



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING  
AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

(Reference: [Annual and financial reports 2017-2018](#))

**Members:**

**MS B CODY (Chair)  
MRS V DUNNE  
MS C LE COUTEUR**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**THURSDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 2018**

**Secretary to the committee:  
Mrs J Moa (Ph: 620 50136)**

**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**

**Community Services Directorate.....1, 33, 39, 59**

## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## **The committee met at 9.05 am.**

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

Wood, Ms Jo, Director-General

Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Acting Coordinator-General, Family Safety

Gilding, Ms Louise, Executive Director, Housing ACT

Loft, Ms Catherine, Director, Infrastructure and Contracts, Housing ACT

Foulcher, Ms Deborah, Director, Strategy and Viability, Housing ACT

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Director, Inclusion and Participation

Petroni, Ms Kylie-Ann, Senior Manager, Tenant Relocation, Housing ACT

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, and welcome to today's hearing of the Standing Committee on Health, Ageing and Community Services. This is the first public hearing of the committee's inquiry into the 2017-18 annual and financial reports, referred to it by the Assembly on 25 October 2018.

Before we begin, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge that we meet on the lands of the Ngunnawal people. I pay my respects to elders, past, present and emerging, for the continuing contribution of their culture to this city and this region.

Today the committee will be examining the annual report of the Community Services Directorate for the 2017-18 reporting period. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you, minister and officials, for attending today's session. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the pink privilege statement that is before you on the table. Could you please confirm for the record that you have read and understand the privilege implications of the statement?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I remind witnesses that the proceedings are being recorded by Hansard for transcription purposes, as well as being webstreamed and broadcast live. Before we proceed to questions, I would like to remind members that questions today should relate to the 2017-18 annual and financial reports. I would like to start by personally thanking everyone for being here. Minister, could we go to page 91 of the Community Services Directorate annual report? What are gold livable standards and how do we stack up?

**Ms Berry:** That is a very good question. Chair, I might start by saying that we do have some people here that can answer, but the question might be more suitable to be asked on Friday. Sometimes we might have to ask whether we can answer on Friday or take it on notice, if we do not have the appropriate people here to respond.

**THE CHAIR:** Absolutely.

**Ms Berry:** We will do our best, because not everybody is here, to respond to questions, particularly around the strategy and affordable housing.

**Ms Gilding:** There are different types of built form and there are those different categories—class C, livable gold, livable silver and those various classifications. Wherever possible, and as far as is practicable, Housing ACT constructs dwellings to adaptable class C or the livable housing design gold level, which allows people to age in place and remain in their established community.

With class C, if you think about being able to manoeuvre around a house in a wheelchair, that is what class C allows you to do. Obviously, you need a particular type of site or block in order to be able to do that. If you think about some of our steep blocks in Canberra, it will be particularly difficult to deliver class C on those. We look then to deliver as many of those features as we can within each of our sites. They might look more like a livable gold standard.

What you are looking at there is a flat, level entry, and entry with extra space and width. I call it swinging room—so that you can get down the corridor with there being enough manoeuvrability. Your wet areas would certainly have, again, the turning space, the space to be able to use those amenities if you have mobility challenges. We look at our kitchens as well. Often they will have benchtops that can be height adjustable and cooking appliances that can be height adjustable.

We could go to the building code, which would tell us point by point, blow by blow, the exact difference between class C and livable gold. My colleague might want to add more detail in relation to that.

**Ms Loft:** There are silver, gold or platinum livable standards. We always go to gold. They have to be certified by occupational therapists, architects and builders, to be able to do that. As Louise stated, it is all about the living conditions, be it in relation to prams, strollers or wider doorways for disability. We are looking for that life-cycle asset for people to remain in their home.

**THE CHAIR:** How many of our housing stock currently meet gold standard? I am sure there would be some older stock that may not necessarily meet gold standard. Are we looking at a high percentage?

**Ms Loft:** Anything that we have constructed recently meets the gold standard. But, as you said, there would be older stock that would not. I do not have those numbers but I can get those for you.

**Ms Gilding:** In terms of a percentage, one of the things that our TFM, our total facilities management, provider does is rolling condition audits and assessments. It is about collecting that data. We know that about 17 per cent of our total stock at the moment is adaptable, that we actually have records for and know about. As those condition audits come through and we collect that data, we have a much better understanding of how many adaptable houses we do or do not have.

**THE CHAIR:** As you just stated, as we build new housing stock—I note that there is some new housing stock being built in the Murrumbidgee electorate, for example—will that all be built at gold standard?

**Ms Gilding:** As far as possible. That is what I was saying before. There are site constraints. If it is a flat block, we will be able to get to class C. The size of the block and the slope of the block essentially determine how high a standard we can get to in terms of adaptability on that site.

**THE CHAIR:** What are some of the other challenges being met when you are building, particularly in the Murrumbidgee electorate, for example? What about community consultations? Have there been other areas of concern that housing has met with?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, there have been. The task force has been working really well in engaging with the community and spending a lot of time engaging with the community on the outcomes that we are trying to achieve. Part of that is around renewing our stock that no longer meets the needs of some of the people who live in public housing. It is about renewing that stock so that it is much more sustainable, environmentally friendly and more affordable for people who live in public housing, so that they can have a better quality of life. Of course, it is about making sure that we can attempt to achieve, as much as possible, a more adaptable type of housing.

For the most part, our conversations with the community have been positive. Occasionally there has been some hostility from people, for reasons that I still do not understand. We have tried to overcome that by involving them as much as possible in the process. An example of where we have had great success in working with the community on how we build the bricks and mortar and how we build a community around that and support the people who will be moving into that neighbourhood is the Holder residents association. We have some really positive work happening out of that which we will be able to use as an example going forward, in order to have different types of conversations and community building within our community on other things that might prove challenging for some people. In particular, for vulnerable people in our community who need additional support, the work in Holder has been quite outstanding. I will ask Kylie-Ann Petroni to provide an update on where that started and how it is going now.

**THE CHAIR:** I have to declare for the record that I have known Kylie for quite some time.

**Ms Petroni:** When consultations commenced with the task force on building the work out at Holder, we attended some client consultations and some community consultations. Through that process we identified the members of the Holder Community Action Group, and we invited them to come along and understand a little bit more about what we do and how we work. They came along to a linking into communities meeting, where they met our community partners as well as some of our clients that we work with, in order to understand how we actually do this. They initially thought that we picked 20 names off a list and moved them out to different suburbs. But we took them through the process to show them that the team works with

each individual for 12 months, to understand their needs and complexities, and addresses those needs in order to find them appropriate housing.

Through that we then put together five workshops, working with the community. The action group came along and contributed to that, along with community partners—Woden Community Service facilitated it. Through that we put together a framework and a pilot that that action group contributed to.

One of the key things was building community inside and out. It was not just about having a complex that was identified as public housing; it was about: what does that mean? Re-establishing neighbourhood was one of the things that the Holder Community Action Group identified—that we had lost that neighbourliness and community connection. They were the ones that put on the table that we should not be identifying public housing separately to other housing within the community. They wanted to be able to welcome those tenants to their community, to make them feel comfortable and accepted. They wanted to contribute to training and employment opportunities, as well as meeting and greeting, and establishing those sorts of things, and changing the way in which public housing tenants are perceived.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** This is interesting. It is like you are in a parallel reality. At the last meeting I had with the Holder residents group, which Ms Cody was at as well, when I walked out one of the people was in tears. There are still a considerable number of people—I do not know; I do not have the resources to say if they are the majority or the minority; I cannot go there—in Holder and other parts of the Murrumbidgee electorate who do not feel nearly as positive about it as you do. It is like a parallel reality.

The other thing that really concerns me is: the housing strategy talks about more housing renewal. Obviously I am in favour of better housing for public housing tenants. I am not trying to say anything about that. What I am wondering is how you will be able to do the consultation with the communities about where they will be going in a way that we do not have people in tears and we do not have people taking Housing to ACAT because they feel that is the only thing they can do.

**Ms Berry:** I think the first thing is understanding the community better. And that has been through the work that the task force has done. From my perspective, staring down hostility from people who consider themselves able to make choices about other people's lives, I take that issue very seriously and so does this government. Where people are prosecuting others who do not have the same kinds of opportunities as we do, I will face that down and I will do it publicly and in this place at every opportunity. For the rest of the community it is more about understanding what is happening and understanding more about people who live in the ACT and not having a perception built around them which is simply not true.

