants have been enrolled in the NDIS.

There is also built into the full scheme arrangements another review, probably a Productivity Commission review. I am not sure that that has 100 per cent been determined. The Productivity Commission did a review that was responded to and that review was finalised last year. There will be another review in five years.

THE CHAIR: I have a couple of supplementaries while we are on the NDIS. The ACT is responsible for accreditation of providers. Do you have any role as well in plan review management?

Ms Stephen-Smith: No.

THE CHAIR: What are the formal channels of communication with the Office for Disability and the NDIA?

Ms Stephen-Smith: As Mrs Mitcherson just said, we do do advocacy. We often get representations—not that often but we do get representations—from individuals, either on their own behalf or from people they are carers for in relation to their plans and plan reviews. The Office for Disability does work directly with the NDIA to escalate those matters to ensure that they can be resolved in a timely way.

I think I have said a number of times that I always find it very disappointing that people have to come to a minister or the ACT Office for Disability to get an appropriate response from the agency, but we do still continue to play that role. Of course, we also have the integrated service response that is funded in this budget, the \$625,000 for the next financial year.

That includes funding for two FTE staff who manage that interface between the NDIA and our mainstream service system, but who also support people for whom there is a change in their circumstances, where they are having significant difficulty accessing NDIS because of their complex needs or eligibility issues. For example, if they are not a permanent resident or a citizen of Australia they will not be eligible.

THE CHAIR: That is in terms of people's plans. What is the position in terms of poor quality providers or complaints around poor quality providers?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I will ask Sally Gibson to come up.

MS CODY: I have a supplementary on that while we are waiting. There is a quality—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Quality complaints regulator? What does QCR stand for?

MS CODY: Thank you. Is it a sort of statutory authority—

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is right here.

THE CHAIR: Good, okay. I am glad we were all on the same page there.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The Human Services Registrar is probably the better way to describe it.

Ms Gibson: Thank you for the question. We take complaints about providers, those providers that are specialist disability providers as defined under the Disability Services Act. We have been responsible for assessing them and making recommendations for registration with the NDIA and also assessing their compliance against the standards that they are required to comply with.

We have had 17 complaints up to 5 June in this financial year about providers, specific complaints that have led to a targeted compliance assessment generally. We have had, as at 5 June, 223 registered specialist disability support providers that we have been oversighting.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am partly continuing on this. Obviously, we are in favour of maintaining the investment but trying to work out what it actually is is really confusing. On BP3, page 78, you have a bunch of CMTEDD expense initiatives under “Maintaining support for disability services.” They add up to \$4.983 million. At BP3, page 79, there are initiatives that total \$28 million and on BP3, page 81, you have another lot of expense initiatives. If you go to page 23 of budget paper G, which is yours—CSD’s—it adds up to about \$19.6 million. We are totally confused. That would be the summary of this.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I do sympathise with your confusion, Ms Le Couteur. I guess what the main budget measure, which probably is the one; let me try to find it. It is in budget paper 3, in the CSD area.

MS LE COUTEUR: What page is this?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It is page 94.

MS LE COUTEUR: I did not even go to page 94. There you go.

Ms Stephen-Smith: This is probably the full description in terms of—

MS LE COUTEUR: So that is the whole—

Ms Stephen-Smith: Essentially, what this set of budget measures is doing—this is where it is brought together—is describing all the things that we needed to work out in order to fund our transition to full scheme and to ensure that the services that either were no longer NDIS eligible in-kind services or were services that had not been explicitly funded and had been sort of cash managed over time were all spelt out for the community. So we are spelling out our commitment to fully fund our share of NDIS.

We are spelling out our commitment to the children and young people’s equipment loan scheme, the child development service, the taxi subsidy scheme, the integrated service response and those rehabilitation, aged and community care services. For example, the taxi subsidy scheme sits in the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate. Rehabilitation, aged and community care services sit within the Health Directorate. Hence, there are a number of directorates that have a contribution to make.

Then, of course, there are other things that sit within CSD that have a contribution to make for this full initiative around, I guess, working out everything we need to work out to be able to say, “We are at full scheme. Everything we are responsible for is funded.” That does not mean to say that we do not have more funding in the future for disability services or supports for people with disability in our community. But in terms of NDIS, this is kind of—I cannot think of the term but basically—

MS LE COUTEUR: Finished off.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, tying up the loose ends.

MS LE COUTEUR: These are all existing; there is not a new initiative amongst them. We are just tidying up, putting everything together in one bit?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good. One of the things that surprises me in this is that we have associated revenue from ACT Health. The money is good but why is ACT Health providing revenue for this?

Ms Stephen-Smith: A part of that initiative is offset from the health funding envelope. Essentially, what has previously been occurring under the NDIS transition arrangements is that we have been claiming an in-kind offset to our cash contribution to the national disability insurance scheme. Part of that in kind has been for rehabilitation, aged and community care services in the Health Directorate that were not cashed out but that were provided by Health and then counted as an in-kind NDIS service.

We got advice from the commonwealth that those services would no longer be eligible to be counted as in kind from 1 July 2019. We therefore have to fund those services while also providing the equivalent amount of cash to the NDIS. Some of that funding has come from the Health envelope.

MRS JONES: It is a money-go-round.

Ms Stephen-Smith: A money-go-round, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: Why in the money-go-round does 2021 get less of it? We go from \$10 million down to \$7 million, up to \$9 million and then to \$12 million. What is happening? How are we saving money?

Ms Murray: I have read the privilege statement, thank you. This is in relation to the timing difference. The NDIS does not get the money in the first quarter. We need to profile it across in the second quarter. So it is almost like tipping the bucket into next year. That is why it goes up and then goes down. Then we have the indexation adjustment. That is why it appears to go down. You have the \$3,646 million NDIS initial top-up up-front payment for the first quarter. There is about that much money that we were tipping over from the previous year in relation to the calculation of that first quarter being paid into the second. So it appears to go up but actually over an extended period of time it is actually just the same.

MS LE COUTEUR: Just indexation.

Ms Murray: That is right and the indexation is the four per cent applied—

MS LE COUTEUR: Given that these all come from a whole bunch of different directorates, is there going to be any consolidated reporting on them, as you have here? We missed this when looking at all the other bits. Is it going to continue to be consolidated into the future or how will it work?

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, I imagine that every directorate will report on the programs for which they are responsible. So CMTEDD will continue to report on the operation of the taxi subsidy scheme in an operational sense; CSD on the child development service; and CAYPELS and Health on the rehabilitation, aged and community care services.

MS LE COUTEUR: We could not find the disability justice strategy. Maybe it is hiding somewhere but we could not manage to find that one.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, you could not find any money. The disability justice strategy will be finalised in the next couple of months and, as the first action plan for the disability justice strategy had not been finalised, we were not able to include it in the budget but our intention is that the disability justice strategy will be released shortly. I will not use the word “imminently”.

MRS JONES: And funded from where?

MS LE COUTEUR: And funded from where, yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Obviously governments make decisions outside budget processes as well as things happen throughout the year. I am obviously not in a position to make a funding announcement in relation to disability justice strategy but I can—

MRS JONES: To clarify, it is not coming out of the existing funding you have? It

would come from additional or you just do not know yet?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am just not in a position to make any announcement in relation to that but I can assure you that I am 100 per cent committed to the delivery of a disability justice strategy. I think the Chief Minister has also mentioned publicly that that is one of the things, along with the climate change strategy, that we are still working on the detail of and that will come out later this year.

MRS JONES: I go to the ACT senior practitioner. The budget says that we will enhance the capacity of the ACT senior practitioner to provide oversight of the use of restrictive practices. I know we touched on the work towards reducing or eliminating those processes but I want to understand how restrictive practices is being defined. You mentioned that there has been a change in how it is being defined.

Ms Donley: The only change in definition was with the chemical restraint definition under the act and that is to make it consistent with the NDIS national definition.

MRS JONES: And what is that definition now?

Ms Donley: The original definition did not mention the word “behaviour”. It only talked about medications for use to limit movement but the national definition points out that it is medications that also affect behaviour. It is really looking at the use of psychotropic medications for addressing behaviours of concern, as opposed to treating the mental illness.

MRS JONES: That is the way you have made it consistent now across both ACT and NDIS?

Ms Donley: And the NDIS definition.

MRS JONES: Practically speaking, how does that affect the use of chemical restraint?

Ms Donley: It was a technical issue which was really a point of discussion with prescribers rather than the operation of the definition in everyday work across the sectors. It just means that it is now more inclusive of medications purely used for behaviours of concern rather than limiting it to those drugs that restrict movement, which meant it was a very small range of drugs.

MRS JONES: On a different topic, what equipment is included in the children and young people’s equipment loan services scheme?

Ms Parker: I acknowledge the privilege statement. The children and young people’s equipment loan scheme includes a variety of paediatric loan equipment. It is designed for children up to the age of 16 and it includes a variety of equipment to assist with self-care and everyday activities. We have got a number of borrowers of equipment that include families in the ACT who have private therapists who are prescribing equipment to assist with seating, feeding and bathing, those sorts of everyday activities.

In addition, the Education and Health directorates are also accessing some equipment, for example for children who leave hospital and require a wheelchair and they do not have an appropriately sized one in the hospital to lend them. That would be something that CAYPELS would also cover.

MRS JONES: How is it accessed? Is it by referral or is it by general intake?

Ms Parker: To be able to access the loan scheme you have to have a therapist working with you to be able to ensure that that equipment is appropriate for what the child's needs are. That would be either someone at the hospital, one of the allied health staff who work in education—

MRS JONES: Does the therapist contact you? Is that the method?

Ms Parker: Yes, that is the method, and we require a therapist to be involved. We have in fact had quite a few families contact us directly because they have heard about the scheme and need a piece of equipment and have not been referred by their therapist. In that circumstance our staff will actually work through with them on what is required and, if necessary, contact their provider to discuss what their needs might be.

MRS JONES: Is it means tested?

Ms Parker: No.

MRS JONES: Is there any cost to the user?

Ms Parker: No.

MRS JONES: What is the usual loan time frame or what is the standard loan time frame?

Ms Parker: It is meant to be a temporary loan scheme; so it is a—

MRS JONES: Whilst finding something?

Ms Parker: Yes, whilst finding something more appropriate. It was designed to fill the gap whilst you are finding a permanent piece of equipment or whilst you are getting that approved for NDIS funding or purchasing your own. It is also designed to be able to allow a client to trial a piece of equipment. If some people are not quite sure if this is going to be right, give it a go at home, see if it fits in your space, see if it supports your child, come back to us for something different if that does not work. Initial loans are a three-month loan but we have, with quite a number of families, needed to extend those loans whilst other processes are going on to allow them to get that piece of equipment themselves.

MRS JONES: Why is its funding included in child development services? It does not have its own discrete program funding. Is that a very good question?

Ms Parker: It is a very good question. My understanding is that it is a bit of a

hangover from the history of Therapy ACT. When Therapy ACT existed it was part of the suite of services that was offered by Therapy ACT. When we had to transition to NDIS and the child development service was established it was recognised at the time that there was a need for the ongoing use of this loan pool and at that point in time there was not another appropriate place to put it. It remains with the child development service to continue to run that whilst we consider where the most appropriate place for that will be.

MRS JONES: We can make some recommendations about that. What moneys are set aside for replacement and repair?

Ms Parker: I have got some information on that. In the 2019-20 budget we received \$54,000 towards repairs and maintenance of equipment in that loan pool.

MRS JONES: Do you respond to requests for specific mobility aids and do you sometimes have to source things in order to lend them?

Ms Parker: At this time because we do not have funding to purchase new equipment we would not purchase that for the scheme.

MRS JONES: Is there a second-hand market for this type of equipment?

Ms Parker: To be honest I am not sure. We have people who come to our scheme and say to us, "I have got this piece of equipment that I have outgrown and no longer need," and there are times we have accepted those or have communicated with other people we know who are looking for similar pieces of equipment. It is not a primary function of the service, but because there is such limited ability to find that equipment we assist where we can.

MRS JONES: Do you work with the equipment loan service run by the Health Directorate?

Ms Parker: We do not work with them but we certainly have redirected business between each other at various points where they have got equipment we do not have or vice versa.

MRS JONES: So you are totally discrete organisations but you have a functional relationship?

Ms Parker: Yes.

MRS JONES: Do we know why there are two similar schemes. Obviously, this is aimed at children.

Ms Parker: I think that that was the reason it was established; it was aimed at children. Whilst it was with Therapy ACT there was the ability to trial disability-specific equipment for children.

MRS JONES: I imagine at the top end of your cohort there might be some 15 or 16-year-olds who need adult-size equipment.

Ms Parker: Yes.

MRS JONES: So you would just refer them on?

Ms Parker: Yes.

MS CODY: So you literally lend only to children who are part of the NDIS scheme?

Ms Parker: No.

MS CODY: All children?

Ms Parker: We will lend to anyone in the ACT who requires a piece of equipment as long as they have a therapist who will explain what they need.

MS CODY: So even if it is just short term, for example, a child breaks a leg?

Ms Parker: Yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: As Ms Parker said in relation to the review of the service and where it sits and everything, part of that is looking at where we may be able to make claims and become an NDIS provider for that type of service. There will be children and young people who have an NDIS plan where this is a very legitimate service for those young people to pursue. We think that we should be able to claim from NDIS, and that is part of the work that we are doing over the next 12 months.

MS ORR: Mrs Jones asked about the definitional change also noting that there is an allocation of additional funds to the Senior Practitioner. What will this funding enable the office to do that it has not been able to do so far?

Ms Donley: The additional funding is for a database and for staff. Obviously I am going to utilise the staff for education of the sector and to provide advice, as we currently do on a daily basis, but also work with practitioners around skilling people up on assessments and implementation of positive behaviour support plans.

The database will enable ease of reporting and provide clarity because it will be very much like a bank form: you cannot go on to the next section until you have filled out the first section. It will be based on a restrictive intervention data system that I have been working with for the past 12 years in Victoria. It is a responsive system and has a built-in audit process that audits a plan put into the system as it is being written and provides feedback. It is another layer of support and education we can provide all of the sectors under the act.

MS ORR: Will you still be running regular events and forums to help Canberrans understand the work and legislation?

Ms Donley: We do a mixture of information sessions every week open to the public so anybody can come. They are an hour and a half each week in a variety of settings across Canberra for ease of access. I also invite experts from across Australia to

present evidence-based practice around the reduction of restricted practices. We have had three experts so far who have been incredibly generous with their time and all those sessions have been very well attended; there were 150 attendees at the last one on dual disability.

Everybody comments on how members of the public are not usually able to hear the experts speak about their research; it is usually confined to conferences, which are very expensive to attend. This enables members of the public to ask questions of experts. At the last one we had the clinical director from our mental health research centre at ANU and a mum talking about medications her son had been prescribed. She was actually getting advice directly from the expert around how that would happen and what best practice is.

We have another forum happening on 16 August for the early childhood sector and another one on 15 November for the forensic sector.

MS ORR: Is there any other work you are doing to reach out to the community to better understand the role and how it can support them?

Ms Donley: I visit houses for supported independent living every week. At the invitation of either the person with a disability, their family or the providers, I also attend team meetings for early childhood and care services, usually in the evening with pizza delivered. I really will go anywhere people invite me.

Unfortunately, I had to say no this week to a New South Wales provider. They wanted me to talk about positive behaviour support to them, which I would absolutely love to do but I think I am busy enough in our own jurisdiction.

My team will do whatever is required, whether it is talking to a whole-of-school staff or going out to advocacy groups or parent groups. I have been to morning teas. I have been to a variety of settings and will continue to do so. That is how I practised for the past 12 years in Victoria. I give my mobile number out to everybody and it is well utilised.