The work that Kylie-Ann Petroni and the rest of the consultation group have been doing is about bringing in people who have not had the same kinds of experiences, giving them the chance to actually engage with the support services, to meet people who live in public housing for themselves so that we can remove the kinds of myths around some of the unhelpful behaviour from some people in our community who are trying to divide us. We are in the process of building a really strong community.

Holder did not start in a positive place; that is for sure. This has not been an easy journey for everyone. But I tell you what, right now there are people who, if they looked at themselves back when they started this journey to where they are now, I would say, are a different person with a very different and inclusive understanding of how they can support other people in our community and bring their neighbourhood together, regardless of people's backgrounds or where they come from.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I think that one of the issues that you are not talking about here is that some of the objections have absolutely nothing to do with the people who will live in the housing. I know in Holder there are some people who are seriously concerned about overlooking and having development in a place that they had thought for the entire time they have lived there would never be developed. I think that it is not correct to say that all the opposition is due to the people who would live there. In Chapman, of course, when you look at the bushfire issues, I think we have to acknowledge that the concerns of people are not all based on who will be living there.

**Ms Berry:** Sorry, was that a question? What is the question?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I got it from you that you felt that you had to stare down the opposition because they had more opportunities than the public housing tenants. What I am trying to say and—

**Ms Berry:** I have had to. And that has been the case. With regard to actual development within people's neighbourhoods, what the government has asked people in those communities to do is to share some of their open space for the purpose of building public housing. And that is what we have asked them to do.

We have used Holder as an example of how we have moved from a situation where a point of view on the types of people who might be living in their neighbourhood was put, rather than the built form or where the infrastructure was going to be built. We have been able to overcome a lot of the issues that the residents in Holder had with regard to built form. There have been significant changes—a reduction in numbers and an opportunity to actually build an even stronger community in Holder as a result of all this.

I think that is a really positive outcome and, for the most part through this renewal program, the community have been accepting of inviting new people to live in their neighbourhood. Occasionally there has not been that welcoming experience, and we have had to face it down. And that is the fact of the matter. The fact also is that we will continue to renew and build public housing in our community because that is the right thing to do. And we have to build it somewhere. It cannot always be all out on the edge. It is going to have to be in infill as well.

I think the way that the public housing task force has gone about consulting the community well before the development application process is even in place—well before that—to engage people in building strong communities, supporting new people moving into their neighbourhood and sharing a piece of their neighbourhood for the public housing renewal program is a positive outcome for everyone overall.



**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am going to page 95. This is a numeric question. Page 95 has “Women—Domestic Violence inclusive” and it has got the number of support places.

**MS CHEYNE:** I am wondering if we are supposed to be here.

**THE CHAIR:** Is this relating to housing?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, page 95. In the top line you have got “Women (with or without accompanying children)”. For this you have 174. The previous annual report had two fewer places for women and then eight fewer places on the 84 number of accommodation places for women with children or family at any one time. My question is: what organisations have lost spaces? Why are we going down?

**Ms Gilding:** On the question of the comparison of accommodation places, specifically in this example—and I will jump right in and talk right through the detail—we were working with Northside Community Service and their funding around the women’s program that they had. They had 18 single-bedroom properties in Bega Court. As you know, Bega Court was part of the public housing renewal program.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, well aware.

**Ms Gilding:** What we see is quite a flexibility within the program in how public housing works with the specialist homelessness sector, particularly around head leasing properties, to match the diversity and the demand that we see coming through that system. As part of considering what accommodation they needed going forward to meet the demand that was coming their way, we repositioned the head leases. Instead of 18 single properties, they now have 12 two to three-bedroom properties. If we do a bedroom count on that, we have gone from 18 bedrooms to over 33 bedrooms. There is actually an overall increase.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Why does it say the numbers are fewer?

**Ms Gilding:** Because it is the way we count an accommodation property. One property might be a one-bedroom property or it might be a three-bedroom property. We work with each of the providers. To try to simplify the data in this space we use a health framework. A health framework says that an individual presents to a hospital service and an individual needs a bed. We know that in the specialist homelessness sector we have a diversity of clients that turn to us. One client might be a single person or it might be a woman with three children.

Northside, in their women’s program, did not have as many single women presenting to them as they did women with children, and as part of their contractual arrangements we repositioned the properties that they had so that they could actually meet the diversity of the folk that were showing up and needing their services. They have got more capacity to help families—women with children that present—plus they also still have similar capacity to help single women. They can take that three-bedroom property and perhaps have two matched women who might be in those single units but actually are sharing a house. They actually have an increased capacity. What we count is the number of properties, as opposed to the number of bedrooms in

this particular case, and that is what you are seeing in terms of that differential.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That does make sense. Is Northside the only group who has lost places? You have also gone down in both lines—the number of support places at any one time and the number of individual accommodation. According to this, it is 84 this year, and that is eight fewer than the year before. Both of those have gone down. I would have assumed that accommodation places for individuals or families is closer to what you were talking about, as in a property. I am not quite understanding why that has gone down as well.

**Ms Gilding:** They have not gone down.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The numbers in the annual reports have gone down. Let me put it that way. The year before it was 92. This year it is 84. I have got it in front of me from the year before in your annual report.

**Ms Gilding:** I am sorry, I do not have the year before and this year. But if I then look at 2018-19 in terms of the program that is coming through, and if we look at the total, what we have got to understand is that we built in flexibility and adaptability in the 2016 contracts, where we separated the ability to provide support from accommodation so that we could move into that early intervention-prevention space to help people keep a roof over their head. If we really want to look at a total within that and how we work with the sector to actually give them the flexibility that they need so that they can be responsive on a daily basis to the folk that need help, and if we look at the sector capacity for 2018-19, we have got 973 support places and 348 accommodation places. That is what we have at the moment. On page 95 we have got 973 this year, compared to 945 last year—a significant increase—and we have got 348 accommodation places compared with 321 last year. The trajectory is up.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Up and confusing.

**Ms Gilding:** I understand that data and data efficacy is a really critical thing in this space and we count a lot of different things here. We have got 48 programs and we have got 28 or so providers. Each of those providers has a service funding agreement. In that service funding agreement we find a minimum output, which tells us what the number of support places at any one time might be, and the accommodation places. And what we find is that regularly they are over and above in terms of the services that they provide. That is because we work with them to provide that movement within accommodation.

What you will find between the two is that, in terms of the minimum baseline that is in their contracts, they have not actually fallen below that at all and in actual fact we are moving up and above that minimum output and it is actually to the sector's credit in terms of what they are achieving.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I know they are all working really, really, really hard. The extra 36 places in the budget are why we have the numbers that you quoted that are up now, compared to the numbers in the annual report?

**Ms Gilding:** That is right.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** While we are on homelessness, no doubt you saw today's *Canberra Times* report from Safe Shelter saying that they thought another 30 beds were needed for emergency overnight. Would that be around what you would think?

**Ms Berry:** I think it is important, first, to understand the way that Safe Shelter count their nights of support and individual support, and how other support services are supporting some of the individuals, or attempting to support some of the individuals, who might have sought accommodation with Safe Shelter. Do you want to go through some of that detail?

**Ms Gilding:** Yes, we will. I am going to ask Deb to do that.

**Ms Foulcher:** One of the areas of my responsibility is looking at data and looking at the demand that we encounter in the homelessness sector. In looking at the Safe Shelter figures, the first thing is to try to get an understanding about what they count. Sometimes we have heard about 700 bed nights, which is an accumulative figure, and that can include the same people every night. We were trying to understand how they count their data. One of the things that we do in understanding rough sleepers is look at the census data. We also look at our street to home data and our OneLink data. And we do a bit of a triangulation just to see if they are all heading in the same direction.

We do not come up with the same figures as Safe Shelter. When we did an analysis of the census data, we found that there were 50 people, and that was a significant increase from 2011. We then looked at our OneLink data, which showed that at around the same time about 23 people had indicated that they were rough sleeping and seeking support. When we went to our street to home data, we were getting similar figures to the census. So when we were looking at that, we were understanding that there were people who street to home were going out to who were clearly not accessing our OneLink data. That is the kind of way that we use the datasets we have.

We have looked at the Safe Shelter data. Recently I had a look at their last report. I think the number that Richard Griffiths was talking about was around 95. We still were not understanding what that counting methodology was and whether they were distinct clients. That is something that we would like to get a better handle on.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You do not have any views as to their headline suggestion?

**Ms Gilding:** In relation to?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The paper today said that Safe Shelter had suggested that another 30 beds would be enough to sort the emergency homelessness problem out. That was a fairly positive headline, I thought, because 30 beds is—

**Ms Gilding:** A small number.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** an achievable number.

**Ms Berry:** There are a couple of things. The data is really important, and we have not got a very good understanding of the data that Safe Shelter share. We would like to be

able to understand that better, to make sure it matches up to our data. We do not know about the individuals that are going there, although street to home, which is funded by the ACT government and run by St Vincent de Paul, told me recently that only one of the clients that they were supporting had access to Safe Shelter.

We are trying to get a good picture of the individuals as well, and the kinds of supports that they are getting, particularly making sure that if they can—and if they are willing, at this point in their life, to access support—they get engaged with OneLink so that we can provide them with the best support services that we can.

A number of the people who are sleeping rough, for lots of different reasons—because of trauma that they have experienced in their lives and a whole raft of complex issues—have not been ready to engage at certain times with organisations like street to home, OneLink and other support services that are available. But they might access the UnitingCare morning centre; they might go to the Red Cross, the free food services, the Roadhouse and the Blue Door as a way to just be part of the community and get some access to some support.

Getting that formalised support is the missing bit: sometimes people will be there but not actually ready to get support yet. Those people are not just left alone. Experts who have the expertise approach those people and make an assessment of how often they should be approached and the kinds of support that they might need—and that they are available when that person is ready to access supports. Supporting them where they are and making sure that they are safe is the first thing; then, when they are ready, it is about being able to roll them through the different kinds of supports.

One of the things that will be important as part of that is the increase in the number of properties that will be provided to community housing. That has the chance to free up more beds and services within organisations like Havelock House, to be able to support people who are ready to get that support when they need it. I also know that when I have spoken with Vinnies at Samaritan House there are often vacancies to transition people into, and then move them into, more permanent accommodation. It is about linking them up to support services and then getting them through the different programs that they might need.

**MS CHEYNE:** On the earlier line of questioning, you were talking about subsectors and the programs that are available for people who are at risk of experiencing homelessness or are experiencing homelessness. I note from the preamble to that that Housing ACT works with the asylum seeker transitional accommodation program. Does Housing ACT also work with the Red Cross humanitarian program and people exiting out of that program?

**Ms Foulcher:** Yes, we do. We work regularly with the asylum seeker transitional advisory group, which is a range of organisations that provide support to asylum seekers. We have an arrangement where we provide some of the hard to let properties. A lot of these people have difficulty accessing income, particularly if they have uncertain immigration status, so Housing ACT provides some houses. They use any rent that they can receive from asylum seekers to fund their support.

We have a close relationship with Argyle and Red Cross in relation to other programs

that we fund them for. We have been having conversations with both Argyle and Red Cross in relation to some of the difficulties they were having in housing asylum seekers, particularly in the Canberra market as opposed to some of the other markets. We have been having some ongoing conversations with them.

**MS CHEYNE:** Is that because some of these are families, and quite large families: five or six people?

**Ms Foulcher:** Yes. Initially when we set up the ASTA program, we were seeing a lot of single men. Then, when we were meeting with the asylum seeker transitional accommodation program, they were telling us they were getting more women and children. That is why, in the last budget, there was a commitment to provide an extra \$1.7 million, I think, off the top of my head, to develop a program so that we could look at ways in which we can support women and children. The single men are being housed in the Ainslie Avenue single-bed hard to let places—they were relatively easy to house—but finding accommodation places for women with children or for families was very different. That is why we are looking at a program to accommodate those people.

**MS CHEYNE:** Would they typically be assessed as being priority needs or high needs?

**Ms Foulcher:** That is a very good question. Anecdotally, when we looked at the MARSS program—they used to run the humanitarian program—they had a very high success rate in getting migrants into employment and into the private market. That was something that they had reported in their reports to us. I am not sure. That is one of the things that we want to look at. Anecdotally, we find that once someone from another country comes here and does have access to employment—they get an adequate visa so that they can get employment—they do very well in terms of not just going into the public housing system. But of course if they are eligible, they would be prioritised accordingly under our public housing waitlist.

**MR PARTON:** The report, at page 90, refers to delivery of the new service model as a requirement of tenderers for the new total facilities management contract. What are the main changes in the model compared with the previous contract? I am specifically looking at the requirement of tenderers for the new total facilities management contract. What differences are there in requirements for tenderers under the new model as compared to the old?

**Ms Berry:** Tenderers?

**MR PARTON:** Tenderers in terms of the subcontractors, the local on-the-ground subcontractors who essentially are doing most of the—

**Ms Berry:** Well, there are quite a lot of changes to this contract which will make the experience of public housing tenants much better. It will also mean public housing tenants and others will be offered employment. Programmed Facilities Management have specific targets they need to meet. That contract started on 1 November. They will be the ones that will be responsible for the total facilities management in our public housing.

**Ms Gilding:** I might start off in terms of the tender process, which I think is what you are asking about. We have been out for a tender and we put together a significantly different product in terms of what we wanted. We still want maintenance services but we want the service provider to deliver by understanding the tenant voice and needs through all of that, and the subcontractor workforce and innovation. We had a think about the holistic way the contract was managed and we developed a new performance management system. So instead of having, as under the old contract, 24 key performance indicators that were not linked, we developed a performance management system that required a healthy contract overall.

**MR PARTON:** How has that been embraced by the subcontractor?

**Ms Gilding:** In terms of it being embraced as part of the tender process, it was accepted by all of our tenderers, and we had a very strong field. They welcomed that new performance management system and the way it set incentives in the right place or drove the behaviour by making sure our tenants and the ACT taxpayer received the most efficient and effective delivery of those contracts.

**MR PARTON:** Is the tender process completed? Because I got mail only in the last few days that, despite the new contract starting on 1 November, the tender process was not complete.

**Ms Gilding:** We went through that tender process. Those requirements in the document, and particularly the significant difference—being the performance management system—were well received by that large national-international construction market. We then had a very robust tender evaluation process and had a preferred tenderer. We went to negotiations with that preferred tenderer and we have since signed a contract. We have been through a three-month mobilisation period, and the new contract services started only last week, on 1 November.

**MR PARTON:** I think we are talking about different things; I am talking about the process involved to get the subcontractors on board.

**Ms Gilding:** Yes, the subcontractors. Approximately 80 to 90 subcontractors had been delivering services as part of the old Spotless contract. Through that mobilisation period the two organisations worked together and, of course, the new provider, Programmed, had a three-month period where they did their recruitment.

**MR PARTON:** And you are telling me that is all completed, that it is all done? All the subcontractors are locked away?

**Ms Gilding:** The vast majority are. For exact numbers, I am going to hand over to Catherine.

**Ms Loft:** Programmed invited all the subcontractors that were interested to an open invitation. They held a town hall. There were 140 people present at that. The registrations closed in early September, about 7 September, for that process. To date, 69 have been contracted. Some were with Spotless and some are new. There are still some contracts that have not been finalised; we are waiting on final documentation.

**MR PARTON:** So the overall new contract started on 1 November?

**Ms Loft:** Yes.

**MR PARTON:** It is 8 November.

**Ms Loft:** Yes.

**MR PARTON:** And a number of the subcontracts are not—

**Ms Loft:** Only six.

**MR PARTON:** Six are not?

**Ms Loft:** Yes.

**MR PARTON:** Can I specifically ask about changes in the model in relation to the determination and management of tenant responsible maintenance? What has changed for the subcontractors now, as opposed to the previous model?

**Ms Loft:** Nothing.

**MR PARTON:** Does the Programmed Facilities Management service person have to bill the tenant for tenant for tenant responsible maintenance?

**Ms Loft:** No. It is responsive.

**Ms Berry:** No, nothing has changed in that respect.

**MR PARTON:** Really? Because I just got feedback that that had changed dramatically and that it was now up to the service person to determine, advise and discuss tenant responsive maintenance issues with a tenant. But that is not your understanding?

**Ms Loft:** The subcontractor would advise Programmed on the damage and the costs involved. That comes back to Housing. We QA the invoice and verify either with a site visit or video or photos and Housing invoice the tenant.