MRS KIKKERT: My question relates to special needs transport. The ACT taxi subsidy scheme supports NDIS participants. What discussions have been held with all the relevant agencies to determine special needs transport cost?

Ms Stephen-Smith: There are a few elements to special needs transport. The taxi subsidy scheme will be ongoing in the way that it has been, and that is indicated in the full funding that is delivered in the budget.

Special school transport will continue to be delivered as an in-kind service by all states and territories for the next few years—five years dated from six months ago—under the NDIS arrangements, because it is very hard to work out how that can be delivered as an individualised service. The states and territories have been providing that service and will continue to provide it as an in-kind contribution to the national disability insurance scheme, and that has been agreed by the Disability Reform Council.

Broader special needs transport, such as the flexible bus service and community buses, will continue as they have been, with Transport Canberra for flexible need buses and community transport funded through the community services portfolio. There is a lot of work going on between Transport Canberra and the community sector around how to better integrate the flexible transport services and special needs transport that Transport Canberra provides and the community sector services.

MRS KIKKERT: With the taxi subsidy scheme, are the costs included in the NDIS plan?

Ms Stephen-Smith: No.

MRS KIKKERT: I just wanted to clarify that.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Some NDIS participants will have transport in their plan, meaning it will, but the taxi subsidy scheme operates on top of that essentially. Part of the reason for that is that it is considered to be a reasonable adjustment for a public transport system. If people are unable to use public transport as a result of their disability, we have essentially said that we consider the taxi subsidy scheme to be a reasonable adjustment in the context of a state or territory government's responsibility to provide public transport.

MRS KIKKERT: Last year it was signalled that there would be increased penalties for the misuse of a mobility parking permit. I note from recent media that this has started. What feedback, if any, have you had from the disability community about its effectiveness and appropriate targeting?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I have not really had any.

MRS JONES: Is that just an increase in the fines?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. There was a significant increase in the fines for misusing disability parking. I know that when it was announced it was welcomed by disability advocates, but I have not had any feedback from people with disability about the impact that that has had. But I would expect, given, as you have said, Mrs Kikkert, what we have heard in other portfolios around the revenue raised from that and the fact that those fines are being implemented and that enforcement is in place, that that will have an impact on ensuring that disability parking is available for those who genuinely need it.

MRS JONES: Is it the parking permit or the parking space that is getting fined? Or is it the matching up of the two?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is a very good question, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Would you like to take that on notice?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Noting that it is not my portfolio, we will take that question on notice and come back with some clarity around exactly what that—

MRS JONES: That is very kind, given that it is our last day. How does delivery of the integrated service response program work, and what role does the ACT government play?

Ms Evans: The integrated service response program is a program within the Office for Disability. There are two staff who are specialists in managing complex disability matters. Those two staff act to support people where the situation they find themselves in requires more coordination than might otherwise be the case. Basically what we found is that we have had about 70 referrals since the program began in November 2018. Mostly those were not needing a funding solution, but more needed support to ensure that services are working together. If a person is accessing mainstream health services but also NDIS services, then the two may need some coordination and supports. It is around the complex needs of people with disability. For many of them it is either that they are not eligible for the NDIS or they are and the complexity just needs some supports.

MRS JONES: On notice, could you let us know what the 70 referrals were? Not people but why; just one line on each, or less.

Ms Evans: Sure.

MRS JONES: How do eligible people access the program? Is that via referral?

Ms Evans: It is via referral, usually from a practitioner in one of the service systems we are working in. But an individual can contact the Office for Disability and the Office for Disability can determine that support is required through the individual support response.

In relation to giving you information about the individuals who are engaged, funding has been provided to 17 individuals. For the vast majority of the individuals that we are supporting, as I said, it is not a funding response, so if I listed 70, most of them would just say “support and advice” or that kind of—

MRS JONES: I do not mind if it is summarised but that is fine. It is just so that we can understand a bit better what type of situation is being assisted, essentially.

Ms Evans: We will take that on notice then.

MRS JONES: Finally, do you promote this service to the professionals so they know it is there?

Ms Evans: Yes, although I would say that individuals and families are aware of the Office for Disability more broadly. If they ring us to ask for advice, we will assist them.

MRS JONES: That is when you might send them.

Ms Evans: Sometimes the advice may simply be that we will negotiate on their behalf with the NDIS, if it is a straightforward matter. But if it is more complex, it may be referred to the individual support response.

MRS JONES: Yes, I have recently got a package for one of my children through the NDIS. Getting the package was not the hard part. It is the “how to turn it into something” that is the really complex bit. I think that is what—

Ms Evans: Yes.

MRS JONES: If I am struggling—

Ms Evans: Yes, that is right. Importantly, I think that the government did provide \$400,000 for individual advocacy through advocacy for inclusion and ADACAS, because some families need that level of individual advocacy beyond the—

MRS JONES: Just to get it going.

Ms Evans: Yes, there is additional funding there.

MRS JONES: It is like, “Let’s get a degree to implement my child’s NDIS.”

Ms Evans: Yes, indeed.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. I think that also goes to the role of local area coordinators. I come back to Ms Cody’s question about the areas that we have been advocating on at the national level. The role of local area coordinators is one of those areas where we really think that, a, they should have better local knowledge than our current local area coordinator did when they set up in the ACT; and, b, they should have more capacity to actually be able to support people with the implementation of their plans. They have been very busy doing the planning work, which was not really supposed to be their primary role. They are supposed to be coordinators. That is some of the feedback that we have been provided with.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time; so we will move on to output classes 3.1 and 3.2, child and family centres and the child development service. Mr Orr, would you like to kick off?

MS ORR: I pick up where I left off. Is this the place to ask about early support by design and the Youth Co announcements I have been hearing about?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It would probably be better to do it in output classes 3.3 or 2.3, but we can do it now if you want to.

MRS JONES: Just do it! Come on, Ms Orr; we have not been that specific for the past two weeks. How about you just ask your question.

MS ORR: Are you able to provide the committee with an update on the early support by design project?

Ms Sabellico: I acknowledge the privilege statement. The early support by design team have been doing a lot of work to look at how we establish appropriate

co-production processes with community, particularly given that a lot of the work we have undertaken with the research that we have looked at and an assessment of the way in which we have consulted previously has all been that we are going to be consulting with the usual people most of the time in the same way. We have not really looked to engage with service users or those people who are not accessing services. So they have been developing a range of methodologies by which we can actually start to look at how we include those voices in the way in which we are identifying what the issues are, what the solutions for those issues are and how we can then embed them into policy and practice.

We have also been doing a lot of work around establishing the outcomes framework for early support. We will have a draft of that for public consultation next week; 1 July is when I expect to be able to sign that out to the minister for consultation.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Subject to clearance from the minister.

Ms Sabellico: We are doing some of that. We are also doing some of the preliminary work to establish the four implementation initiatives that were identified in the initial project plan.

MS ORR: Can you just remind us what they are?

Ms Sabellico: One initiative is around looking at early support provided to people before they enter the child protection system, so how do we actually look at what we need to do to better support people before reports are made into child protection; what does that look like? We will be working with the recommendations from the Our Booris, Our Way steering committee and the recommendations that they have around more early support to define what that looks like and how it progresses, as well as then having a look at what we need to put in place at the really early end—down in the nought to three area—to support families where they need support at that point in time. We will then look at what we need to do with that going forward. That one has two areas to it.

The other one is looking at a diversionary program for youth justice, looking at children whose parents are incarcerated and what we need to do to support them so that they do not end up in that trajectory. The third one is the place-based initiative. We are working with the commonwealth still in terms of what that is going to look like. They have a set of prescriptive arrangements and mechanisms that we are working through in terms of how that fits best for the ACT context.

The fourth one is working with Health in terms of looking at the matched nursing program and what we can do there in order to achieve longer sustainable home visiting and how we also incorporate some multi-disciplinary approaches to that through bringing in services where they are identified and needed for families. They have been undertaking that work. They are now about to embark on implementing those four in the next couple of months.

Another piece of work we have been working on has come from early support. It potentially may come out under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs section. It is establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander co-design forum,

which is a forum that will work directly with community members and practitioners from across the ACT to support government in looking at specific issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community around what we need to do to take on board their advice in developing our policy and practice guidelines. We are giving life to the self-determination principle that sits underneath the agreement.

MS ORR: When you say that you are going to start to implement them, what are the things you are actually looking to do to implement them? Or is that still a little too early to ask?

Ms Sabellico: With the practice forum or with all of them?

MS ORR: All of them.

Ms Sabellico: With all of them we are using a co-design approach. We are working with the directorates involved, we are working with people who are currently accessing services and those who are not accessing services, to be able to have a look at what the pathways should be and what are the supports required to assist people through those pathways. Often it is about helping those who do not necessarily have the skills to navigate through.

We have some working groups established for the implementation initiatives. The one that is place based is more about working with the commonwealth in the first place to get agreement to be able to progress that work.

With the Aboriginal co-design forum we have got a network of people who are not currently accessing the services or who are service users, to help build an information base about what they find to be some of the barriers and the strengths and those sorts of things. Then we are working with a critical group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives to progress the co-design forum.

MS ORR: If I can sneak in my question on the Youth Co announcement, because that was the other question, can you run me through a little more about that? I know it was certainly something that was quite passionately advocated for on behalf of Youth Co.

MRS JONES: Indeed, in this very room.

MS ORR: Indeed, and last year when I was on this committee.

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is right. We are really pleased we have obviously found the funding from internal resources to support this project with the Youth Coalition. It has a number of elements to it. The total funding is \$480,000 over the next 12 months. That includes funding for Youth Coalition to do some policy work and also coordination but working with CSD to look at what models exist in other jurisdictions to support young people at risk of disengaging from family and potentially becoming homeless or engaging with the youth justice or child protection systems.

We have heard very loudly and clearly from the Youth Coalition, Families ACT and across the sector that that early support for families to enable them to address the challenges they face and keep young people safe at home delivers the best outcome.

But we know that, despite the great work that our youth services are able to do and even with intensive family support, in some cases young people are not going to be able to stay safely at home. Then it is: what is the best outcome for that? That will also look at the interaction between the child and youth protection system and those families.

But then there is additional support for Woden Community Services and Northside Community Services to do more case management and intensive support for families and additional funding for Conflict Resolution Services' existing family treehouse program, again to meet the demand for those family mediation services. I think one of the articles that recently came out had some information about just how effective that family treehouse program has been. A young woman who spoke at the Youth Homelessness Matters Day event recently talked about the fact that her family had accessed that program probably a little later than was really going to be most effective and she had ended up leaving home anyway. They had not been able to resolve the conflict within the family.

It really links in with the early support. How do we ensure that families are seeking help early in the life of those challenges? We are looking at the respite: is there a need for a respite service so that young people can safely be outside the home while some of those issues with the family are resolved, and then be able to return home safely?

MRS KIKKERT: \$40,000 will be given to Marymead for crisis accommodation but apparently it is respite care for kids with disability. What will happen if this \$40,000 for respite accommodation places is exhausted before the pilot program ends in 12 months?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think the first thing to say is that Marymead is one potential provider of respite services but, to the extent that there is a need for accommodation support for young people that Youth Coalition is working with, that will be determined on a case-by-case basis. I hand over to Ms Sabellico.

Ms Sabellico: The \$40,000 has been allocated as brokerage for assistance for crisis and interim alternative accommodation needs. We are going to look at a system whereby we need to look to exhaust whatever we have available to us and then the money would be used to establish other options where they are either not available or where there is not enough. We will look at that on a case-by-case basis.

It is also about looking to test if there are other creative and innovative ways in which we can actually start to look at what the types of models are that you need for young people of this age and their families to best support and maintain that family reconnection and be able to provide a bit of time out while we are actually working to bring the family back together again. We will look at a range of options.

MRS KIKKERT: You mentioned before that you were looking at supporting kids whose parents are incarcerated. Is there an age limit for supporting those children?

Ms Sabellico: In the implementation initiative?

MRS KIKKERT: Yes.

Ms Sabellico: We have not defined an age limit at this stage. That will be up to the working group when we are defining the actual cohort that we are looking at in the first instance.

MRS KIKKERT: When will you know, roughly? When will you have a meeting, and will there be an announcement about it? I am just thinking, if there is a special targeting of children that you are looking at, some children will also be missing out on that support.

Ms Sabellico: I will take that question on notice and get back to you.

MS ORR: I think when Mrs Kikkert asked her first supplementary question—correct me if I misheard—she said that the funding was for children with disability. I just want to check if it was for everyone.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No. I think the point that Mrs Kikkert was making was that Marymead's respite services are primarily for young people with disability.

MS ORR: That is the way I took it. I just wanted to make sure.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. Ms Evans might not welcome me saying this. We have an existing, very small, community respite—what is the right name for it?

Ms Evans: Through Ricky Stuart?

Ms Stephen-Smith: No. We have a very small respite service for families where they have no natural supports in place and maybe a parent might be going into hospital and there is no-one else who can look after the kids. There is an existing, very small respite service for those kinds of individualised circumstances. These kinds of levels of flexibility in service exist in our system, and one of the things we need to look at is: what is already existing that we can build on? We know, from a lot of the experience of young people who have been homeless, a lot of those young people end up living with family friends or the family of friends. And that—

MRS JONES: That question has taken up 15 minutes and we have got five more people who want to ask a question; so we might have to move on.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Okay.

MRS KIKKERT: I will go back to output class 3.1, child and family centres. I have been hearing from many constituents that the car park at the West Belconnen child and family centre is quite small. Are there any plans to extend the car park into the empty land right next door to the centre?

Ms Saballa: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. I oversee the three child and family centres and the child development service. It is an issue that we are aware of. We have been working with the facilities team in the Community Services Directorate. One of the changes we have observed is that we now have secure parking for the fleet of cars we use as part of our outreach work in the child and family centre

program. The centre, as you would know, is highly utilised. Yes, we have been looking at extending that car park because there is some vacant space available.

MS CODY: Is the centre at Holder the only place where NDIS services are delivered for children?

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, the child development service at Holder is not an NDIS provider.

Ms Saballa: The child development service is at the Holder site. We are predominantly located there and we operate from the Holder site but we also have a presence in the child and family centres. In terms of delivery of NDIS supports, at the Holder site we also have the collocation of the early childhood, early intervention partner called NDIS EACH, so national disability insurance scheme EACH. They are funded by the NDIA to provide a range of services for children up to seven years. That can range from plan reviews, early childhood therapeutic supports, and talking with families about supports and referring.

More than a year ago we negotiated with NDIS EACH—that funded partner in the community—to see if they could also have a presence in the child and family centres. We did that because we know the importance of services being available locally for families. Holder is a great site but it is not on a main transport route.

We know that the child and family centres are known, respected and trusted services so we were able to negotiate office space for NDIS EACH staff to be collocated with us at least a couple of days a week or as long as they needed. We also negotiated some clinical space because we wanted to make sure that families that need the support of that early childhood, early intervention partner can access that at the three childhood family centres.

MS LE COUTEUR: At page 362 of budget paper 3 there is a bunch of small amounts of money for child and family centres for Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and Belco from the infrastructure fund. Can you tell me what that is about?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think this is better infrastructure fund funding.

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, but it is a whole bunch of little things.

Ms Murray: In relation to the usage of what we call the better infrastructure fund, which are the smaller amounts of funds for the projects you can see here, we have done some work in relation to the car parking and the security fencing but a lot has been focused on improving the environmental sustainability of all our sites. If I could extend the answer from childhood family centres, at Bimberi we have used some of those funds to upgrade the heat pump so that we are reducing our emissions and creating a greater level of efficiency.

That has been the consistent approach we have looked to utilise to create improvements in terms of the livability and workability of the centres but also their overall sustainability. When you look at how we are utilising our better infrastructure fund—I automatically go to call it the BIF—it has that focus on a significant return on

investment and basic maintenance but always with a view to how we can become a more sustainable organisation.