**MR PARTON:** Because my feedback was that the subcontractors now were being left to deal specifically with that issue.

**Ms Loft:** No.

**Ms Berry:** It sounds like your feedback might not be consistent with what we are requiring. So if there is some issue around that, perhaps you would get in touch with my office and we can clarify that with whomever is suggesting that that is the case.

**MR PARTON:** I concede that, very clearly, it is not your understanding that that is the case. So either I have incorrect information or there are some things going on on

the ground that should not be.

**THE CHAIR:** I think you have just had an offer to help sort that out, so excellent.

**MR PARTON:** Yes, thanks.

**MS CHEYNE:** I can ask about housing strategy here, right? Or is it tomorrow?

**Ms Berry:** We can try to answer it. We have officials, so we can try. We have made sure there are people here, but if we cannot answer it we will do it tomorrow.

**MS CHEYNE:** I note that in the housing strategy there is a section that mentions that different occupancy and ownership models were raised in the consultation, like co-housing and cooperative housing. The section says that, rather than be as part of the housing strategy, an investigation into different occupancy models will be undertaken.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, we might have to do that one tomorrow, I think. Sorry, Ms Cheyne.

**MS CHEYNE:** That is all right. Back in the 2012 public housing asset management strategy the demand for public housing dwellings was expected to reach almost 13,000 households by 2020. Do we have an updated forecast for the expected demand for public housing dwellings?

**Ms Gilding:** We have done a whole range of different modelling that we will be putting in to that new long-term asset management plan, which we have said will be ready next year, June 2019. We will publish that new overarching document with the principles that will guide that forward program over the next five years. We expect to include some high-level demographics as part of that.

**MS CHEYNE:** I do not want you to give it away; I can wait until next year. But will we be expecting an increase, in line with the population increase overall?

**Ms Gilding:** I cannot remember what our population is tracking at, but I know that from one census to another we had an 11 per cent increase. Of course we will see across all of our income quintiles an increase in demand for housing. As to how you then divide or look at the silo nature of the demand within that—of course it is not just a blanket approach—we have done quite a bit of modelling in relation to what that means for demand in public housing. But we also need to look at the shift up and down the whole housing market. We know what we do in affordable housing has impacts on the demand for public housing. So we have certainly done a lot of work to bring that together.

**MS CHEYNE:** That will be quite sophisticated because you have different levers.

**Ms Gilding:** It is a complex piece of analysis.

**MS CHEYNE:** I will look forward to next year.

**THE CHAIR:** As we have a few minutes remaining, I have a quick question that



I hope there is a quick answer to. Page 87 of the report deals with making a difference and the challenges of social housing services. How much has commonwealth housing funding moved around over the last decade? How does that impact on the ACT government funding?

**Ms Berry:** Commonwealth funding has not increased, despite several requests for it to increase. Also, we have constantly had to ask for more certainty around that funding. So not much has changed is the short answer in respect of the current federal government's funding for housing and homelessness.

**THE CHAIR:** How does that impact on the ACT government funding?

**Ms Berry:** It means that we need to do the things that we have announced in our strategy, for example. That is one part of it. But also, what is actually causing homelessness in the first place I think is the big issue that our country faces and that the states and territories cannot respond to on their own. That is why we consistently ask the federal government to consider things like increasing Newstart and looking at their tax settings around housing—negative gearing, capital gains and the like. Those are not things that territory and state governments can do anything about.

We can make adjustments to our own tax levers within reason. But if we go too far and interfere in the market too much, things can very quickly go in the wrong direction. So the ACT government make the different changes that we can that are within our responsibility and we then keep on lobbying for the federal government to make the changes that they can that will make a significant difference for us all. But there absolutely needs to be a national approach to this. As I have always said, we cannot do it on our own, but Canberra is doing a very good job.

**THE CHAIR:** Obviously, that will also have major impacts on Canberrans needing social housing, which we have to then pick up the slack for.

**Ms Gilding:** I think it was a difficult negotiation with the commonwealth for the new national housing and homelessness agreement. The ACT receives about \$23 million a year through funding from the federal government for housing services. We have historically spent all of that money. It goes straight to those who need it most and into our homelessness funding. What made the negotiations this time around particularly difficult was that the commonwealth said, "Sorry, we want you to cover the full housing spectrum and we are not going to give you any more funding."

**Ms Berry:** "And we are going to hold you accountable for it all."

**Ms Gilding:** Correct. So it was a case of: "We would like you to buy the Ferrari, thanks, but we are only going to pay for the wheels." It did make the negotiations a little bit difficult in terms of the possibilities and what we were then actually signing up to. The commonwealth's requirements are that we have a publicly available housing strategy, which we now do.

That covers those five goals across the spectrum of housing in Canberra: a publicly available homelessness strategy, which is included in the housing strategy and, of course, a favourite topic of yours, Ms Le Couteur, improved reporting on performance

data. Certainly, I am looking forward to actually working together with other states and jurisdictions to really get a handle on our data and our reporting of our data. But, unfortunately, we did not get an increase in funding. We did get some certainty.

**Ms Berry:** Just to finish off, in respect of the federal government's commitment to providing funding for community housing last year, we are still waiting on that funding to come through.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have a question from the same page, 87. It relates to the cohort study, which your report says is expected in the second half of 2018. Are we still on track for that?

**Ms Gilding:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That is obviously soon. Is that going to be what you will use to flesh out the homelessness part of the housing strategy? How do you plan to use it? I would love to ask you about the results, but you have not released it yet.

**Ms Berry:** That is right. The whole purpose of the cohort study was to guide us in how we respond.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Will it be a new instalment, virtually, on using the housing strategy?

**Ms Gilding:** It will certainly inform going forward. I go back to the conversation where we started, around our analysis and our flexibility within the specialist homelessness system. It certainly gives us a rich understanding of what services we need to be providing in what shape and form. Would you like to add something here?

**Ms Foulcher:** Yes. The origins, I think, of the cohort study were our increasing understanding that there were people who were in crisis accommodation who needed long-term and often permanent supports to be able to sustain their accommodation and that they should not be in crisis accommodation. But there were opportunities for us to have a look at best models for long-term supportive accommodation.

What the cohort study will enable us to do is to look at the different types of people who would have the best outcomes in different types of supports. So some people would thrive in group settings; others would not. We were hoping that we might get some recommendations around what a permanent supportive accommodation place might look like for different types of people, whether it is in the community or whether it is standalone—something like Common Ground.

It is really our understanding that when people go into crisis accommodation, it is not just a matter of addressing all their issues and then they can go off and sustain their accommodation. We need to follow them with some supports. Sometimes that is lifetime supports. Sometimes it is intermittent, but our goal is to make sure these people do not go back into homelessness. That is the thing we are hoping to achieve.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister, and thank you officials from Housing. We will move on to the annual report for the Minister for Women, and I have a couple of

questions on page 49 of the CSD report. There is talk about the abuse prevention referral and information line, APRIL. Are we ensuring that everybody who needs to know about APRIL knows about it? What is being done to help to promote the use of APRIL?

**Ms Evans:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. The APRIL line was in the 2017-18 year. It was run through the office for women and received calls about a range of concerns for referral. So it was people ringing to say, “I need advice. I’d like to be referred.” It was around 80 calls we received through that line.

In terms of promotion, at the end of that financial year the APRIL line was moved across to the seniors legal centre to be promoted through that area. We still retain the women’s information line, but the APRIL aspect of it around concerns about elder abuse moved across to what is now known as the OPALS line for seniors. Some level of promotion is going on and it is picking up quite well. But we will be continuing to work with colleagues to promote the OPALS line. People can still call the same number. If someone called for APRIL they would get through to somebody to talk to them.

**THE CHAIR:** And people that have been using APRIL, you have found have been satisfied with the service? Do you do follow-ups? It is only a referral service, but is there a way that we know whether those people took the next step or were able to get some support?

**Ms Evans:** That is partly the reason for the change, because over at the legal centre people can be referred to services that might support them in a legal sense, if that is what they require, whereas we were literally just taking the call and linking people up. We did not have a sense of what happened next for those people and we did not have those services available within our directorate. I assume that information will be more available at the end of this financial year about the number of calls taken and how people were able to follow it up.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. I have another question which relates to the APRIL stuff. There was also the return to work program that looks amazing and wonderful. The CIT at Tuggeranong do a return to work program. Are there linkages between the two?