MS LE COUTEUR: You said a significant return on investment. Are you talking about a significant financial return or another type of return?

Ms Murray: Both. I do not want to preach to you, but we know that when you create a greater efficiency in terms of heat utilities you reduce your utilities costs significantly but you also significantly reduce your carbon footprint.

MRS JONES: Is there a time frame on when the car park at the West Belconnen child and family centre might be addressed?

Ms Saballa: I would need to take that on notice. We have been in discussions internally and we know that this is an issue. There is some initial planning, but I will take that on notice.

MRS JONES: One of the budget priorities is to establish an integrated management system for the child and family centre program and child development service including an electronic portal as a source of policy, procedures and related resources for staff, and clear governance processes to embed a business-as-usual, continuous improvement process. Who is developing the integrated management system of the child and family centres and child development service, when will it be ready and exactly what will it do?

Ms Saballa: This is a project on which I am so pleased to provide an update. It is a really important project; it is one of those behind the scenes kinds of projects. The portal is where staff can access up-to-date policies and procedures, so that is front-facing and supports our staff work. But an integrated management system is really about a quality assurance process so that all our policies and procedures are up to date and so we can also add new ones as issues emerge and our practice is refined.

The existing IMS—integrated management system—was set up a number of years ago, and that is with child and youth protection service. There is an existing, very streamlined governance system. What I mean by that is that processes are in place where new policies and procedures are developed. They are brought up to a change control committee, they are approved and then they are put into the portal of the staff, so the portal is very front-facing for staff.

We want to have a branch IMS presence as well. We have sound policies and procedures in place, but it is a really opportune time to have a look at those and update them. At the end of last year we engaged a consultant to do work with us. That was an opportunity to look at the suite of policies and procedures we have and also to work with the managers—the three managers for child and family centres and the senior manager—to scope out the work.

MRS JONES: What will the system be able to do, or what do you hope it will be able to do? Sorry to be blunt but we do not get all the acronyms, so it has to be as boring, plain English as possible.

Ms Saballa: If I am a child and family worker in the Tuggeranong child and family centre and I need some information about referral to the child development service, I can go into a portal—it is available on the computer—and click into “child and family centres”. There will be a whole list of policies and procedures. I can click into that and it will have the form for me and it will have the documentation. That is from a staff perspective, but to be able to do that there is a whole lot of behind-the-scenes work to make sure that it is done to a really high standard, quality assured and regularly updated. That is the integrated management system. Over time—I need to come back to your question about the date, and I will do that—it means there is a quality assurance process. So it means in six months we can review a policy but we can also audit the usage so—

MRS JONES: So you get some feedback about how it is being used.

Ms Saballa: Yes. In terms of the date, the project is overseen by the business improvement executive. It is a strategic project. It has dates around it. We are working towards having the portal and the first suite of policies and projects against four specific modules by the end of this year. They will be intake, individual work with families, group work and also the child development service. Does that—

MRS JONES: Yes, that is great.

Ms Saballa: Is that a 101? Obviously there is quite a lot to that project.

MRS JONES: Sorry, we do it to every department. It is just that you end up working with all these terms; it is just your day-to-day existence.

MS ORR: I am looking for some further detail about the programs that are funded under maintaining support for disability services in transition to the full NDIS scheme. I understand they do fit under this budget output. Can you expand on the work of the child disability services and how it fits with the other child health services and the NDIS service system more broadly?

Ms Stephen-Smith: How the child development service integrates with other services?

MS ORR: Yes.

Ms Saballa: I can talk about the child development service and what we deliver. And you are interested in how we intersect with a range of other service providers?

MS ORR: Yes.

Ms Saballa: As you would be aware, the child development service was established in the transition to the NDIS. It is primarily a service that families in the community can come to where they have concerns about their children’s development. It is a universal service. That means that all families with young children are welcome to participate. Families attend either through a drop-in clinic at the child and family centres or directly at the Holder site.

What we have seen over the last few years with the transition to the NDIS is the complexity of the whole early childhood early intervention service system landscape, and it has changed. The child development service and what we offer is different to Therapy ACT and what was offered previously. We have the new NDIA-funded provider that I was talking about before, NDIS EACH. They have very specific roles in terms of what they do.

There are two pathways. One is a pathway into an NDIS supported package and then the other pathway is into early intervention supports for children that may not need a package but would definitely benefit from some targeted support to enhance their development. Then there is a suite of service providers. Families with funded packages will be able to go out with their plan for their child and, with choice and control, choose providers that can provide services for their children. So the landscape has changed. Does that go to what you were seeking?

MS ORR: It does, thank you. You mentioned the centre in Holder. Is that the only place where services can be accessed?

Ms Saballa: For the ones that we have carriage of under this output class, our main site is the Holder site but, as I was mentioning, we definitely have a presence in the child and family centres. Those drop-in clinics are really highly utilised. We also co-facilitate a number of programs with either community partners or government partners. Some of the work we have focused on over the last couple of years is with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. We have been very committed to how we best engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with young children. The approach that we have refined is an outreach approach and it is going to where families are.

We have recently received some fantastic feedback from Gugan. They really commended the work of the early years engagement officer that we have on staff and the work that she has been doing directly with families. Why it is important is the ability to connect well with families, and then we are able to tailor a range of supports, not just the child development service around assessment and diagnosis and referral to other supports but also warm linkage into a range of supports and programs that we offer in the child and family centres at the three sites. That is something that we are really pleased is going so well.

MRS JONES: A little more practically on that universal service, I have heard in this place quite a bit since the NDIS being introduced about some issues with children with hearing issues at birth not being picked up quickly enough. The service that has done that predominantly in the ACT is one of our own ACT-based community organisations, as far as I know. Have we had any uptick in getting those tiny children through to their hearing therapy faster? NDIS was putting a brake on it. If they are accessing services early enough they can actually function in the school community as if they did not have a hearing disability, but there was a problem during the introduction of the NDIS. How are we tracking on that?

Ms Saballa: Thanks for your question; it is a really important one. I remember back to last year when it was a focus of questions and conversation when we had the committee looking at ACT implementation of the NDIS. There was a lot of discussion

about that pathway. After that it was an issue that was taken up. The NDIS did some concerted work around some streamlined pathways for particular issues, and this was one of them.

MRS JONES: Can you take on notice any results of change that we can see from where we sit?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We probably do not need to take that on notice.

Ms Evans: Yes, I can provide a quick response. As Ms Saballa was saying, the NDIS did some work in the information linkages and capacity-building rounds of funding. There was \$15.5 million that went out to organisations in the last financial year. Two that I think would be relevant around this were the Deafness Forum, which received \$117,000, and, for deafness advocacy for sports and recreation, \$115,000. There were those two specifically but there were a range of other ACT organisations receiving funding. The purpose of the information linkages and capacity-building funds is to assist people to understand what services they can access. In terms of deafness, the health system would be the primary place where very small children are picked up, but it is around how families then know what service to access, who to go to. They would get that through the information linkage and capacity-building organisations that are being funded through the scheme but also then through their own NDIS package, where they would be linked with the appropriate provider—

MRS JONES: I think the problem that was identified was that getting a package for a baby is really tough, and also that by the time a package has been approved it is already sometimes too late to get the optimal outcome for primary school.

Ms Evans: I can confirm that the agency have acknowledged that. Through these pathways that Ms Saballa mentioned, they have worked towards reducing that amount of time. In the last week or so they have announced a commitment to even shorter time frames for small children under six.

MRS JONES: NDIS have?

Ms Evans: Yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The commonwealth has committed to, I think, a 50 day—

Ms Evans: The commonwealth as the agency, yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: —time frame for plans for children.

MRS JONES: That is a good improvement.

Ms Stephen-Smith: To go directly to your question, Mrs Jones, there was at that point some confusion about the ongoing role of Australian Hearing in providing testing and assessment.

MRS JONES: Yes, but that is continuing now?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. The commonwealth confirm that Australian Hearing continues to have that role of actually doing the hearing assessment for young children. One of the things that has been improved is the pathway from Australian Hearing telling the NDIS early childhood early intervention partners about that, confirming that hearing issue, and then that is a pathway into NDIS.

MRS JONES: The Auditor-General's report that came out yesterday raised concerns that vulnerable kids are falling through the gaps of these universal services. Obviously you will not have had time to respond to that but do you want to put anything on the record about how you might consider addressing gaps, other than this one that we have discussed?

Ms Stephen-Smith: You are right, I have not had a chance to actually have a look at that report yet. Obviously the Auditor-General works with directorates, and other people were aware of some of those issues that were being raised. I think it goes directly to the early support initiative that Ms Sabellico was talking about earlier. I hand over to her to talk about that.

Ms Sabellico: I point out that both Melanie's area and my area of strategic policy have been working quite closely on the Auditor-General's report around referral pathways and will continue to consider the recommendations and look at what we need to do not just for services provided within CSD but also within the service system to ensure that we are addressing the full opening up of those referral pathways and making sure that we have got the early support frameworks in place to pick things up early and have the services in place over time because it will take time to get there. That can assist in addressing and supporting people's access to services in a very timely way.

MRS JONES: In particular with dyslexia in children, what is the process for diagnosing and treating dyslexia at the moment? Do you want to take it on notice?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

MRS JONES: I would like to know how many dyslexia cases have been referred to specialists through the service in the past year.

Ms Parker: Sorry, can I clarify? Do you mean to our service?

MRS JONES: Yes.

Ms Parker: Or just to a specialist who can diagnose dyslexia, because that is—

MRS JONES: No, through your own service obviously.

Ms Parker: We would not diagnose dyslexia. But I can follow up the process.

MRS JONES: Once dyslexia has been diagnosed, if they are accessing the child development service, who has had access and also what specific supports are offered to children and parents? That would be great, thank you.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I point Mrs Jones to the announcement that Minister Fitzharris made on 20 June about the work that Health is doing, particularly around the first thousand days and ensuring that we can support all parents of newborns to get the services they need and to be linked into the early support services.

MRS KIKKERT: Strategic indicator 2 shows no predicted increase in the number of occasions of service to child and family centre clients over the forward estimates. The target for the number of parenting assistance sessions in 2019-20 is the same as both the target and estimated outcome in 2018-19. Why are the services provided by the three child and family centres not increasing in line with Canberra's population?

Ms Saballa: I am happy to take that one. First of all, to go to occasions of service for the child and family centres—that is our strategic indicator—we have seen an increase in demand under that indicator. For the next financial year we have increased that target. It will be at 8,250. That will be our target. And that reflects the increased demand from families accessing our service.

MRS KIKKERT: In the minister's recent update to the Assembly on the children and young people's commitment she mentioned that child and family centres have strengthened their focus on engaging with more vulnerable and complex families using a targeted early intervention model. As drop-in facilities, what are the child and family centres doing to target the vulnerable and complex families that need help but are not self-referring?

Ms Saballa: The child and family centre model and approach is a universal service. It is welcoming, culturally safe and inclusive for all families. And that is very successful in terms of engaging families that maybe experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage. Why that is so is that it is non-stigmatising. It is a service for everybody. And we see that as people come in the door and they talk with us about the different needs and requests for services. I think the way that we do our work is a very important part of engaging more vulnerable families. That is the first thing.

It is also the range of service types that we provide. We can provide something that could be a light touch in terms of some information but then that goes right through to a scale of intervention or support like case management, which is really tailored to your family, and where we can work with families with high and complex needs for quite a period.

There would be an intersection of issues. It might be around mental health, it might be intersection with statutory care and protection systems, it might be substance misuse, it might be—

MRS JONES: I think the question was going to those who are not walking in the door. Is there any targeted work you are doing to attract people who have not ever heard of or been into these centres?

MRS KIKKERT: How are you promoting the service that centres provide to people?

Ms Saballa: Thank you for clarifying that. The first thing is that we are a well-known service.

MRS JONES: Who measures that? Is there some measure of how well known the service is?

Ms Saballa: There are a couple of things. When we see an increase in the numbers of occasions of service, I think that is a good indication. I had a look at the CSD, Community Services Directorate, website and usage. And we have definitely had an increase in the number of unique views in this financial year.

MRS JONES: Of your service?

Ms Saballa: Yes. We have publications like this. I am holding up the guide to our services and programs. This is widely distributed, and a lot of people take this small brochure. We make sure that each year it is a comprehensive but very accessible document. This is across locations in the ACT. We get referrals from many agencies, whether it is general practitioners, whether it is through community sector partners—and it might be very targeted service providers—and also from our colleagues, for example in Health.

The other thing is that we have services like maternal and child health collocated on site. What that means is that if a vulnerable family is coming in for something mainstream—an immunisation for their young child—the match staff member says, “There seem to be some things happening for you and your family at the moment. Come down. Come down to intake. It is just around the corner. I would like to introduce you to Mel.” It is a really successful way of being able to link families into a range of other supports.

The other thing is that we have a lot of services that are providing very targeted services as well. We have been the pilot site for one of the innovation challenges under the family safety hub. We have a solicitor two days a week co-located at Gungahlin child and family centre, and that is a health-justice partnership. That staff member is able to help co-facilitate groups, provide advice to families, be available to provide advice. And that has been a really successful initiative.

MRS JONES: Would it be fair to say that, by increasing the variety of services on site, you are hoping to capture a greater audience?

Ms Saballa: And we do. We are continually looking at what we provide, and that is a reason why we do see variance across our indicators as well. It is not a mere transactional service that you get when you come into a child and family centre. We see shifts across our indicator as we respond to what the community is asking for.

MRS JONES: The thing is that 10 per cent of children, according to yesterday’s Auditor-General’s report, are missing out on their match nurse visits. I find that astounding, given that basically people are matched up with their match nurse appointments before they leave hospital. If they are not getting the match nurse, they are not getting to the children health checks. That means they do not walk in the door at the health centre. Is there any work that we are doing or can do to improve the attendance of the match nurse visits to the home?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The sustained nurse home visiting program that early support is partnering with under Health is exactly targeted at that issue of—

MRS JONES: When did that start?

Ms Stephen-Smith: It has not started yet. But it is one of the four initiatives under the early support program that Ms Sabellico talked about. Health is committed to that program.

Ms Sabellico: We will be specifically looking at what we need to do to support people to attend and to—

MRS JONES: In that case, it is the nurse coming to them; so they are not returning their phone calls, they do not have a safe environment for the nurse to come to, or what have you. Are there ways of knocking out those problems—

Ms Stephen-Smith: And that is exactly also where—

MRS JONES: having experienced many match nurse visits myself.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Minister Fitzharris's announcement last week around this first thousand days is focused. It is important to recognise that first thousand days includes the period of pregnancy. We really want families who are vulnerable to ensure that they are engaging prenatally with supports as well. We know that some families who are particularly vulnerable, particularly where they consider there is a lack of trust in government services because they are worried about child protection interactions or whatever, are less likely to engage. So part of our aim is to ensure that we are building a trusted service system where people are seeking help early and trusting the services to do that.

MRS JONES: Did you say that the first thousand days includes pregnancy as well? It is the first thousand days of a child's life; is that correct?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time. We will suspend and return in 15 minutes.

Hearing suspended from 11.03 to 11.18 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back. We will now move on to output class 3.3, child and youth protection services. Minister, the government has committed nearly \$40 million to make out of home care placements more sustainable. What specifically is this money being spent on?

Ms Stephen-Smith: There are a number of elements to that particular funding measure. Part of it is reflecting the updated experience around the number of children and young people in out of home care. When A step up for our kids was initially funded, there were obviously projections around the number of children and young people who were expected to be in out of home care. The number has been higher than those initial projections on which A step up was based. This is about sort of

re-baselining the number of children and young people in care. Also, there is some work through the mid-contract review of ACT Together. Barnardos is the lead agency of the ACT Together consortium around pricing for the continuum of care. Ms Pappas can talk a bit more about that.