**Ms Berry:** The return to work program was in west Belconnen initially. SPARK applied for grants and were successful in applying for the return to work programs and ran programs in west Belconnen. Because of its success in providing opportunities for women who have been out of the workforce for a little while or might have had some different things going on in their lives we then looked at how we could expand the program to Tuggeranong. It has now been expanded to Tuggeranong and I think about 25 women are accessing the program. It has not quite started yet.

**THE CHAIR:** So it is different to the CIT one?

**Ms Berry:** Well, it works with the CIT. SPARK, which is out of the joint venture Ginninderry development out in west Belconnen, is facilitating the program and

works in partnership with CIT and other organisations. But I do not have the detail of who else they are working with at Tuggeranong.

**Ms Evans:** There are two aspects to the return to work grant. So \$135,000 in the 2017-18 year went to individual women who needed support. They might have been applying to get some additional training as an individual. The minister is referring to the program that we started. As she said, for this financial year we are just moving into that Tuggeranong area, so that program is just being established. But we worked out of the Belconnen area with the Ginninderry SPARK program. It is some training for women and some support and mentoring.

**THE CHAIR:** The CIT at Tuggeranong has been running a women's return to work program for a number of years that I have been involved with. It is a separate program and I was not sure if there were going to be linkages to the two.

**Ms Evans:** I am not aware of that, Ms Cody, but we can definitely follow that up.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I have a question about APRIL. The paragraph above is about the women's information service. The number of contacts for this year is a lot lower than for the year before. Is that for the same sorts of reasons that the APRIL numbers have gone down—in other words, you have more specialised services?

**Ms Evans:** I cannot say specifically why the numbers have gone down, but I would suspect it is because we have a range of services available and not just that one phone contact. We continue to have face-to-face contact with women as well, but I think there are other ways for women to access support, which is a positive thing, and the phone line just might not be their preferred way.

**MRS JONES:** I have a couple of brief questions, minister. There has been a lot of discussion, obviously, over the women's safety perception figure. Has anything occurred in the last six months to try to address that?

**Ms Berry:** When we first talked about this in estimates just recently we noted that it is a national figure; it is a survey conducted by the police nationally. That figure is something I, as the Minister for Women, am held accountable for, but I do not have any say in the survey or how that target is met.

The office for women is having a look at those targets to see whether they are appropriate and whether we can improve on them. But also consider that there needs to be a national approach to this, and it goes to attitudes towards women. Women should not feel unsafe at any time, but the facts are that women feel they are unsafe because they are scared of something not very nice happening to them, and the fear is usually that a man would do that. That is the fear—that a man is going to jump out of a bush and do something horrible to a woman. As a country we need to come to terms with our attitudes towards women and women's safety.

**MRS JONES:** So nothing specifically likely to address that topic?

**Ms Berry:** Locally, yes. We are doing a whole lot of work locally in the ACT. A couple of programs nationally have been happening through Our Watch, which we are

working on better promoting here, around bystander behaviour. I will get Jo to talk to that in a moment. But there are other things happening in the ACT to address attitudes and to hopefully make women feel safer.

**MRS JONES:** Particularly if there is anything around the night-time stuff. For decades we have been reclaiming the night, but how do we actually get a change? Is it literally about specific areas of our city and lighting, for example? Is it something as practical as that?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, and there is some of that—although isn't it a shame that you should be scared of the dark as a grown woman?

**MRS JONES:** Yes. That is right.

**Ms Wood:** A couple of different approaches are being taken through the women's action plan around safety specifically. The women's safety mapping tool was developed through the Women's Centre for Health Matters. They developed that from a grant they received. That tool has been useful in highlighting safety needs. It has been used in Haig Park, for instance, to look at women's perceptions of safety in the evenings. The government has made quite a number of changes around Haig Park to make that area feel safer for women and to be, in fact, safer for women. That tool highlights everything from how safe you are riding a bike, for instance, on pathways through to a range of other things about what makes people feel safe. So it is a quite a broad tool.

Also under the women's action plan, through EPSDD, is a project on place audits. They audited 10 locations in the city; it was not just for women but it picked up on a range of things about women's activities, women's movement through the space and the perceptions of safety in those spaces. They produced a methodology and a toolkit that is now being used for similar audits.

**MRS JONES:** Obviously there is quite a bit of detail, so on notice could you get back to us on what the mapping tool has thrown up and what actions have been taken?

**Ms Wood:** Yes.

**MRS JONES:** We had discussions here about a year ago about women firefighters having portaloos available to them. Have you heard any reporting from the department about it?

**Ms Berry:** I have, but I do not have the detail.

**MRS JONES:** I do not mind if you take it on notice.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, I will take it on notice.

**MRS JONES:** It would be nice to know if they have been deployed, how often and who requested them.

**Ms Berry:** Yes. We will find that out for you. I should expect those questions from

you by now.

**MRS JONES:** Well, I have been away for a little while, so I am hoping that while I have been gone things have been improving for the ladies.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, they have. Did you want to go to the bystander behaviour under the Our Watch work?

**MRS JONES:** Yes.

**Ms Wood:** Under the national plan to reduce violence against women and children, we are in the process of developing the fourth action plan. Under the third action plan a whole lot of work has happened around the attitudinal campaign and particularly starting to move up the prevention pipeline to tackle gender equality and sexist behaviour.

One of the most recently launched campaigns developed by Our Watch, which is the national agency established to drive primary prevention, is specifically targeting bystander behaviour. It has a series of videos that are very normal kinds of settings—people out at dinner, in a range of social settings. Someone says something inappropriate or acts in a way that is inappropriate and then the challenge is to the other people in that setting: “What do you say?” It is really quite powerful and gives people some really practical tips about what they could say and the different ways they could approach that.

For the 16 days of activism against violence against women we are looking at how we promote those campaigns locally. They are very shareable on social media and they are things we can use in a range of different ways.

**MRS JONES:** Feel free in your response on notice to give us some links, then we can be promoting that as well. Thank you for all you are doing in this space, and thanks from Liliana.

**MS CHEYNE:** Are the outcomes or the analysis for the place audit that you mentioned, Ms Evans, publicly available?

**Ms Evans:** I am not sure if it is publicly available. It is through another directorate, but amongst that information that we will bring back, as requested—

**MS CHEYNE:** Is it through EPSDD?

**Ms Evans:** Yes. We will find that information and make it available.

**MS CHEYNE:** Is the mapping tool that we were talking about the same mapping tool that is being run through—

**Ms Evans:** That was through the Women’s Centre for Health Matters. It was a different tool. I think that what they found has been made publicly available over time, but I am not sure exactly of the status of the current information.

**MS CHEYNE:** Yes, I recall that in estimates we were asking Mr Ponton whether he would take on board the feedback that they got through the mapping tool. Perhaps I can ask him sometime tomorrow.

**Ms Berry:** Yes. Mrs Jones has left, but she might be interested to know about this. One of the other activities is the CBR NightCrew, which gets launched over the Christmas period. That is one of the activities of the government, in partnership with, I think, St John Ambulance, to provide a safe place for people to—

**THE CHAIR:** Charge their mobile phones, get some water.

**Ms Berry:** Charge their mobile phones, get some water, get some thongs on their feet if they are women wearing outrageously high heels. But also it is a place where people can direct others to if they might be feeling unsafe. The clubs or the nightclubs have a good relationship with the CBR NightCrew; so they will get in touch if they have spotted somebody who might be in trouble. Using the CCTV cameras, the police who are doing observations around the place often refer people there. The NightCrew then get people home in a taxi, rather than in a police car. It gives them a chance to sober up for a few hours if they have had too much to drink—all that kind of support.

We have also heard about the number of incidences of sexual assaults that have been avoided as a result of that being a safe place for women to go if they are feeling threatened. I think that is really in Attorney-General's. I do not know whether you have anything more you can add to that, Jacinta?

**Ms Evans:** No, I do not, minister.

**Ms Berry:** In the short time that it has been operating, it has had some outstandingly positive results across a whole raft of areas but particularly around getting people home safely and the avoidance of sexual assaults in the city.

**THE CHAIR:** Arising from evidence at estimates a couple of years back, I told my son about NightCrew. He took a young woman he found in an alley to them. He said, "I don't know her name. I can't get it out of her, but she needs help." They were incredible.

**Ms Berry:** They have been the outstanding results. It is obvious that people now know they are there. So they can refer people or go there themselves if they need help.

**MS CHEYNE:** We had quite a bit of discussion in estimates with you, minister, and also with the minister for policing and the Chief Police Officer about those perceptions of women's safety and how we had those pretty low results from that national survey.

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MS CHEYNE:** There were some recommendations arising from estimates that I am pretty sure were agreed to about you and the Chief Police Officer working together on providing some feedback, through the office for women, as well to the survey designers, to make sure the methodology is right.

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MS CHEYNE:** But also working together with the CPO to work out how to make people feel safer. I appreciate that there is a lot of work in this space and I also appreciate you have just had a changeover in the CPO.

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MS CHEYNE:** But is there any update you can give us?

**Ms Berry:** We have started that.

**MS CHEYNE:** Great.

**Ms Berry:** I will bring the new Chief Police Officer in with that work as well. But we have started. We have access to the survey. Whether or not we will be able to contribute to it is another thing, but we will work with the police to see whether we can and to see whether there are other ways that we can get this information from our community about their feelings of feeling safe.

**MS CHEYNE:** That is great. Can I sneak something in while I am still questioning? Mrs Jones did it; I know she has different circumstances. Also in estimates, minister, I remember we were talking about some advertising that might sexualise women.

**THE CHAIR:** There were reports in the media this morning about this.

**MS CHEYNE:** Indeed, something that we discussed yesterday with Access Canberra—with Dave Peffer and with Mr Ponton—was some of the hoardings around building sites. There is not one culprit; there are a few. While we all appreciate that building sites want to advertise their fantastically designed buildings and what great places they are going to be to live in, some of the messaging, like having women in a misty shower, might not necessarily be making women feel comfortable or safe. Indeed, a young girl said to me, through her father, “I don’t understand what this has to do with the building site.” Have you had any conversations, or could you have some conversations, with Mr Ponton and Mr Peffer about what might be able to be done in that space?

**Ms Berry:** I have had numerous conversations with many people about this issue. Unfortunately, I did not hear it this morning; I had another catastrophe I had to deal with on my way here. I will listen to it. I have written to the Advertising Standards Bureau. I do not know if I have had a response back or, if I did, if it was not a satisfactory one. I hope that they will take our concerns seriously. I think that they are serious. I think that this relates to this whole issue of changing community attitudes about how we perceive women.

**MS CHEYNE:** It is kind of that bystander thing. If we are all looking at it and not doing anything about it—

**Ms Berry:** Yes, and when I have raised it, the particular organisations and others have



been quite defensive about why they have used it and why they reckon it is appropriate. I guess the story from all of that is that we need to continue to do that. We need to continue to actually push back against that kind of behaviour, those kinds of attitudes and say, “You can still advertise your beautiful new building, but you do not need to sexualise women unnecessarily.” That is the message that I have been trying to get across to builders. I have written to some builders in this town, some developers, around that particular issue and have not had a satisfactory response from them, either. But I will continue pursuing that, where I know about it, and I encourage people to do the same. I think the more movement you get around this, the more likely it is that we are going to get an outcome.

But, yes, it is those little things. Even with all the work that we are doing around women’s safety in the ACT and trying to make Canberra feel like a safer place for everyone, but particularly women and girls, you come up against this kind of attitude that makes it very difficult. It is one step forward, two steps back every time. If I get a response back from the Advertising Standards Bureau, satisfactory or otherwise, I am happy to provide it to the committee if it is available in time.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MS CHEYNE:** Thanks very much.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can I make a short comment on that? I was at Woden Valley Community Council last night and two unrelated people in the audience brought up that subject.

**MS CHEYNE:** I presume they were not watching the EDT hearings yesterday. Maybe they were.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** They probably were, of course. Yes, it is a widespread community issue.

**THE CHAIR:** It is really interesting stuff.

**Ms Berry:** I am glad that it is being discussed here, because whenever I have raised it I have been slammed. I am happy for everybody else to take this up, because it is an important issue. I am glad to hear that it is being discussed in the community as well.

**THE CHAIR:** I am sure that both Ms Le Couteur and I have a million questions, but in the interests of time we will move on to the next area, which is the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence and the Coordinator-General for Family Safety.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am going to page 73. I note that the family safety hub has spent time reviewing ideas and further developing your concepts to the action stage for women and families during pregnancy and early parenting who are statistically at greater risk or are experiencing family violence. In practical terms, though, what does this actually mean? If I were a pregnant woman experiencing or concerned that I would soon be experiencing family violence—what are the new services? What are the changes for them, compared to how things were a couple of years ago?

**Ms Berry:** That is a really good question. There has been, as you know, considerable work done with the co-design of the family safety hub. I will ask Jo Wood to give you a response, but I think it would be useful for the committee to understand the research behind what we know about women who are pregnant or may not be pregnant—reproductive coercion and all those kinds of issues that women face—and then go on to the challenge that has come out of the co-design of this work.

**Ms Wood:** The starting point for that challenge and the reason for picking that issue was what the data tells us about women's exposure to violence during pregnancy. Women are at greater risk of violence starting. It is one of the escalation points when violence may emerge in a relationship, because that relationship is undergoing very significant change and people's roles are changing, and controlling behaviour that may have pre-existed is now expressed in new ways in that setting. I think it is one in five women who experience violence during pregnancy, so we know that there is a much higher rate of experiencing violence during pregnancy.

One of our big issues is connecting people to help earlier in relation to domestic and family violence, and we have almost universal contact points for women during that part of their experience. So there was a real opportunity there to look at what we could do differently, and certainly a real appetite from maternal health services to look at what more they can do. Every time we have been in a setting with front-line workers, midwives and other health professionals, they have said they very much see the need to do more but are not necessarily confident about what to do. So there was a real opportunity there to build their capability and to build some better connections across our service system so that we can provide people with the right kind of help.

Another thing we see around maternal health is an emerging recognition of the problem of reproductive coercion. We do not have local data on that issue, but there is some US data and there is some data that Queensland has collected around women who have attended clinics for termination services. About 15 per cent in both those datasets have disclosed that they have experienced some form of reproductive coercion. Either they are prevented from using contraception or an unwanted pregnancy is used to control women. There is a higher representation of younger women in that cohort experiencing reproductive coercion. So there are a range of risk issues there and a really good opportunity for some better intervention.

But we are not only looking at women; we explicitly set out to say we want to talk about new parents. What is the opportunity to engage men during that big transition point in their lives in a preventative way? That is where we started. That is what drove that challenge.

Then we moved into running the challenge. We are learning how to do this. This was our first go at it. We brought together a whole range of people across the service system—particularly people in health settings but also people from education, from the legal sector and from a range of community services—to come and talk about the opportunities to engage people in help earlier, and what things we would need to have in place to be able to do that. I think there were 57 ideas from that first challenge. We have kind of crunched them down to some concepts that we are taking forward in different ways. Some of them need more research and we need to look at what is the

best practice elsewhere, and some of them are things that we can start testing in the ACT.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I must not be understanding properly. My question was really about what new services pregnant people can access that they could not in the past? I appreciate that there is a problem, but I got a bit lost. What has actually changed on the ground if you are pregnant now, compared to if you were pregnant a few years ago?

**Ms Berry:** I think you are referring to the pilot for this particular challenge around women who are seeking support if they have experienced or are experiencing violence, which is what came out of the co-design of this work. We are about to pilot a new program for these women, who have been identified as people in our community who would not normally access this kind of support or could not access it in a normal way. It is a legal support service for women who might be seeking maternal health services. What a pilot will deliver is an opportunity to do that in a place where a woman feels safe and comfortable and has disclosed her situation in a way that she feels is safe.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So it has not yet started?

**Ms Wood:** It has not yet started, but it is very close to starting. It is looking at how we bring together health and legal services, offering someone a more holistic response. I think the important thing we have learned from doing this is that, while it is about the service we offer to clients and giving them another option to seek help, which is having the legal service available in a place where they are already getting services, it is equally about building capability and equipping the health professionals to provide better support and to know when legal support might be useful. That part of it is equally important. And that then is building the connection across the service system. In everything we do, we are conscious that we need some new options for people but we also need to better connect what we have got already.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You said it is a pilot. Is it a pilot insofar as it is only for a short period of time or a small cohort of women? Can you tell me a bit more about this?