Ms Pappas: I acknowledge the privilege statement. I do not think I have that much to add to the minister's response.

THE CHAIR: Then I will move to my next supplementary question. What portion of the money is going to foster care, to kinship care and to residential care?

Ms Pappas: The ACT Together consortium runs a continuum of care. They run residential care, foster care and some kinship care where there are children on long-term orders. It is not proportioned in terms of there being money for each of those individuals. They run the entire service system. They are providing funding regardless of where children are across any of those program areas.

THE CHAIR: In the budget papers it is said that this is making funding more sustainable. How is funding unsustainable at the moment? Is that the point that you were getting at?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, that is in relation to the numbers. Previously, where there has been excess demand compared to the forward estimates funding for the number of children and young people in care, that is being managed either through cash managing from underspends in other areas of the directorate or through Treasurer's advances. People will have seen in previous budgets that the Community Services Directorate has Treasurer's advances in a number of years. That has been part of the reason for those. There are two other elements to this overall funding line that I should mention. This goes to your question, Miss Burch, around foster carers and kinship carers.

There was within A step up for our kids a grandfathering arrangement for those fostering and kinship carers who were receiving higher payments than the new payment schedule under step up. That grandfathering is due to end from 30 June this year. Cabinet made a decision to continue those grandfathering arrangements so that we do not see any foster or kinship carers who still have the same children in their care as they did at the beginning of step up losing payments or getting their payments reduced. Those grandfathering payments will remain.

We talked earlier in relation to NDIS about the fact that we had some in-kind claims that reduced our cash contribution. One of those in-kind claims related to support for children and young people in out of home care with a disability. We were advised that that could no longer be an in-kind claim; so that funding as well contributes to that.

MS LE COUTEUR: Does this address the funding concerns that were raised by the 2018 carer wellbeing survey? I understand that foster and kinship carers raised some concerns about this funding in the 2018 carers wellbeing survey.

Ms Stephen-Smith: There were obviously a range of issues raised by foster and kinship carers through the carer wellbeing survey. I guess that the primary feedback

I have had is not around the carer and kinship support payments. It is more around: is there sufficient support for therapeutic supports for the children and young people they care for? Is that what you are going to?

MS LE COUTEUR: You say that is all of those issues.

Ms Pappas: In respect of A step up for our kids, I guess the carers subsidy is sort of a carryover from what was being experienced in the previous iteration of the out of home care system. In addition, foster carers and kinship carers were provided with access to therapeutic assessments, which determine then the individual needs of children and young people. Then the funding flows based on what those individual needs are. Carers were given choices. The therapeutic assessment team was to identify what the individual needs were and then support the agencies to assist carers to access those services, or carers could source those services on their own.

MS LE COUTEUR: What are the accountability indicators going to be? Page 16 of budget statements G just has the output dollars.

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is the overarching dollars indicator but there are a range of other indicators further on page 21. I am not sure I am understanding your question correctly around the performance of child and youth protection services.

MS LE COUTEUR: There is nothing specifically about kinship or foster carers?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We have talked both with carers and internally about how we gather better data around the wellbeing of carers and do that in a consistent way over time so we can report on that. You will be aware that we have got a snapshot report on A step up for our kids but a mid-term evaluation has also been underway. The report of the mid-term evaluation will be released fairly shortly. Part of the work we have been doing with the provider—KMPG has done that evaluation work—is looking at how we can better understand the experience of carers.

Ms Barbato: I acknowledge the privilege statement. The carer wellbeing survey was conducted in 2018 and all foster and kinship carers were invited to take part. In the end 215 carers took that opportunity, which was around 23 per cent of those invited to participate. The purpose was to get feedback directly from carers about their experience of caring. We asked questions about satisfaction and how their expectations when they commenced caring were met or otherwise and we asked questions about what makes life easier for them and what causes stress.

In the findings we had about what causes stress for carers the financial situation arose, but some of the more prominent findings were around carers' level of involvement in decision-making, how they felt about their interactions with the directorate, the amount of support they receive and the impacts on their family. Some of those findings were different for foster carers and kinship carers, and that is to be expected in some ways. Both our directorate and our partner, ACT Together, are looking at the findings and what they mean for our processes.

The carer wellbeing subcommittee are part of the governance for A step up for our kids and they report to the joint governance group. They have taken the findings of

the carer wellbeing survey and are structuring their work plan for the next financial year around them. We will look at what actions we can take across government and non-government, and importantly that will be led by and in partnership with carers.

MS LE COUTEUR: Of the additional sustainable out of home care, how much is going to go to admin, overheads and evaluation planning and how much goes to care? I am happy if you take that on notice.

MRS JONES: The cost of the out of home care days has gone up by 8.8 per cent from \$147 a day to \$160. Why is that?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Are you referring to AIHW data?

MRS JONES: I believe it is in the budget papers.

Ms Stephen-Smith: We were talking earlier about the fact that it is a flat fee arrangement with Act Together; they get a flat fee for each child and young person in out of home care that they are responsible for.

MRS JONES: Yes, but why the increase?

Ms Stephen-Smith: As part of the mid-term contract review, which was built into the contract from the start, there was always going to be a consideration of whether that flat fee was appropriate. As part of the mid-term contract review and our ongoing negotiations with Barnardos as the contract progresses there was a decision to increase the flat fee. Of course, indexation is built in.

MRS JONES: Of course, but indexation is not 8.8 per cent.

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is right.

MRS JONES: For how many years has it been at \$147? For how long was that contract underway?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That contract commenced in 2016, but it would not have been \$147 for that whole time because it would have been indexed.

MRS JONES: Yes, but the jump is higher than indexation.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes.

MS ORR: Can I get an update on the outcomes we are seeing from the government's out of home care strategy, noting that it was quite a big change when it was first introduced?

Ms Pappas: It is pretty transformational reform for us in the ACT; it is setting up new services that we have not had previously. We have seen some really interesting early signs that we are being more successful in keeping children at home in terms of our preservation response and partnership with Uniting and Karinya House and other services that deliver early support services for children to stay home safely with their

parents.

We are achieving more than what we anticipated we would. We are seeing a slower number of children come into care. There are still children needing to come into care because of safety issues, but the rate of that is slowing. We are also having greater success returning children once we are able to support families so they can return home. That has been a really interesting success for us.

There is also work around stability for children in out of home care who are not able to go home. They are able to achieve greater permanency and greater stability within their existing arrangements.

In partnership with Premier Youthworks, Barnardos and the consortium we are seeing a greater flow through the residential care service. Kids are not staying in residential care; they are either returning home, going into some sort of semi-independent or independent living, or going into family-based care. That is good to see. It is not where we want it to be at the moment, but it is good to see that kids are not staying in residential care services. That is not the preferred form of care for us; home-based care is the preferred form, ideally with family.

MS CODY: Budget statements G includes a reference to a technical adjustment for a measure called attracting and retaining child and youth protection workers. What is that all about?

Ms Stephen-Smith: This is a technical adjustment that responds to our enterprise bargaining agreement with child and youth protection services staff. I hand over to Ms Murray to talk more about that.

Ms Murray: This is, I think, some really exciting work that we have undertaken, as much as we can, in the employee relations space. What we know is that we have a small pool of candidates who train as social workers and who are called to work in the very complex field of care and protection. What we know is that when we recruit people into the first one and two years there is a particularly intensive effort in training people up to be really good-quality youth professionals. We know that that investment bears excellent fruit in terms of their practice. And then amazingly other people want to employ them.

What do we need to do to be competitive, is the question. I will speak a little about how we become competitive in that field, how do we attract and retain, but also how do we grow the pool. It is not simply a program that focuses on an enterprise agreement solution to what is a far more complex and broader problem.

We know that we lose a large proportion of our staff at the three-year mark. Previously we have addressed that through what we refer to as a group attraction and retention incentive, which has provided some benefit to a cohort of staff who have been with us for more than three years. That is a small way of approaching it. We wanted to provide a more consistent and cohesive approach.

We have looked at the competencies that we require and we have worked with our staff and we have worked with experts in the area—and I need to acknowledge the

support of the CPSU through this program—and we have worked collaboratively towards an end where we have designed the competencies that we want of our staff. That will allow us to actually go through a broadbanning process.

The way we were established in our structure was that there was an automatic progression based on assessment of competence between the 1 and the 2. First year-out university people come in, they learn the ropes. If they are good they essentially automatically progress to the HP 2.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Health professional 2.

Ms Murray: I will get to the technical adjustment in just a sec. I am trying to be concise. But what we know also is that, as soon as they get to the health professional 2, which will roughly translate to a children and youth practitioner 2, we then ask people to apply for the health professional or CYPP3 and then 4. What we are seeing in a female-dominated workforce is that people struggle with the time, the effort, to put themselves through a process of addressing selection criteria, going for interviews, competing with their peers for limited positions.

With the broadbanning, which, used in specialised circumstances, is a really appropriate industrial mechanism to encourage people to demonstrate a level of profession and practice and be assessed on that over an ongoing period, when positions are available—

MRS JONES: You can pick from that group that has already basically been assessed?

Ms Murray: Correct. This does not turn off the ability for us to attract people externally back into the service but what it actually provides is, exactly as you have described, we can pick from a pool full of people who have essentially prequalified with those competencies.

What we have done in terms of the industrial mechanism for this is that many years ago we fought hard to be seen as a profession, which is a critical thing for these roles. These are a highly trained, highly specialised group of individuals whom we ask a huge amount of. They fought very hard to come into the health professionals agreement, which is a very broad agreement. It has a lot of people at the hospital and it is a relatively complex agreement. What we felt from an industrial perspective was that it did not actually give an adequate voice or capacity to control the specific needs of this cohort of staff that we have.

Through a process, and by agreement with the unions, we have actually translated that from the health professionals agreement into the technical and other professionals agreement, again acknowledging that these are professionals. And we have restated it to a children and young people practitioner.

MRS KIKKERT: How many of those practitioners do you have?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I would say about 200.

Ms Murray: About 200. It goes up and down.

MRS KIKKERT: There are heaps?

Ms Murray: We are not talking 10, we are talking 200.

Ms Pappas: The combination of people who are the front-line officers and then the specialist enabling functions that support them to do their work well. Senior practitioners, principal practitioners and practice leaders are all part of that cohort of staff that are going to benefit from this work.

MRS JONES: Could you break down the number of senior practitioners to front-line service, however you break it down, and give that back to us on notice? That would be great.

Ms Murray: Absolutely. One of the major things within the agreement as well is that, as you will have recalled over many years, there have been some questions around how we retain really quality teachers in the classroom and not send them into the management stream. One of the significant initiatives with this is actually again we know that we need our excellent leaders in practice out in the field, out in the community, training, bringing on, mentoring new staff. It does have a focus on keeping those practitioners that Helen has spoken about as well.

MS ORR: Is burnout an issue in this field?

Ms Murray: Absolutely. I think it would be incorrect to say it is not. It is a very difficult job. We are dealing with some really complex families. I am probably not the expert to talk about this.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think Helen probably could talk a bit about the way staff have an opportunity to move through different roles.

Ms Pappas: The ACT is interesting in that we really have to go to a strategy of growing our own staff. People opt into this work because they value, I guess, working in an environment where children are considered front and centre and their best interests are paramount. We attract people, usually new graduates, into the system. We do a lot of work with new graduates and give them access to the entire service system so that they understand. Even though they might just work in one bit of it, they need to understand the entire service so that they are able to support families.

We have this process where we offer rotation, we offer people to experience our intake service. Then they can go to our, I guess, investigation or our appraisal teams and our case management teams. We provide those opportunities. And we have got pathways. We expect staff to have attended certain training at certain points: domestic and family violence training, training on drugs and alcohol. We do that formally, informally, e-learning, face to face, in a combination of matters.

We also have a formal supervision framework for these staff. Because of the complexity of the work and the environments that our staff have to go in to, we have got a formal supervision process where people go out, they come back, they can be debriefed, there are regular catch-ups with their team leader.

MRS JONES: What percentage of staff workforce in this area are graduates each intake, each year perhaps?

Ms Pappas: We do not have the benefit of huge numbers at the same time. New South Wales get huge numbers out of their social work schools in New South Wales. But we have got a regular process where each month we are advertising. And we, in effect, are feeding people into the system. But that actually gives us an ability to have a really individualised, personalised induction into the service.

MRS JONES: Is there a way you can quantify those numbers for us, even if it is on notice, graduates coming in maybe over the past three years?

Ms Pappas: Yes, I think we probably could do that.

MRS JONES: I have a final supplementary. What obstacles, apart from obviously the possibility of burnout and people wanting a change, make it difficult to attract and retain CYPS workers?

Mrs Mitcherson: I have read the privilege statement. Part of what Christine was talking about in terms of the suite of things is that when we lose people at year 3, they become our next supervisors. Apart from burnout, we also lose to other industries. We do not lose across the border to other child protection industries. We tend to lose to Education and to Health. A big NDIS market now is in the NGO sector. The salary levels are the same. So we have increased salaries going forward as part of this new scheme. That is part of it as well. We hope that we will retain but also maybe attract some staff back. Sometimes they are not leaving for burnout or just for money. At different points in time, you have your family, you have young children, you have mortgages—

MRS JONES: Is part-time work available in this area?

Mrs Mitcherson: Absolutely, we have at any one time I think between 15 and 20 on maternity leave as well so we have a lot of part-time work. The FTE is not really a head count for us because our head count is much larger than our FTE. We have many staff return to work from maternity leave or from other conditions.

MRS JONES: Yes, those things are important.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think it is probably worth noting. One of the things that makes it difficult to attract and retain people to work in these very difficult areas is the fact that it is often subject to a lot of public scrutiny. So the more we can talk positively about the work that child protection and youth justice workers do, the more likely it is that people are going to want to do that work.

We saw in the Human Rights Commission report on Bimberi a very clear indication that the negative publicity about Bimberi had impacted on the capacity for Bimberi to recruit new staff into the service. That is not meant to be a comment about not holding the service to account. Obviously, I am all in favour of transparency and we need to be accountable for the service that we provide. But we also need to be really careful

about how we have those discussions in the public debate. We should be acknowledging the very difficult work that child and youth protection services staff do, how important that work is and how rewarding actually that work is.

MRS JONES: Yes, I guess that you can do positive publicity, too.

Ms Stephen-Smith: And we do try.

MS CODY: I want to know—I think you have possibly answered the question anyway—how this new agreement differs from the previous agreement?

Ms Murray: I will try to be succinct.

MS CODY: Please.

Ms Murray: There are the salary increases across the board and also specifically-targeted salary increases. There is also a reduction in terms of the steps to take in respect of particular provisions. This quite an expanded scale. We have actually squashed that down. Again, it is matching consistently internally and externally ACT government sectors. I have spoken about the focus on keeping the practitioners in the field.

We also have spoken about growing our own. That is through programs such as are articulated in the agreement, including the paraprofessional stream. We know that some of our excellent admin staff who work with us every day, who actually interact very positively with our clients, have a significant interest in growing into the qualified professionals in terms of the CYPPs. They know the work. They know what they are getting into. So we are really wanting to invest through this agreement in terms of creating a pathway for them.

The other thing I would like to specifically note is that there is a capacity for us to assess people as suitable based on their cultural experience. That is actually a relatively significant piece of work that we have undertaken. We know that there are some extraordinary professionals in the sector who have worked with their community. I am using an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander example here. They have worked with their community for 30 years but do not hold a qualification. Therefore, with the structure that we had within the broader health professional stream, it rendered them unsuitable or unqualified for the positions, which we all know that they would eminently—

MRS JONES: More than capable of doing, yes.

Ms Murray: And be practice leaders in the space. This has allowed us to create an assessment. We are working really closely with a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment and policy expert on the design of some assessment in relation to that cultural experience. When I say that there are exciting things that you get to do in the employee relations space, this is one of them.

MS CODY: Absolutely, thank you.

MRS JONES: It is like the recognition of prior learning that we do through the TAFE and the university sector, yes.

Ms Murray: That is probably one of the best examples, yes.

MRS JONES: RPL, yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a very simple question. It relates to the completion of the child and youth record information system. It is at BP3, page 134. You have money for it. Is this going to have the capability of measuring parents with a disability who have kids in the system?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is a very good question, Ms Le Couteur.

MS LE COUTEUR: Thank you.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, indeed.

Ms Pappas: It will. It will measure disability. I probably will not get the words right; so people diagnosed. It is formal diagnosis and then it is for where people are on the journey either to being assessed towards a diagnosis or just where there is a suspicion or an observation, I guess, and then also a formal diagnosis for parents and for children. That is not going to retrospectively capture everybody in the system but it will build that data probably once the system goes live.

MS LE COUTEUR: Good, because we have asked about this before.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes, one of the challenges we often face is that people do not self-identify as having a disability, even if they do. Again, it is actually making the system safe for people to identify that they have a disability and therefore can be supported.

MS LE COUTEUR: Obviously, that was going to be my supplementary. You will not just record this information but you will then use it to support the parents and the kids appropriately.

Ms Pappas: I think the work that we have started to talk to our staff about, or to have a look at with the Office for Disability through the disability justice strategy, is potentially around what the screening tools are that help guide staff to ask the questions that might take them to that place and to do some training around that and some practice guidance to assist staff.

MS LE COUTEUR: Obviously, the next question is: when is the new system going to be in operation?

Ms Pappas: Sorry, that is—

MS LE COUTEUR: That was a hard question, was it?

Mrs Mitcherson: No, we are doing a lot of user testing at the moment. We also have

to migrate data from the old system; so we are doing a few things in parallel. We are hoping to go live later this year for the first section.

Ms Pappas: We are learning from the lessons across the country—

Mrs Mitcherson: And we want to take our time.

Ms Pappas: Child protection systems are all sequentially looking to upgrade their systems. The lessons from the New South Wales experience are that it is better to take your time, make sure that you have done substantial training with your staff, that you have tested the system and also that the data migration is working as it should before you go live. I do not have a date, but we are optimistic that that will happen in the second half of this year.

MRS JONES: The government is acting on the Human Rights Commission's recommendation to install CCTV in Bimberi and identify black spots and obviously the budget has some capital outlays. The installation of CCTV in known black spots in Bimberi appears to be taking two years, is that correct?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The budget measure is a bit over two years, but Ms Robinson can talk about the implementation of that. Of course, we have the capacity to bring forward through the capital pool established by the Chief Minister if capital projects run ahead of time.

Ms Robinson: I acknowledge the privilege statement. There are two aspects to this project: one is the obvious one reflected here, installing additional CCTV cameras across the Bimberi site. That will be approximately 100 new cameras across the site. In addition, the second stage of the project is about allowing the Bimberi system to be integrated into the whole-of-government emergency services CCTV network so in the event that there needs to be an emergency response at Bimberi for a fire or anything like that there is capacity for emergency services outside of the centre to log into the centre and see what is occurring and be able to provide the best-fit response. That is why it is provisioned over the two years. That is how we think the project will run.

MRS JONES: Are there other facilities in the corrections space that have that ability to livestream to emergency services?

Ms Robinson: My understanding from speaking to my colleagues across Australia is it is very limited. The Northern Territory are certainly considering that in their new builds, but I do not believe that that functionality exists at this stage in other states and territories.

MRS JONES: What safeguards will there be about access to that livestream data?

Ms Robinson: I am not sure "livestream" is the best way to describe it; it will sit on a unique channel and will not be part of the standard CCTV images that can be currently pulled up at any time within those centres. It will sit on its own channel and we will work through our operating standards and formalise those through MOUs with emergency services.

MRS JONES: So the protocols around how that is accessed will then be formalised in agreements.

Ms Robinson: That is right. There is every intention that we retain our control centre in Bimberi and that will be responsible for monitoring the day-to-day CCTV across the site.

MRS JONES: When do you expect the 100 new cameras to be operational?

Ms Robinson: In the 2019-20 financial year.

MRS JONES: What are the \$50,000 per annum expenses associated with this initiative for?

Ms Robinson: That is for CCTV camera maintenance. You can appreciate that across the site cameras are both internal and external and at times they need repairing and replacing.

MRS JONES: Is there confidence that after this installation the black spots will have been more or less eliminated?

Ms Robinson: I do not think we could ever say they are eliminated, but we have certainly had a design undertaken by external consultants in terms of location across the centre.

MRS JONES: What was the scope for that design? What were they asked to do?

Ms Robinson: They were asked to consider where the existing cameras were located and identify those high-traffic areas where the centre could benefit from additional cameras. I should note a considerable portion of the cameras will go into the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre, the school within Bimberi. When the design was initially done for Bimberi over 10 years ago the Education Directorate indicated their preference not to have CCTV cameras within the school. Over time their position has shifted on that so this will allow us to put CCTV cameras within the school at Bimberi.

MRS KIKKERT: Are the caseworkers getting trained to develop their skills in analysing information and also weighing evidence? We just heard the other day that the public service is receiving \$2.8 million to teach public servants how to identify domestic violence. Is there specific training for the child and youth protection services practitioners to be taught how to analyse information correctly and weigh evidence?

Ms Stephen-Smith: In relation specifically to domestic and family violence, child and youth protection services has already—

MRS KIKKERT: The 200 practitioners, though, that Ms Murray was talking about—

Ms Stephen-Smith: They have already had significant domestic and family violence training rolled out. Ms Pappas can talk about—

MRS KIKKERT: I am talking specifically not about family and domestic violence but about weighing evidence and analysing information when they receive reports from the public about a certain child or family.

Ms Pappas: There is quite significant training. Decision-making flows through all of our policies and procedures. The staff make multiple decisions every day on various families, so guidance around how best to make decisions flows through all of our policies and procedures. Specifically, around training we have the risk assessment framework. What does risk mean? How do you analyse it? What do you make of it? Who do you need to talk to about what information you do not have and where you can get that expertise? Staff are supported to understand how to make those decisions. When the decision is that those matters go to an investigation, staff are then run through appraisal training. What is an appraisal? How do you build relationships? How do you make informed decisions? Who do you need to talk to? It is pretty consistent through all of the training.

There is some specialised training around physical abuse and domestic and sexual abuse; staff go through quite a comprehensive training program. The physical abuse one is under development. And there are practice guides. We are in the process now of writing a decision-making practice guide that consolidates all of that information into a document that staff can go back and refer to. It is not about all the decisions you make; it is about how you can make a good one. That just builds. People come in already with a qualification. We give them a lot of support and training and we expose them to the work and support them to do the work. Then the next-level training and the practice guides are supposed to build their sophistication in how they do that.

MRS KIKKERT: That is great. I have had communication with a constituent, which you are aware of, who had a child removed from them several years ago. The child—

MS CODY: Chair, I just want to draw to the committee's and your attention that there is currently an open inquiry with the HACS committee—

MRS KIKKERT: But this is not regarding the inquiry.

MS CODY: There is a rather large inquiry about child and youth protection services and—

MRS KIKKERT: Sure. This has nothing to do with the inquiry. Could you let me finish? Knowing that there are 200 practitioners within the child and youth protection services, why is it so hard for a mother to ask for a caseworker to pass on their case to a different caseworker? How does that process work? I understand that you guys are all compassionate people. You can understand how a mother would feel if their child has been removed from them and then the same caseworker is working with her children who are still alive. You can understand the trauma that she is going through. Is it possible then—

MRS JONES: What are the systems for requesting a different caseworker?

MS CODY: I still think that that comes under the terms of reference for—

MRS JONES: No, absolutely not. It is totally acceptable to ask within this area. “What is the system for asking for a different caseworker?” is a perfectly reasonable question.

MRS KIKKERT: And knowing that there are 200—

THE CHAIR: We are out of time, so if there is a short answer to the question of what the process is—

Ms Stephen-Smith: There is always capacity to seek for child and youth protection services senior management to consider those types of matters on their merits—

MRS JONES: And what is the process for that?

Ms Stephen-Smith: and there is an entirely separate complaints system that sits outside CYPS. There is very clear complaints or review mechanism in there. So there is the capacity for people to do that. I am aware of the case that Mrs Kikkert is talking about. That request has been made and considered on its merits. That is the process.

Ms Pappas: Across the system, this is one of those vexed issues. We integrated in 2015 our child protection and our youth justice services because we were finding that there was some disruption to the relationship because there were different people involved in those families’ lives. The reason we designed an integrated service system was to allow caseworkers to walk alongside families through the good, the bad and the ugly, to be honest, because that caseworker has the history of that family. Our investment is around how we can help caseworkers understand the impact of the system on families, build the relationships and be able to have very difficult conversations but maintain the relationship, because actually we are telling their story.

MRS KIKKERT: Is it easy to pass a case on to another caseworker, or is it—

MS CODY: I do know that this is exactly part 2 of the HACS inquiry that we are looking into.

THE CHAIR: We are out of time for this session anyway, so we will end there.

MRS JONES: Can I just ask on notice what the system is for when that relationship does not work, which must happen from time to time, and what the decision-making paradigm around that is?

Ms Stephen-Smith: We will take that question on notice.

MRS JONES: Thank you.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Can I answer a question we took on notice earlier in relation to disability permits? I have had some information from the other portfolio.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Stephen-Smith: The fines relate both to the use of a permit and to the particular parking space. A \$600 fine applies if a vehicle is parked in a disabled parking bay with a lost, stolen or expired permit, or a deceased person's permit, and a \$120 fine applies if a vehicle is displaying a lost, stolen or expired permit, or a deceased person's permit, in a timed or paid parking bay. So there is differentiation both on the basis of the type of parking bay and in relation to misuse of the permit.

MRS JONES: But the effective factor is that the permit should not be being used.

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is right. And then the—

MRS JONES: As opposed to the police fines for parking in the wrong spot?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. The increased enforcement is around the capacity for them to check in real time whether that is a legitimate permit.

THE CHAIR: We are now dealing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

MR MILLIGAN: I would like to ask some questions on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs budget. Referring to budget statements G at output 2.3, money has been moved from 2.1 to 2.3, from \$7.5 million to almost \$12 million now. The explanation suggests that the increased money being put into 2.3 has been about \$4.4 million. I want to know what has contributed to that increase and also, out of the \$12 million, what is that money going to deliver for the community and what proportion of that money is going to Aboriginal communities and child organisations?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I think there are probably a couple of things going on there. This footnote explains that the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs functionally moved from inclusion and participation to strategic policy. That money is just a shift of the resources for the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

MR MILLIGAN: That is the \$4.4 million?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Ms Sabellico can maybe clarify the numbers around that.

Ms Sabellico: I need to take that on notice to get you a definitive response to that. It would be part of the transfer then but also potentially what component part was transferred.

MR MILLIGAN: Going to the second part of my question, what is the \$12 million in output 2.3, the strategic policy area working towards delivering tangible initiatives, and what contribution do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations make to that? Is that all government money allocated in the budget for the department?

Ms Sabellico: The full allocation of the \$12 million is for strategic policy more broadly, which includes the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and also includes that funding for the secretariat for the elected body, as well as the funding for the elected body. That is captured all within strategic policy itself.

The work that we would undertake is the work from the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs that specifically links to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement and the focus area action plans around supporting implementation, monitoring the implementation and working with community to develop the co-design and co-production arrangements to help support the delivery of those, both within CSD and across government. Within strategic policy we also consider, in the development of our policy and our guidance, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people first and look at what we need to do in terms of ensuring that we have their voices throughout the development of our work more broadly.

Ms Stephen-Smith: If I can just add to that: the specific things that are provided under that would also include the management and delivery of a range of grants programs for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community—the cultural scholarship and leadership grants and the new and emerging organisations grants. It also includes support for the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, which is delivered by the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. The office supports me in my work around the closing the gap joint council with the coalition of peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and the national policy work, as well as the general policy development work for the ACT.

MR MILLIGAN: You made reference to the agreement. Is there any money being given to any initiatives as part of this new agreement with the elected body and the community? What initiatives, programs or services are actually being delivered under this agreement and what money has potentially been given to Aboriginal-controlled community organisations to run these programs or services as part of this agreement?

Ms Stephen-Smith: As you are aware, there are more than 90 actions within the action plan for the agreement. We probably cannot go through each and every one of them and say who is getting money to do what. But I would certainly draw attention to the budget measure in the Health portfolio around the funding for the design feasibility for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and drug service. That work will be done with Winnunga Nimmitjiah and—

MR MILLIGAN: That is about \$340,000 or something, is it?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That \$300,000 will go to Winnunga to do the design and feasibility work for that service.

MR MILLIGAN: That is with Winnunga?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That money will indeed go to Winnunga. The ACT government will fund Winnunga to design the delivery of a dedicated Aboriginal residential rehab facility, and the agreement is that Winnunga will identify a specialist Aboriginal alcohol and drug service provider to assist them with that work. ACT Health will partner in the work, including identifying potential locations that provide access to other health and emergency services, and that work will then inform the construction of a facility.

MR MILLIGAN: How will that be different to what Winnunga already put forward

as their model of care for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Obviously part of the issue around their model of care for the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm was, I guess, a series of miscommunications in terms of the way that Health had asked Winnunga to develop that model of care. That ended with them developing a model of clinical care that could not be delivered at the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm as a result of the zoning and the planning, the lease arrangements for the farm itself.

My expectation, not having spoken to Julie specifically about this and not having spoken to Health officials specifically about this in any more detail at this point, is that Winnunga would be drawing on some of the work that they did to develop that model of care in talking about what the model of care should be for the new facility.

MR MILLIGAN: Is ATODA included in this model of care? Have they been included?

Ms Stephen-Smith: My understanding is that the agreement with Winnunga is that it will be left to them to determine who the most appropriate partner for them will be in developing that work.

MS ORR: On the new agreement that has been signed that Mr Milligan has asked some questions about, can you walk me through how the priorities of the agreement were identified?

Ms Charles: I acknowledge the privilege statement. In developing the agreement and identifying the core focus areas and priority areas, the elected body and OATSIA worked together to develop the agreement and also to have the conversations with the community on what should be included.

As part of the community engagement strategy we had an online survey which extended into the community. We had the your say website, and we had face-to-face conversations with over 60 individuals, including the traditional custodians, community members, community organisations and reaching into the AMC and others. We also had an online survey that reached in excess of 1,000 individuals across Canberra.

We also reviewed a number of past consultations over a 10-year period to come to the core focus areas. We have worked together with the elected body through an inter-directorate committee to form what you see in the priority actions that were identified by community through the elected body consultations.

MS ORR: Now that the agreement is in force, what is the role of the elected body from here on?

Ms Charles: The role of the elected body is to continue the conversation with directorates around accountability. They provide that accountability piece through their elected body hearings on an annual basis but also with their regular meetings with directors-general in their portfolio areas and other meetings we have.

Ms Stephen-Smith: As Ms Charles said, the members of the elected body each have a portfolio and they meet regularly with the director-general of the portfolio they have responsibility for, but they also meet with cabinet. There was a meeting with cabinet in relation to identifying the elected body's budget priorities coming out of their consultations on the agreement.

In terms of Mr Milligan's question and yours, that is an ongoing piece of work with the elected body. But another one of those budget measures that specifically responds to those priorities is delivering family centred responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families impacted by family violence, specifically responding to the *We don't shoot our wounded* report.

That report was received by government 10 years ago and was never formally responded to. We heard through those consultations that that was an open wound for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. As we talked to them about family violence they were saying, "Well, we told you through *We don't shoot our wounded* what our priorities are." Ms Berry has committed to respond directly to the *We don't shoot our wounded* report, and that is funded in the budget.