**Ms Berry:** Is this sort of thing done anywhere else?

**Ms Wood:** It is. There are similar models. It is a pilot in that it is time limited. It is proposed to be from November, so it is very close to launching, through to the end of the financial year. That gives us an opportunity to collect data and test how it is working. It would be open to all potential eligible clients. We would be looking at connecting with people in Centenary hospital, Calvary, and the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre. So it is not limiting the number of people who may be assisted. Part of the point of piloting is to work out how many people might need to be assisted.

It is informed by some really well-established models, particularly in Victoria, in what they call health justice partnerships. There are different models of that in Victoria for different kinds of hospitals. There is certainly one with the Royal Women's Hospital, which obviously would see a lot of domestic and family violence, although I think the other health justice partnerships with other hospitals also see a lot of domestic violence and family violence, and elder abuse as well. It is an issue that people who

are accessing health services often disclose there because it is a trusted relationship with the health professional.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How will you decide whether the pilot continues at the end of the financial year?

**Ms Berry:** It is the same as with any other pilot: we will have to make an assessment of it and how it might continue, depending on its success. That is why it is a pilot.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Do you have an idea of the budget required for this?

**Ms Woods:** We can take that on notice. We are working through that, so we can take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** I want to talk briefly about the family safety hub and where it is at now. I know that there has been a lot of work over the last little while; on page 71 of the report you say there has been significant work. Can you expand on what that significant work looks like, please?

**Ms Wood:** Yes. We launched the hub in May with the first challenge. We are really conscious that we are trying to do something new, and we wanted to get started on coming to grips with what that looks like and what it actually takes, which is why we started with that first challenge.

The overarching work is to map out the work plan for the hub, what its priorities will be and what actual challenges it is going to work on. It has been getting close to having a team in place. We have recruited the family safety hub lead role; now we are in the throes of recruiting the rest of the team—it will be a multidisciplinary team—to bring different expertise together. We have been working through what our governance structures need to look like, how we use funding and all those kinds of operational issues.

Coming out of the first challenge, there was a lot of work on the ideas that came out of that. We have talked about one that is going to pilot, but there is a lot more work behind the scenes on doing some more research on some of those ideas. There are some really good ideas, but we do not want to reinvent the wheel; we want to look at who else has actually tackled that particular issue. So we are making sure our approaches are evidence based.

A big part of what has to happen is that, once you generate the ideas, ideas are a bit of a snippet of something, and there is a lot of work to turn them into something you can implement, and do it in a robust way. There is a lot of what the design people call prototyping, which is really taking the idea out in a form that you can test. One of the ways we have done that that has worked really well with the different health professionals and different community services is to “storyboard” the service so that you have a kind of cartoon version of the different stages of delivering that service and what that would look like. That helps you work out where there are gaps and where you might need some additional guidance, additional training or additional explanatory materials. There has been a lot of quite detailed work to map out everything that is required to deliver that pilot. And in the background we have been

developing the evaluation program for the whole hub, as well as how you might test a pilot.

**THE CHAIR:** I am sure that that work has also included how you better build relationships with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They often have slightly different needs.

**Ms Wood:** We certainly set out to do that in designing the hub, putting diverse needs at the centre of our insight gathering. We are pulling together a challenge and workshops around that, trying to bring in diverse experiences and different services that work with different parts of our community. But we are also really conscious that we need to work with people in the way they want to work with us. Relationships will need to build over time. We are seeking to engage with the multicultural forums and the women's forum—their report and the work they have done—to look at what we can learn from that and how we can work with different groups.

As well, nationally a big feature of the women's safety summit in Adelaide was a really strong focus on diverse experiences and diverse needs. We are also working closely with Anne-Maree, who is acting as coordinator-general while I am doing this role, and the work that she leads with the office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs: how we ensure that the work that is happening there also picks up the family violence priorities that have come out of our work.

**Ms Berry:** I think that was a significant approach by the federal government in this second summit: to actually consider the needs of women from different backgrounds. We had opportunities for women who would not normally get the chance to present their views. Women with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, LGBTIQ people and women from multicultural backgrounds were able to present at the summit. That gave everybody the chance to consider the challenge before us all as a country about how we meet the diverse needs of every single woman, regardless of their background, as we work towards finalising the third action plan and implementing the fourth. That was probably the best part of the summit: hearing from those women who would not normally get the chance.

**THE CHAIR:** With some of the information that was provided by those women, were there new things that had not been considered?

**Ms Wood:** I would say that there were not things that were particularly new for us. We have done a lot of work on understanding diverse experiences, and with the work that we have done, through our insights, when we look at the national research, our insights actually stack up pretty well in giving us a really good understanding of those issues.

We did certainly connect with other jurisdictions, in that there was an opportunity to share the work that we were doing. We were particularly interested in the work happening in Alice Springs. I am not at all suggesting we could pick up something from Alice Springs and just transplant it into the ACT, but what was really interesting about their project was that it started work on a men's behaviour change program, a designed and driven men's behaviour change program.

Similar to the way that we are trying to work through the hub—try, test, learn—it emerged from them early on that, while we are supporting men’s behaviour change, we need to think about women’s safety alongside that. They created a women’s safety monitoring group as part of that program. It has evolved over about six years, and the thing that is really interesting about that program is that it is the women’s program that has really blossomed. The women have become really strong advocates and leaders for change. They are doing a whole lot of work to mentor and support young women. They are getting involved in supporting the diversion of young people away from custody and detention. So what started with a men’s behaviour change program has really given women a voice and given women an opportunity to shape change in their community.

That side of the program is probably getting better outcomes than the behaviour change, because we know behaviour change is really hard. It was really interesting to look at how that has evolved and how they created the space for women to shape it themselves. That is what we would like to learn from it.

**Ms Berry:** And also their honesty in acknowledging how long it took. It has taken years for this to evolve to where it is now, and it is not finished. It did start at a point, and then its journey changed; they allowed that sort of flexibility for it to be able to change into what it is now.

**MRS KIKKERT:** On page 72 it says that the government decided that the family safety hub was not needed to provide case coordination or case management. I fully understand the need to work in the area of prevention, but at the same time front-line services need to be able to meet need. News reports this year have discussed, for example, the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and various women’s refuges struggling not to turn clients away. Canberrans I have spoken with feel that their levies for the \$19 million safer families package should be able to help with both crisis responses and also prevention. How are you measuring whether the safer families levy is being spent correctly?

**Ms Berry:** It is reported on in every budget cycle; that is the first part. It is making sure that it does go in the right direction. There have been increases in funding to the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and Domestic Violence Crisis Service as well, to make sure that we can keep up with that need. I guess that is the complexity of this issue that we are challenged with. It needs to be holistic. It cannot just be the support service end. There does need to be intervention, and prevention as well, working on addressing domestic and family violence. It is about being there at the bottom of the cliff, if you like, to catch people who need the support, but also starting to build that fence at the top to stop people from falling off in the first place. Do you want to talk in more detail about the levy?

**Ms Wood:** As the minister said, we report in detail in each budget. The safer families levy funds are contributed across directorates; they do not all sit with CSD. We have a mechanism by which directorates are reporting on outcomes that are being achieved under each of the things that are funded under the safer families levy. That is the basis for the detailed report we provide in the budget papers.

We are always looking to see if we have got the balance right. We know we need to do more on prevention, but we know that the more we talk about the issues of domestic and family violence the more people will come forward seeking help. That is where the demand comes for the front-line services. So there certainly is funding under the safer families package for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, and for Legal Aid, who support people at that crisis end.

The other thing to note is that beyond the safer families package there was additional funding provided in the last budget for the Domestic Violence Crisis Service and Canberra Rape Crisis Centre in recognition that what we have seen in the ACT since about 2015 is an increase in ongoing demand for those organisations. So there was additional funding in the budget. I do not have the figures on me.

**MRS KIKKERT:** What percentage of the levy each year is spent on providing client services and what percentage is spent on other activities; for example, research activities? Do you have a breakdown of how much of the levy is spent on each of those areas?

**Ms Wood:** I do not think we have a percentage breakdown of exactly that.

**MRS KIKKERT:** If not, just straight-out numbers?

**Ms Wood:** Sorry; I do not have it with me because it is in the budget papers rather than the annual report. We can provide that on notice.