Ms Sabellico: The elected body will of course play a significant role in some of the core priorities as we work through the agreement and the action plans. We will work with directorates and community to bring together those members for appropriate consultation to drive self-determination around solutions to inform where government might then take those responses.

MS ORR: Treaty for the ACT is mentioned in one of the agreement's action plans. Can you expand on the process so far and how it links to the agreement's theme and principles?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I have had a couple of conversations with the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. I went to a meeting with them to open the conversation around whether we were interested in having a treaty conversation with the ACT traditional custodians. Then we had an exchange of letters—the co-chairs wrote to me about their initial expectations on how we would start that conversation for a treaty and I wrote back, committing the government to that conversation.

They have asked for further information around the treaty processes in other jurisdictions and potentially a visit to Victoria to talk to some of the Aboriginal community there about how their treaty process was opened. Ms Charles can provide an update on those conversations.

Ms Charles: I have also met with people in Victoria, including the government and Ms Jill Gallagher, the Treaty Advancement Commissioner, to talk about where they are up to in the process and how we can move forward. I have also talked with UNEC about bringing key community members to the ACT to provide them with information on how the process has been operating in Victoria.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have some questions from BP3, on page 79 or 95, on strengthening services. Can you explain in more detail what is going to be in those?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is part of our ongoing response to the Our Booris, Our Way review. As you know, Ms Le Couteur, this process was established in mid-2017 to have a wholly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care and to look at the experience of children and families.

The Our Booris, Our Way steering committee has already made a number of recommendations. We had some funding in the midyear budget review last year to recruit three new staff to respond to the initial part of those recommendations. This is ongoing funding for those three positions, but we will also use internal resources to ensure we can continue to respond to the recommendations. Mrs Mitcherson can say more about exactly what is happening.

Mrs Mitcherson: To identify those positions, we have recruited to our practice leader position, we have two training officers and we are also increasing our cultural services team by two. I think they are close to recruitment.

Ms Pappas: The role of the practice leader is to support, coach, mentor and walk alongside caseworkers when working with Aboriginal families. The training officer is about reviewing and delivering the cultural development program, in partnership with our cultural services team, and the policy officer's key role is to review all our policies and procedures and embed the Aboriginal child placement principle into all those. That is the priority work happening with that funding.

MS LE COUTEUR: But the cultural services team, the in-house team, you were talking about earlier?

Ms Pappas: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: What is involved in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles?

Ms Pappas: They are a nationally agreed set of principles that guide and direct the work of how people should work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. It goes to issues of prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection. Each of those areas has guidance around what it means. We are using that in how we guide our caseworkers to implement that within our practice and our service.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Part of that implementation has been getting SNAICC, the national peak body, to undertake training with our staff on implementing and embedding those placement principles.

MS LE COUTEUR: How is the Aboriginal community going to be involved in the ongoing work?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Obviously, the steering committee is ongoing. They have not completed the review yet. That is wholly an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander steering committee. They have been very engaged with the community, as well as doing case reviews for all of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care.

MS LE COUTEUR: So the steering committee will look at each child in care?

Ms Stephen-Smith: Yes. As at the time when the review commenced, in December 2017, the cases for each of those children and young people in the system at that point in time are each being reviewed through the Our Booris, Our Way team, supported by the steering committee. They have also been having one-on-one conversations. They accepted submissions, but they have also been having one-on-one conversations with the community. I think, if not next week—

Ms Pappas: It was last week.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Just last week they had a kinship carer forum.

MS LE COUTEUR: Will any new placements also be reviewed by them?

Ms Pappas: Do you mean new children coming into the system?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes. Presumably you did not stop in 2017.

Ms Pappas: As I understand it, the review is at a point in time. The families that were in the system when the review started are the families that they are reviewing. They are not going to additional, new arrangements that are in place subsequently.

Ms Stephen-Smith: However, for some of the children and young people, they are going back and looking at whether the situation has changed over the 18 months or over the year that they have been doing this review. They are looking at whether what they are seeing has changed in the life of that child or young person since they first reviewed that case. They are selecting a sample of those cases to have a look at a further review, to see whether there has been a change in the experience of that child or young person and their family through that period of time.

MS LE COUTEUR: I am probably just confused. For young people who get involved in the system after 2017, is there any Indigenous involvement in the work you do for them? From what you said, it sounded like pre-2017 is reviewed but after that not. I am sure I am confused.

Ms Stephen-Smith: No, they are two completely separate things in terms of how the Our Booris, Our Way review is working. I guess that that is a systemic review of the system, designed to come up with some systemic recommendations around how we improve the system. They are not making decisions about what will happen with individual children and young people. They are simply doing case reviews about what that experience was and drawing systemic issues from that, versus when a child or young person is coming in through intake, yes. Ms Pappas can talk about the work of the cultural team.

Ms Pappas: As families are notified or reported to the child protection system, we have some mechanisms to make sure that there is consultation with our internal cultural services team. There is advice and support right up-front. As I said, the cultural services team walk alongside our staff. They do a range of things, including

actually going out with our child protection workers. They help to facilitate and to build relationships with families. They provide advice. They provide services directly to some families themselves.

The cultural services team is one response. The Gugan Gulwan and OzChild initiative, the functional family therapy program, has been hugely successful. We have been able to divert a lot of families through that program for support and advice. As I said, that is led by Gugan Gulwan. Then we run our own internal family group conferencing program for Aboriginal families.

Again, it is a diversion from the court system, ideally, and the child protection system more broadly. It is family-led decision-making. Our team brings together all of the family members and supports them to make some decisions about the safety of their own children in a family plan, which they then go away and implement.

Ms Stephen-Smith: That work is led by Aboriginal—

Ms Pappas: Staff; that is right.

MRS JONES: I have a very straightforward and simple question for you minister, you will be pleased to hear. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander budget statement, that short statement, does not have any dollar figures associated with it that we know of, that we can find. But it is a part of a budget statement. So what can you point us to to check whether all of this is funded in detail, essentially?

Ms Stephen-Smith: I have not got it in front of me, but in respect of the first lot of initiatives, you can check against budget paper 3 to see how many dollars are associated with those. It was really a stylistic thing. Most of those statements—the social inclusion statement et cetera—are not dollar focused. They are action focused. Then the other second lot of dot points, I guess, are around the fact that the budget is not the only thing that we do. Throughout the year we have implemented other things—for example, the restoration of Boomanulla Oval and the work that is going on with the community to restore that to community management and ownership long term. It is not very long term; it is midterm.

I think there was some funding in the midyear review—it might have even been in last year's budget—around the restoration of Boomanulla. But that would not have been the full amount that was spent on that. You can go out and look at Boomanulla and see the work that has happened.

MRS JONES: Sure, but is the spending on Boomanulla now complete?

Ms Stephen-Smith: The spending on the restoration as a sports facility is complete. Obviously, the lights have not been replaced. That would be a pretty expensive exercise, but the oval is open for use as a facility for community. The elected body's secretariat also is now based out there so that they are more accessible to the community. Obviously, the oval is also open for winter sports.

MRS JONES: In the interests of time, can you take on notice in respect of that budget statement anything that is not clearly outlined in the budget? Where are we at with it?

What is the expected spend over the 12 months coming? Is that all right?

Ms Stephen-Smith: That is fine.

MRS JONES: Finally, I have a quite wrap-up of the week, even though we are meeting after lunch. I will not be here for the whole time. While officials are here to enjoy it, some of our highlights from the week include Minister Berry committing to “respond positively” to a not yet written recommendation on breastfeeding facilities for our APS staff in Canberra and Ms Le Couteur telling Minister Berry, “Clearly, on the basis of your face, the answer is no.”

We learned that the golden sun moths may be saving themselves by moving to new habitats. We learned a new term. Last week’s term was “bio-psychosocial situations”. This week it was from Mr Matthew Kendall. It was the mesocosmos, which is a huge plastic bag test tube on Lake Tuggeranong.

THE CHAIR: I think my favourite was the money-go-round.

MRS JONES: The money-go-round, yes. That is an old term. Mr Parton said to Minister Stephen-Smith and the urban renewal taskforce, “It is clear you know what you are doing but it would be good if we knew what you were doing.”

Ms Stephen-Smith: And who could disagree with that?

MRS JONES: Ms Le Couteur said, again to Minister Stephen-Smith, regarding a line in the budget measures, “We are totally confused, would be a good way to put it.” Finally, the Clerk said that he acknowledged the privilege statement and was familiar with it because he helped to draft it. That is our wrap-up.

Ms Stephen-Smith: Excellent.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Stephen-Smith: I am glad I got to experience your wrap-up, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: There you go. Everyone likes to be at the wrap-up.

THE CHAIR: We will suspend and return at 2 pm.

Hearing suspended from 12.30 to 2.00 pm.

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

Mitcherson, Mrs Bernadette, Director-General

Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Deputy Director-General

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Group Manager, Strategic Policy

Murray, Ms Christine, Executive Branch Manager, People Management

Khan, Ms Azra, Senior Director, National Multicultural Festival, Inclusion and Participation

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Fitzgerald, Mr Bruce, Executive Group Manager, Urban Renewal

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

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

THE CHAIR: Welcome. Would the new officials joining us please confirm that you have read and understood the privilege statement. We will go straight into questions.

Minister, of the \$250,000 in additional funds set aside for this year's National Multicultural Festival, I understand that only \$134,000 was spent. Why was that?

Mr Steel: I will pass over to Ms Evans.

Ms Evans: I do not know that we did have any unspent funds. Was there somewhere that that was noted?

THE CHAIR: The reference I have here is budget statements G, page 23, but I do not have budget statements G in front of me.

Ms Evans: On page 23 it is just listing the changes to appropriation.

THE CHAIR: So your understanding is that all the additional money was spent?

Ms Evans: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Based on the commitments in the 2019-20 budget, which of the three options outlined in the Oakton review is being acted on, going forward. Is it to keep the festival fully in house or is there a different approach being taken?

Mr Steel: We are considering where we go in the future. Certain elements are already contracted out. We have been working particularly around stage management. I will pass to Azra Khan and the team to talk about what happened at this year's festival. We have the further just under \$2 million to enhance the festival over coming years. We will be looking at what enhancements can be made in the future as part of that

funding.

Ms Khan: The minister has already touched on the fact that we are now, this year, looking at the range of activities that comprised the event. There was an internal review done earlier this year. We are addressing some of the recommendations of that review. With the additional funding that we are being provided with, there will be capacity to look at the outsourcing or insourcing of some of the activities. These would include things like additional measures that will address some of the security aspects of the festival footprint.

We are also reviewing the volunteering side of things, the volunteer management side of the event, and looking at some of the learnings we gained from this year and how we might look at moving that forward, with the potential to insource that activity. We are also considering sponsorship and sponsorship coordination, potentially looking at seeking an external process to coordinate that better for the festival.

THE CHAIR: There are now more ongoing staff allocated to the festival; is that correct?

Mr Steel: That is right. We will have an ongoing team.

THE CHAIR: How many staff are there?

Ms Evans: In last year's budget we had confirmed one position, which was the SOGA, which is Ms Khan's position as the director for the festival. In this next budget we have an additional two staff. So it is a confirmed staff of three.

MS CODY: Minister, I understand that in May you introduced in the Assembly the ACT multicultural framework second action plan. Can you provide an update on the progress of the plan, please?

Mr Steel: This is the last action plan under our multicultural framework that was tabled in the Assembly. A lot of the ideas in the action plan came out of the summit which we held in November last year with our multicultural community, as well as a series of roundtables. The action plan delivers on a lot of the ideas that came out of that. A number of actions in the second action plan are either completed or underway already. I would like to highlight a few of those.

The first one is that Canberra joined the Welcoming Cities network, joining 135 other municipalities and cities from around the world. Our commitment under the action plan is to benchmark ourselves against the Welcoming Cities standard and hopefully achieve accreditation at the established level by the end of 2019. Then we will work towards achieving the further advanced level by the end of 2020. So that is one of the actions that we have underway and are starting to get on with.

The other one in relation to the action plan is the welcome to Canberra information pack, for which I have just announced that tenders will be going out very shortly, which will help to deliver an integrated welcome to Canberra support service by July 2019. The welcome pack will focus on services, information and advice to help people newly arriving in Canberra from any migrant visa category. It will particularly

fill the gap in services experienced by people on bridging visas, by asylum seekers and by those on temporary protection visas and safe haven enterprise visas, and connecting them with services and advice when they arrive here—the services we already have that are delivered by a range of different community services. We are really hopeful that that will make a big difference. That is something that was raised with us during the summit as well: the need to have that sort of welcoming service in Canberra. We think it will add to the suite of existing services for that migrant, refugee and humanitarian entrant group as well.

Outside my portfolio but certainly very relevant, because multicultural affairs crosses over so many different areas, is the Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services contract that was announced, supporting women and their families with uncertain visa status, particularly around medium-term housing support. Those are some actions we are already getting underway with, under the plan. We are looking forward to working particularly with the Multicultural Advisory Council on making sure that we implement the other actions over the two years of the plan.

MS LE COUTEUR: Minister, you mentioned the MARSS program. I went to the information night about that a few days ago, as I am an existing investor with them. I think your contract was for 21 families. They are looking at potentially using the land tax exemption. Given that the land tax exemption is currently limited to 100 households, would you be agitating for an extension to this if it is needed by this program?

Mr Steel: I will not speak on behalf of Minister Berry on that one, but I am happy to raise that with her. I know a number of organisations are looking to use the land tax exemption, including the YWCA, who I met with this week, as well in relation to the Rentwell work that they are doing. So I am very happy to raise that. I was not aware that that was a concern. I am happy to raise that with Minister Berry in relation to her responsibilities around housing.

MS LE COUTEUR: It certainly was a concern, thank you. There are multicultural grants. When are you going to be undertaking the review of the multicultural grants?

Mr Steel: I pass to Ms Evans.

Ms Evans: We have commenced a review of the multicultural grants. I met with community members for two separate community conversations about two months ago. That was an open forum that was widely publicised, inviting them to come and tell us about their perceptions of the grants, what they saw as the positives and things they thought we could improve on. We got a really good range of feedback.

We then consolidated that feedback and sent that back out to the people who had attended the forums, asking them if there was anything further to add. We will be using that feedback to incrementally make changes to the grants program. The thing that we were hearing about was transparency—people wanting to be very clear about who got a grant and why. Why was it this much for a particular grant? We will make some improvements around that.

We also heard that the community themselves feel that there are priorities and that we

should reflect that in our grants process. Rather than making it broad, for instance, we should just say that, if we felt there was a particular need around asylum seekers, we should categorise that these grants will actually be available in particular for people who are supporting asylum seekers. Some of the advice they gave us was very generous. It was thinking about people other than their own organisation and how that other organisation could be supported.

That is under review, in the sense that we will make some changes. However, they will be incremental because they are small amounts of money and the last thing we want to do is make sweeping changes that mean that organisations who really depend on those grants for some of their funding suddenly do not find that that is available. We will make our changes gradually.

Mr Steel: Certainly we have had some issues with some multicultural organisations in terms of how they were acquitting grants. We have been working with them to try to provide them with enough information to be able to understand the importance of acquitting grants so that they can then apply for later grants, which they are not able to do unless they have acquitted the grants they have already received. We are working with them to try to make sure that they are aware of the importance of doing that and how to do that.

MRS JONES: Make it as straightforward as possible?

Mr Steel: That is right. We do not want to place undue burden on it, but grants need to be acquitted.

MRS KIKKERT: Following on from that, who will be conducting the review?

Ms Evans: That is being undertaken within the Office of Multicultural Affairs in terms of those grants, but we have had a broader audit done of our grant processes within CSD, which has given us some independent advice around the processes.

MRS KIKKERT: You mentioned that the review has commenced. When will it end?

Ms Evans: As I said, it is going to be an incremental process. We have got two sets of grants for multicultural affairs. One is the National Multicultural Festival grants and the other is the multicultural participating grants. With the festival grants, because they go out earlier, we did not have enough time to make any really major changes. But we did a bit of tidying up around the guidelines.

For the second set of grants this year, the multicultural participation grants, our intention is to make some other minor changes and then test with the community whether that reflects the advice they gave us. We will go back for another look and community consultation.

Mr Steel: We are looking in the future at how we can embed the National Multicultural Festival grants in the application process, particularly for performers who want to perform at the festival. At the same time as they are making an application for holding a performance they can also apply for a grant to support that performance in the same form, just to streamline the process.

MS LE COUTEUR: The second action framework mentioned that one of your metrics is going to be communities successfully acquitting their grants. You talked about that earlier. Can you give us some idea of how many communities are not able to? How big is the problem?

Mr Steel: That might be one that we take on notice for a specific number.

Ms Evans: The number of grants across the whole of our directorate is quite large. But in terms of the multicultural space, I would say that is becoming a very minor problem for us. As the minister said, it is sometimes about people not understanding the need to acquit or maybe leaving the time lines a bit late. But what we have done to address that is change some of the time frames. For instance, with the Multicultural Festival we used to say acquittal could be up until 30 June. The festival is in February and we would say acquittal by 30 June. If the activity was around the festival and so many months have gone past, people might forget: "I have not got that receipt anymore."

We have tried to work with the community to say, "What would make this easier, more accessible for you? What would make that process more straightforward?" It is not a major problem but it is one that, because it was not maybe checked in the past, we have had a problem with. When people apply again, on their record it says they have not acquitted. We are just making sure that does not happen.

MS LE COUTEUR: You are training the people?

Ms Evans: Under the second action plan our commitment is to increase the amount of training available to any organisation. We have in the past provided community engagement around grant applications. But we are hearing again and again that people would like us to do that. When we open up a set of grants we need to make available a time when people can pop in and get support.

MRS JONES: Do you, with that, have a form that can be filled out as the grant is used so that the acquittal process is really easy at the end of it?

Ms Evans: The way that our process is at the moment is through the SmartyGrants system. When people fill that in they are aware of what they are required to do and they have to tick a box that says they will acquit and all that sort of thing. But the SmartyGrants process unfortunately does not allow for their information to be carried over. Even if they apply for another grant later that year, it does not carry over.

MRS JONES: That is a shame, such a shame.

Ms Evans: Yes, I know. We would really like to get to the point where, if you fill it in once, you just log in as yourself and all your information is there.

MRS JONES: With modern systems, there could be some sort of app or form where you can quite literally, when you are getting ready for your function, scan and log the receipts and stuff?

Ms Evans: Yes. We need to look for some improvements there. But it is not an onerous process. It is more about people being aware that there is a time frame and you need to put your paperwork in.

MRS JONES: My question is about the multicultural grants, in particular community and language schools. The budget statement obviously lists an independent review into the government investment in ACT language schools as a priority for next year. When is the review expected to begin?

Ms Evans: We expect to begin that review in this financial year, 2019-20. I am hoping it is in this first half of the financial year. What that will require is for us to go out and seek an independent person to do that review. That is not a lengthy process. I hope we can get that underway by possibly September this year.

MRS JONES: You hope to have that done within what, a few months? Specifically, what are the reviewers being asked to do? What are they looking for? What is the purpose exactly?

Ms Evans: We have not developed the scope yet. I cannot be absolutely definitive, but what we particularly want to do is look at our investment in the language schools. They have a really fantastic place in our community in terms of engaging younger people in their culture and their language. What we want to know is: what is the return on that investment? Does that lead to young people feeling that they have got something out of it? We will be seeking a bit of information from the children, what their perception of it is, and the families.

MRS JONES: It is interesting, because sometimes the results of that sort of thing are not obvious even to the children themselves until decades later.

Ms Evans: Absolutely.

Mr Steel: We have seen huge growth in the number of people accessing our community language schools. We want to get a handle on that growth, through the review, and on whether the current funding system is meeting that need.

MRS JONES: Will the review suggest better connections to the education system as well? Not to take away from the language schools, but there might be ways they can be embedded in schools, not just for their weekend programs but during the week.

Mr Steel: And a lot of these community language schools provide tuition in languages that are not provided in public schools, which is part of the reason why they are so important. On the weekend I was at the celebration of the 28th anniversary of the Canberra Tamil School, and that is just one example of a language that is not provided in a school. They run their school out of Palmerston primary and at Namadgi School, so they are using government education facilities on the weekends. So there is an important connection there.

MS LE COUTEUR: Who will be doing the review?

Mr Steel: We will go out for tender for that.

MRS JONES: With grants applications for community languages school, is there training for those people as well?

Ms Evans: The funding for the community language schools is coordinated through the language association. They get a lump sum and they allocate it, so there is no need for each of the schools to be trained. It is based on the number of enrolments, so that is the acquittal in a sense.

MRS KIKKERT: The Welcoming Cities standard says that migrant communities should be included in the development, implementation and maintenance of a government's plan. We have heard from many multicultural community leaders that they were not consulted about the Welcoming Cities network motion the Chief Minister moved in the Assembly. Why did he not consult with any of the multicultural community leaders, as well as the Multicultural Advisory Council?

Mr Steel: The standard is something we will benchmark ourselves against. That applies to everything we do from now on, now that we have committed to becoming a welcoming city. It is a commitment our government has made because we want to make sure we are an inclusive and welcoming city. I have heard from the multicultural community that they are very supportive of it and they will help us to—

MRS KIKKERT: They were shocked at the time.

Mr Steel: It actually is the starting point of a conversation with the multicultural community about where our strengths are in terms of being a welcoming city and where we need to improve. The benchmarking process will provide a very clear and transparent assessment of where we are as a city. We will certainly include the views of the multicultural sectors as we progress that work.

MRS JONES: So was the reason they were not consulted that it was a direction you wanted to head in?

Mr Steel: That is right. It is an aspiration. The standard is there, and we need to see how we are progressing against that standard. As I said earlier, we are looking at how we can reach a certain level against the standard and, hopefully, progress beyond that. We want to do that in consultation with the community, to assess where we are doing well and what we need to do to improve. It is a starting point for a conversation with the multicultural community. The Multicultural Advisory Council, which provides me with advice directly from the multicultural community, will be advising me as we undertake that benchmarking process.

MRS JONES: I guess that message was not quite getting through—that it was a beginning.

Mr Steel: Well, that is what it is.

MRS KIKKERT: What steps are you moving forward to now to make sure you are consulting with the community?

Mr Steel: We consult with the multicultural community on a range of things. In this second action plan we have committed to consult with the community on the development of an ACT wellbeing index. We will consult with them throughout the benchmarking process, under the Welcoming Cities standard. We will consult as we develop new government policy.

MRS KIKKERT: Who will you be consulting with specifically?

Mr Steel: The summit was the starting point for a range of different actions under the plan. That is where we brought together 150 community leaders and representatives in one room to help develop the second action plan. We also had the roundtables because we realised we could get not everyone in the same room and that we needed to provide more opportunities for people. So we held several roundtables with the community.

The commitment we made following the summit, which we thought was a really useful process, was to hold a series of forums on various topics through the year. We have had two of those forums thus far, in partnership with particular communities. The first one was with the South Sudanese community on the importance of belonging. We just hosted a forum with the Hazara community, talking about the specific issues for their newly arrived refugees and those currently on bridging visas.

We are looking at holding further forums later in the year. I am very keen for the next one to focus on multicultural young people. We want to continue those forums as a way of engaging with the multicultural community on topics of interest.

MRS JONES: Regarding enhancing the ACT services access card for asylum seekers, we understand that CIT has received funding for four years to provide free English language classes to holders of the card. Is that the commitment to enhancing the card or is there something else?

Mr Steel: We are looking at how the card is operating. It provides that free language tuition, free schooling, free health care and access to other services. But I will hand over to Jacinta to explain a little more about what that review will entail.

Ms Evans: Part of that enhancement is also the tender that the minister spoke about earlier, the welcome to Canberra tender. That is another opportunity where access cardholders will potentially be able to get a further suite of supports, particularly around the information provision. That is one of the enhancements.

But one of the other things that we have been aware of is that, as these things grow, it is important to be able to gather data and evaluate the benefits. One of the enhancements is also around supporting Companion House to do some evaluation work around who is actually receiving services through the access card and what benefits are they receiving and what do they think would be helpful.

MRS JONES: It is an assessment, essentially, of where it is at?

Ms Evans: Yes.

MRS JONES: Will that community information pack you spoke about be language specific to the group arriving? Particularly new arrivals are not operating predominantly in English.

Mr Steel: We are certainly cognisant that there will be different languages that are spoken and that English may not be spoken to a high level. As part of the services that are delivered under that pack, we will take that into account. We are looking at the face-to-face element of that as well, where the services are actually present and they are speaking with people, and we will certainly be cognisant of that.

MRS JONES: Nonetheless, will they be in the languages of the arrivals or not?

Mr Steel: Certainly that will be taken into account as the tender goes out.

MRS JONES: What does that mean?

Mr Steel: It is part of the tender that has gone out. We want to hear from whoever wants to deliver this service. We have got a range of really experienced community organisations that work with our multicultural communities on these language barriers every day. We expect them to apply for the tender.

MRS JONES: Do you expect people to have the information delivered to them in their language? You are writing the tender? Presumably your department is?

Mr Steel: Yes.

MRS JONES: Is that part of your outcome that you want to achieve?

Mr Steel: We have a range of organisations that are very experienced in working with people and we expect to hear from them.

MRS JONES: It is not the question I asked.

Mr Steel: Some of them will have more ability to do that than others. But, of course, those who can will be able to demonstrate that through the tender process.

MRS JONES: It might or might not be in the language? It might or might not be delivered in the language of the people who are arriving?

Mr Steel: I expect that we will have some people that cannot speak English and that they will need to be supported to do that. We have obviously got a language services policy as well which will help to assist in that.

MRS JONES: How will the language services policy assist with this tender?

Mr Steel: The language services policy provides for a range of different interpreters, and we are required to access government services.

MRS JONES: How does that function at the moment? With all our services in this field, people are offered interpreters? Is that what happens now?

Mr Steel: We will have to go through the different ones.

Ms Evans: I can see your concern is around people being able to access a welcome to Canberra pack. It would not make sense if they could not.

MRS JONES: There is not much point if they do not understand it.

Ms Evans: Yes, indeed. When we are talking about this suite of services, we are talking about a whole range of things. Some of them will be online, and of course these days online services make it very easy for translations to occur. We have got a range of software and programs that assist us with that. Those parts of the welcome to Canberra information are very easy to manage.

MRS JONES: Google Translate is not always accurate.

Ms Evans: No, not just Google Translate but there are a range of ways that that can be done.

MRS JONES: You can be sent to the wrong place if you rely on Google Translate.

Ms Evans: That is true.

THE CHAIR: You speak from experience, do you?

MRS JONES: I come from a family of people who all went to the wrong place because they did not understand. There is a cultural aspect on top of that.

Ms Evans: That is right.

MRS JONES: My grandfather was told to go to the local parliament. He was too scared to go because he thought he would have to face police officers.

Ms Evans: And that is why, as the minister said, we very much realise that the most appropriate people to deliver these services are actually people who work every day with people from these backgrounds that may have these language barriers. We put the tender to members of the refugee and asylum seeker committee, the RAS committee, and asked that they consider it and that they pass it on to appropriate organisations. We are very confident that they will be well aware of these barriers.

We will make all those arrangements around what level of support individuals need. They will also be really aware of who is coming from what countries. That is a really important part. These emerging countries that we have not had as much contact with may not have materials translated. As the minister alluded to, if that is what is needed for that group of people to receive this information then that will be part of what they come back to us with, and we will say, "This is what we can do for them."

MRS JONES: But you are not stipulating it at the beginning? That is what I want some clarity on. How do you ensure that that outcome is achieved? Near enough actually is not good enough in that sort of space. Otherwise we may as well not do it.

Ms Evans: When we enter into a tender, we put it out and ask for that. When we go back and renegotiate with an organisation we say to them, “How do you expect this information to be provided?” And they tell us. If they were saying to us, “It is all going to be in English,” we would say, “That is not going to work.” If they were saying to us, “We intend to translate this bit, use software for this and do this,” then we would assess that against other tenders.

MRS JONES: You will pick the best option?

Ms Evans: The best bit for the communities.

MRS JONES: Rather than demanding that it be perfect, essentially? Is that right?

Ms Evans: Yes, because we are assuming that they have the best way of approaching the support for people, which we do not necessarily have. That is not our bread and butter, but it is of these organisations that will tender.

THE CHAIR: We have a number of different output classes being covered off in the next section. If it is okay with the committee, we will try to do them in order instead of going around the table, depending on where people—

MRS JONES: We might do what?

THE CHAIR: Go through them—

MRS JONES: In order?

THE CHAIR: in order, rather than go around the table, yes. First up, we have—

MRS JONES: Does that mean sort of jump around as to who has the question?

THE CHAIR: Yes, if that is all right?

MS ORR: Is it just so that we have the same officials at the table?

THE CHAIR: Yes, because there are three different directorates.

MS ORR: I will endeavour to get my questions in the right spot.

MS LE COUTEUR: Can I start off with a question without even knowing whether my question is here?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: It is a procurement question in social services. I am seeing a nod.

Mr Steel: Ask the question.

MS LE COUTEUR: I do not know whether it is my turn, but at least I am in the right place.

THE CHAIR: In respect of new services, output classes 2.3 and 2.4, strategic policy, quality complaints and regulation, does anyone have questions?

MS LE COUTEUR: I think I am in there.

MS CODY: Yes, I think so.

MS ORR: I think everyone should just fire away and see whether the good intentions work out.

Mr Steel: Good idea, yes.

MRS JONES: Do you want me to start?

MS CODY: I think I have a question in this area.

MS LE COUTEUR: I think I have a question in this area.

MS CODY: Hello, minister! In the budget there was \$1.7 million allocated to design a new community centre at the Woden town centre. I am guessing this the right area. I am going with it now.

Mr Steel: Sure, yes.

MS CODY: Obviously, the new centre will provide—sorry, you know what I am trying to say; good job! Can you outline what the next steps of the process will be?

Mr Steel: Yes. There was \$1.75 million provided for in the budget for the full design and documentation approvals for a new Woden community centre. Planning for this facility will be an ongoing process to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the community more broadly, as well as Woden Community Service, which it will house. We have been working with Woden Community Service on the first design brief for the community centre.

Over the next 18 months the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate will continue to work with Woden Community Service and engage with other key stakeholders in Woden, the Woden Valley Community Council included, to seek input into the design brief. I will hand over to Bruce Fitzgerald to provide any further comments on that.

Mr Fitzgerald: That is right. As the minister said, the ultimate aim is to work towards a DA by 2021 for that development.

MS CODY: Is there still a scoping study to be done about exactly where it is going to go?

Mr Steel: We are trying to get a sense, and we have been working closely with

Woden Community Centre, of exactly what they might need, not only for what they are doing now but for what they might need to do in 10 years. Their services have been growing quite significantly as a result of their winning significant tenders from the ACT government to deliver a range of community services, but also the community is growing in Woden. We have been working with them to make sure that their functional brief informs any future design work.

MS ORR: If it is not too early in the piece, what are the sorts of things you are already hearing back from the community?

Mr Steel: From the community more broadly, they would like to see a large community space that is flexible that can be used for a range of different things, whether that is to deliver programs potentially for the arts and maybe some sporting events as well. In terms of the functional brief from Woden Community Service, I will pass over to Bruce to provide some further detail about that.

Mr Fitzgerald: A lot of what they are looking at goes to the basic elements, being the number of desks, counselling rooms, meeting rooms, activity spaces and sensory rooms for people with disabilities. That is at the first stage of what we are looking at. Obviously, from there, as the minister mentioned, there are opportunities for additional spaces like half-court basketball stadiums and the like. That is all part of the functional brief at this stage.

MS ORR: I interrupted Bec. I am going to hand back to her.

MS CODY: No, I am all good.

MS LE COUTEUR: I have a question about the procurement of human services which I understand is moving from a value-for-money to a best-investment model. Can you explain how best investment will be determined and what is its relevance to non-government service providers?

Mr Steel: We are not calling it best investment; we are calling it commissioning for outcomes. We discussed this in annual reports, Ms Le Couteur, if you remember. We are commissioning a strategic planning approach that embeds community needs analysis, ongoing strategic evaluation and increased transparency and accountability into investment and resource allocation.

We are putting out a discussion paper on this very shortly. We want to engage with the community sector around this new model of commissioning to get their feedback. ACTCOSS has already been doing some thinking about what this might mean. I will hand over to Anne-Maree Sabellico to flesh out this idea on which we are intending to consult further with the community.

Ms Sabellico: When we talk about commissioning for outcomes we are effectively looking at the framework we need in place to formalise the processes to ensure that we are making really clear, informed decisions about where we need funding or what we might need to shift in the service system to achieve the best effectiveness from the money we already have in place. It defines different stages in the cycle.

We are looking at good needs assessment and good local planning, including service users as well as service providers in that process and then taking that information to determine what that means for the types of models and services we need in different locations or across the ACT depending on the issue. All that information will then feed into the scope of work we want to procure and will inform that process and, more importantly, afterwards when we are looking at our contracting arrangements not just for inputs and outputs but for the outcome we expect to receive.

So rather than just asking about how many units of service delivery for families were achieved in a three-month period we will be asking whether the case planning goals for particular families were met to ensure that they have the support and systems that they need as individuals.

We will be able to track that at an individual and a cohort level via a new and improved monitoring review and access to the appropriate data we will need to baseline for service delivery going forward. We will then look at that as part of our ongoing cycle of informing our decisions to go forward. We will talk to the sector and other directorates to flesh that out so we can then say for the ACT what our commissioning for outcomes framework will look like.

MS LE COUTEUR: That sounds like an awful lot more data will be collected if you are saying you will know the outcomes for every individual thing that was done. I assume that at present you are not reporting on the outcome of every individual, effectively, output, is that correct?

Ms Sabellico: At different levels we would expect any service would be able to keep a record of how they are achieving against different case plan goals. Whether we collect that at an individual level or at a population level we will work through that with the sector as we develop this. But we want to move away from just reporting on activity to reporting on what we are achieving and changing in somebody's life trajectory.

MS LE COUTEUR: When you are looking at service providers going onwards what value will you place on things like longevity of the existing service providers and the relationships they may or may not have with people in the community and other parts of the sector et cetera?

Ms Sabellico: They will be primary areas we need to look at because one of the things to put in place with any planning approach is how connected we are to being able to deliver on the needs of that community. The way we do that is by having those long-term relationships, developing those over time and being able to advocate for them in terms of their needs as part of that process. We would expect to want more of that going forward.

MS LE COUTEUR: Does this mean that the contracts are likely to be for longer periods?

Ms Sabellico: What should be the length of contract to implement for outcomes that take a longer time to achieve is one of the parameters we want to look at in this and then what would be the appropriate length for contracts for different types of service

provision. They are part of the conversations we will have.

MS LE COUTEUR: You talked earlier about commissioning for outcomes and I am wondering if part of that might effectively be a re-basing of how you do some of these contracts. Some of these statistics have been well established. For example, if the population goes up by X number and you will have another X number of clients, will you be able to fund that automatically without going to a new procurement process?

Ms Sabellico: We would look at that information in order to inform our decisions about what we need to do. We would look at what that means because we need to understand not only the current situation but also the projected situation in terms of planning. But every time we look at the current service system or new funding going into the service system we would need to address those things as we do that.

MS ORR: I know Ms Cody spoke about Woden, but there is also \$1 million allocated in the budget to upgrade community facilities across the territory. Can you advise how this money will be spent?

Mr Steel: There is \$1 million in funding over the forward estimates for community facilities upgrades but there is also a maintenance budget within property group and CMTEDD to upgrade the facilities that we have that are occupied by community groups and five particular properties have been identified.

Those include the Belconnen Community Centre where there will be upgrades to the lifts, toilet refurbishment, replacement of flooring and other minor upgrades. The Mount Rogers community centre will be receiving upgrades to the heating, ventilation and cooling systems as well as fire safety upgrades. Spence Children's Cottage, which is an early childhood service, will have upgrades to wet areas, wash areas and nappy change areas. The Maitland Street centre will have roof repairs in relation to dealing with some of the roof leaks and minor fit-out repairs, and the Tuggeranong Community Centre will also see HVAC upgrades.

They are the ones that have been identified thus far as a part of the work that has been going on. The property group works very closely with the tenants within the community facilities to understand what the needs are in terms of maintenance in those blocks. I have visited a few of these to get a better understanding of what their needs might be. I will pass to over Daniel Bailey from the property group for any further information.

Mr Bailey: The minister has covered it quite well. Property group has around 160 properties available as community facilities but they are ageing and we have an ongoing maintenance program based on facility condition reports. We have an ongoing program that ACT property group funds and we also have some BIF funding, but this million dollars allows us to bring forward some works that were in the pipeline to get them done a little sooner. The minister went through some. Specifically, the Pearce Community Centre will also have roof and floor replacements, and I think the minister mentioned the Civic Youth Centre.

Mr Steel: I did not, but I have visited those two facilities over the past few months which have had some particular upgrades that were needed.

THE CHAIR: I turn to output class 2.4, quality complaints and regulation. There was a significant increase against this output in budget statements G, page 13. What is the additional money for?

Mr Steel: Is this in relation to the Office for Disability? Is that what you are talking about?

Ms Murray: It is on page 14.

THE CHAIR: Yes, there is an increase from \$2.6 million to \$4.2 million.

Ms Murray: Sorry, we are struggling to line up the figures.

Mr Steel: I cannot see that.

THE CHAIR: I am sorry. The reference I have here is incorrect. No, it is alright.

Mr Steel: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions from members here.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, I would like to ask a question about the community facilities that you manage.

Mr Steel: Yes.

MS LE COUTEUR: This is a question about venues. How long is the waiting list for NGOs?

Mr Steel: Yes, I think we have that information. I invite Daniel Bailey back again. We have strong demand for the venues that we have. The city is growing and there is quite a lot of need for that. I think the vacancy rate is about three per cent at the moment. There is a long list of organisations that want to get in and there is a charity factor as well in the terms of organisations that are moving out.

Mr Bailey: Were you looking for where the vacancy currently is at the moment?

MS LE COUTEUR: Yes, basically, I want to know not so much about the vacancies as the waiting list. I suspect the waiting list might be much more extensive than the vacancies. That is probably the point that I am trying to get to.

Mr Steel: The vacancy rate is 3.04 per cent but I do not have the number on the waiting list at this point in time. We might be able to take that on notice.

Mr Bailey: Yes, we can take that on notice. As I think I mentioned, some people are very specific in respect of the waiting list. They will actually be waiting for something in a particular suburb. Those who go on the waiting list are stamped in time. That creates an order that they go on. But they may be stamped as being very specific for one suburb. The stock does not turn over too often but we do have some spots.

Looking at the current vacant list, it is at three per cent, but we are talking very small tenancies. Some are 20, 30 square metres here, 14 square metres there. There are really small pockets that sort of add up. Callam Offices at the moment creates a little vacancy in that part, which actually makes it look a little bit bigger. However, it is earmarked for some government use soon. You will see at the next session, hopefully, that the vacancy rate will be down quite a lot.

The current vacancies are in Conder Community House, Erindale Business Park, Flynn Community Hub, Grant Cameron Community Centre, Kippax Health Centre, Maitland House, 141 Canberra Avenue, Cook Community Hub, Chifley Health and Wellbeing Hub and Weston Community Hub. The team do their footwork quite well. It sometimes takes some time to fill the vacancy because the community groups or organisations will have to take it back to a board. They have to inspect and it can take some time but that sort of vacancy level, in any portfolio, is very good. Just having it under four per cent is very good.

MS LE COUTEUR: A while ago your directorate or someone in property was doing work on rental rates per square metre for NGOs. This came to the public attention particularly because there are a number of groups who are currently paying peppercorn rents. They ended up continuing to have them at that point in time but more work was going to be happening. Can you tell me what is happening with that?

Mr Bailey: Yes, there are a number at the moment. There are 72 peppercorn leases throughout the portfolio. At this stage the decision is still to maintain those. They will be kept. There are no plans to change those. For the Property Group, the default will always be, when we are looking to lease out accommodation for the community, the community rental rate. That community rental rate is based on the number that basically is just cost recovering. That is the default. But we always know that there are exceptions to that. It is really hard to capture something that will suit everybody.

We know that some organisations simply cannot make enough even to pay the rent, but they provide really valuable services for the community. So there will always be exceptions and we are allowed to get those approved. But, yes, there is no plan to change the current peppercorn arrangements.

THE CHAIR: I go back to my previous question. The reference was actually to page 13 of last year's budget statements G, comparing that output to this year's output. Output 2.4 had a budget of \$2.6 million last year and now it has an estimated outcome of \$4.2 million.

Mr Steel: I will pass that one to Christine Murray.

Ms Murray: Thank you for the question. As the committee heard before, the government has made the significant investment in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved in out of home care. We refer to that as Our Booris, Our Way. What we are seeing is actually the follow-through of that investment. It sits within that area. That remains at arm's length from the operational areas.

THE CHAIR: Is that the only reason for that increase? Is it all because of the—

Ms Murray: There are other reasons, but very minor ones. The bulk of that relates to Our Booris, Our Way and that investment.

THE CHAIR: If there are no further questions from the committee, we will suspend and return at 3.15 pm.

Hearing suspended 2.53 to 3.15 pm.

Appearances:

ACT Electoral Commission

Cantwell, Mr Damian, ACT Electoral Commissioner

Spence, Mr Rohan, Deputy Electoral Commissioner

THE CHAIR: I remind officials to please confirm that you have read and understood the privilege card in front of you.

Commissioner, when will we see the outcome of the electoral redistribution?

Mr Cantwell: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The redistribution process is ongoing. We have adhered to the mandatory statutory time lines to this point, as you would expect. Having worked through that process, the augmented Electoral Commission has now sat for the first time to receive and consider objections to the proposed redistribution which was published in early May. That is now under consideration. The outcomes from that meeting are now being collated by way of minutes and a draft statement of reasons. That is with the augmented commission for consideration now. Once that has been completed, we will work through the publication of that. I expect it to be complete by about midyear, but, again, that is subject to the process which is still underway.

THE CHAIR: You say midyear. I think it needs to be.

Mr Cantwell: Again, I think it will be finished within the next few months.

MS CODY: I have a question about polling booths. We have a bunch of new suburbs coming online. How does that affect the polling booths for the upcoming ACT election? In theory, are you going to redistribute polling booths or will there be polling booths moved out of older suburbs and into newer suburbs? Will there be extra polling booths? How does it all work?

Mr Cantwell: It is all part of the planning for the use of the resources that are allocated to help to conduct elections. There are a couple of things in play there. I think you have referred to a couple. We need to make sure that the polling locations are accessible and well known to the community so that they can get to them and get to them easily. We are still in the process of identifying where those locations might be. We are far from completing that planning phase yet. But we will do everything we can to ensure that we achieve accessibility, as you have highlighted, and that we document those well in advance.

The other point here is that we can expect that the trend across both the ACT and other jurisdictions of the desire for communities to do pre-polling activities, or vote early, will continue. That is important in that we could theoretically include that in our planning, whereby if we think that we will be able to meet the voter demand for early or pre-polling we will do that and therefore perhaps have less requirement for polling locations actually on polling day. But that is fine judgement we need to make as we go through the planning processes.

MS CODY: I know you do not run the federal election, but do you look at the pre-polling numbers from the federal election not so long ago as well as the last ACT election to start to think about how the pre-poll numbers may look for 2020?

Mr Cantwell: Absolutely. In fact, we just met as a council of commissioners earlier this week in Brisbane, the Electoral Council of Australia and New Zealand. One of the key bits of information we shared there and will continue to share is the results of the federal election, the New South Wales state election and of course the Victorian election as well. Across those three jurisdictions, those trends continue in early observations.

We will look at that data in more detail. Particularly as it relates to the AEC, where we have common locations for both the federal election as it relates to the ACT and our own Assembly elections, we look to and try to make common those polling locations so that they are well known to the communities. If you are voting in Canberra federally and you know that location, be it a school or a public location, to be a polling site, then it makes sense for us to try to use that same site wherever possible so that that information is well known to the community already.

Mr Spence: In relation to your question about opening new polling places in new suburbs, we have data from, of course, previous elections and we use that data to estimate the number of people who are likely to come to a polling place, based on those electors' enrolled addresses at previous elections and which polling place they attended. Then we extrapolate that against new suburbs. We make our decisions based entirely on vote estimates and where we need to relieve some pressure, and we can do that by opening new polling places. As Damian has mentioned, all those matters are in consideration at the moment.

MS LE COUTEUR: As you would be aware, Minister Fitzharris has signalled her intention to resign. I know you have a countback process and I read how you do it. How long does it actually take from when a member says—I presume they have to write to you and say, "I'm not going to stand. I'm resigning." How long does it then take for you to get another one?

Mr Cantwell: The first point of that process for me is for the Speaker to write to me to formally advise me of the casual vacancy which has arisen.

MS LE COUTEUR: So they do not write to you?

Mr Cantwell: No, the Speaker writes to me. Although we now know that it is coming soon—

MS CODY: If you read the news or listen to the radio.

Mr Cantwell: That is right: something has happened in the last couple of days. The formal process is initiated by the Speaker writing to me, as the commissioner. Having seen that requirement coming along in the next few days, we will do our best to forewarn the *Canberra Times* and secure an opportunity to put the official public notification in the *Canberra Times*, as well as publishing online and on our website that the casual vacancy has arisen and the countback process is required to be put in

place. Ten days after that public notification, the nominations for that countback process close.

As soon as the public notification is made, I also endeavour by every means practicable to contact those candidates who contested for the seat, in this case of Yerrabi, at that time, in the 2016 elections, and invite them to recontest. At the 10-day juncture, midday on that day, the opportunity to nominate closes. I shortly thereafter announce those candidates.

The process of the electronic countback is very quick, given its electronic nature, and we will know the outcome of that very quickly thereafter. But I officially notify that normally 24 to 48 hours after it is known to us in an official capacity. The intent of that is to give the successful candidate, before he or she becomes an MLA, the opportunity to resign from any public position or other position which would compromise his or her capacity to be an MLA.

So, in answer to your question, I think you could allow two weeks from start to finish, including the time that might be taken for the Speaker to put together a formal notification to me. That is a comfortable time line.

MS LE COUTEUR: And in this instance the likely candidate has already done the resignation part. So is all quite amazing.

Mr Cantwell: We have to go through the process.

MS LE COUTEUR: No, I am not saying you do not have to go through the process again. It is nothing for you to comment on.

Mr Cantwell: Understood.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the ministers, the commissioner and the other officials who have appeared today. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the proof transcript of today's hearing when it is available. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice, could you please get those answers to the committee support office within five working days of receipt of the uncorrected proof. If members wish to lodge questions on notice, please get those to the committee support office within five working days of the hearing, with day one being Monday.

The committee adjourned at 3.23 pm.