**MRS KIKKERT:** The budget paper?

**Ms Wood:** The detail from the budget papers.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Thank you. In light of the fact that women's refuges are reporting turning clients away, why is the government funding fewer beds for women fleeing domestic violence?

**Ms Berry:** We did that question earlier.

**THE CHAIR:** You have answered that question.

**Ms Wood:** The issue is that we in the homelessness sector do not report on beds; we report on properties. Going to where there has been a shift in the number of properties, the particular example which Ms Gilding was talking about earlier is shifting one of the providers from having a whole range of, I think, 13 one-bedroom flats to having 12 three-bedroom houses, so they have more capacity. In total, the number of properties is less, but they have more capacity to support women and families. We avoid talking about beds and are really talking about properties. There is actually more capacity to support women leaving domestic violence.

**THE CHAIR:** There was a very long and complex answer provided earlier this morning, if you want to have a look at that.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I will go back and have a look. I just have one more thing. The

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association was commissioned by the government to design a project to increase capacity regarding family violence prevention. What exactly is this project and what will it accomplish?

**Ms Wood:** That project is managed by the Health Directorate. They commissioned ATODA, the peak body, to do a whole range of work on how you would build the capability of the alcohol and other drug sector in the ACT to better respond to domestic and family violence.

What has come out of that work is a capability framework that looks at the services alcohol and drug services offer and the ways in which they can deal with domestic and family violence. Obviously they have some different challenges from those of a whole range of other services: they will be seeing people who are both perpetrators and victims of domestic family violence in their services, so they need a really nuanced and sophisticated understanding of the issues.

They have developed a capability framework. They have developed a set of tools that help services assess their own capability and work out where they sit in terms of their expertise. And then there are a whole range of resources for practitioners who are actually delivering alcohol and drug services.

That has all been delivered. My last advice from the Health Directorate was that they are about to go out for an RFQ to engage a consultant, who could be from the sector, to work with each of the alcohol and drug services to do the capability assessment and bring that picture together. That will give us a picture of the current level of capability—it is a baseline measure of what is the current level of capability of those services in the ACT—and what are the gaps and the things that we would need to invest in to improve the capabilities. That is step one.

Then there will be the work to say that the capability assessment has identified training needs, other policy and guidance needs, the need for strengthening referral pathways, or whatever issues emerge. The safer families package initiative includes resources to then look at addressing those needs and improving the capability. We know that that will have to happen over time, but we are looking to see a consistent approach across the alcohol and other drug sector. There is interest. We know that in other jurisdictions some of the major alcohol and drug services have looked at the materials that have been developed here and want to use them in other places as well.

**MRS KIKKERT:** According to the report by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, the office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety is expecting to assist in the implementation of the DVPC's recommendations relating to children and domestic violence. Is it your understanding that all of these recommendations will be implemented? What obstacles might prevent their full implementation?

**Ms Berry:** The government will need to make a decision, first of all, on the recommendations, which is the usual case with reports that are presented to the government. That has not occurred yet. However, we work closely with the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, who are there to advise me and the coordinator-general on the work that we do to prevent domestic and family violence. Their extraordinary meeting explored a whole lot of issues around how children are affected by domestic



and family violence, in particular. \$100,000 has been committed to the start of this work, with the Children and Young People Commissioner, Jodie Griffiths-Cook. That work is already happening.

We are very keen to get started on that work. Of course, it will have to be considered very carefully, and how you engage children in these kinds of conversations needs to be considered very carefully. It is about having the expertise of somebody like the children's commissioner to work with us about how we have those conversations, in order to start working on what kinds of things we need to do to better support children and young people who have experienced domestic and family violence in their home.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I understand that you were aware of the recommendations of the report in August. Can you explain why it took this long to respond to the recommendations?

**Ms Berry:** We responded immediately.

**MRS KIKKERT:** To just one—giving money out. What about the other four recommendations?

**Ms Berry:** I do not think it is just giving money out, Mrs Kikkert.

**MRS KIKKERT:** It is funding, yes.

**Ms Berry:** It is important funding.

**MRS KIKKERT:** But you said you had not made a decision—

**Ms Berry:** We were able to respond—

**MRS KIKKERT:** on the other recommendations. I am wondering why it has taken two months to respond to the other recommendations.

**Ms Berry:** We have already responded. We responded immediately.

**MRS KIKKERT:** To the other recommendations.

**Ms Berry:** Because that is the work of government, and we need to consider all the recommendations before we provide an official response.

**Ms Sabellico:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. There is other work occurring at the moment in terms of giving consideration to the other four recommendations. The four recommendations do cut across quite a few directorates and the work they do, and other work that is already occurring. It has been really important to get a baseline for what we know is happening in each of the directorates, particularly around trauma-informed services. That, of course, cuts across things like child youth protection, as well as within schools, where they are focused on looking at introducing trauma-informed practices.

There is also the matter of looking at improving the court and legal approaches. Again,

that has some connections across different directorates. With the courts we need to really understand and look at what is occurring at the moment, in order to be able to know what it is that we can look at as part of our recommendations around the report. With training for people who work with children, again there are different synergies around different programs that we need to understand and look at in a very rigorous way so that we can understand exactly what we need to do next.

In terms of using data to inform our strategies, it will be really important to look at domestic and family violence strategies, but that data can also assist us in looking at other work that we do in directorates, particularly when we are supporting families demonstrating multiple vulnerabilities. It is about looking at all of the information that is available to us—what are the systems, who is collecting what—and being able to put together what the next steps are and what actions we need to undertake and fall back on.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Having considered all of that, when do you expect to have a response to the recommendations, after going through all the considerations and speaking to other directorates? Do you have a time frame?

**Ms Berry:** As we have tried to describe to you, we are already beginning to respond, and have responded pretty much immediately, with that first funding and a commitment that the coordinator-general will work closely with the children's commissioner. This is not a report from an auditor-general or an estimates committee that the government is required to report back on within a certain period of time. It allows us to respond immediately, which is what we did with that first round of funding.

Because it is about children and it will require some careful consideration, we want to make sure that we get it right and that we do not re-traumatise children through this process. We will take the time, as we respond, working with experts in the sector like Jodie Griffiths-Cook, the coordinator-general, and other support services, to make sure that we get these responses right. That is what we are doing. That work has already started. I understand that there have already been several meetings with the commissioner for children and young people to work through how we have this conversation with young people, to start with.

**THE CHAIR:** To make sure that you are getting the best possible outcome for everyone involved?

**Ms Berry:** Yes. If I could give an example, through the future of education—I know it is not this portfolio area—we are sharing with the commissioner for children and young people how we went about having a conversation about education. It is a different conversation—

**THE CHAIR:** But just as important for the young people involved.

**Ms Berry:** Just as important, and we also provided lots of different ways for children to engage so that it suited the way that they would want to engage. Some people did it through essays; some people did it through post-it notes or through messages or videos—however they felt comfortable. We also made sure that we got to children

who we would not normally get the chance to engage with. We went to the youth centres and talked with those children as well about what they expected.

That information has already been shared, I think, with the commissioner for children and young people, to give some guidance about what we have already done with some young people on this different and important subject—as you say, chair—and using her expertise in having these sometimes very difficult and hard conversations with young people so that we can find out from them, from the people who are affected, how we can support them better.

**THE CHAIR:** I note the time. We will now break for morning tea and we will resume with Minister Ramsay, the Minister for Seniors and Veterans. I would like to thank everyone who has appeared today. I thank the minister and all the officials for the time they have taken to answer the committee's questions.

**Hearing suspended from 11.00 to 11.17 am.**

Appearances:

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

Community Services Directorate

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Director, Inclusion and Participation

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back. We will now move to seniors and veterans. Thank you, minister and officials, for attending today. Before we go to questions I remind witnesses that when they speak for the first time they should confirm for the record that they have read and understood the implications of the privilege statement.

Minister, I have got a couple of curly ones for you today. I note that there has been a change in the definition of a veteran. There was an announcement recently. How will that impact on our veteran community in Canberra and the ACT government?

**Mr Ramsay:** The definition of veteran was worked through with my ministerial colleagues at one of the veterans' ministers round tables about 12 months ago. It deliberately adopted a broader definition: "Any person who has served one day or more in the Australian Defence Force"—deliberately a broader definition.

I think one of the things that it will do is attempt to break down particular barriers that there have been in the past, where a veteran has been perceived as someone who needed to have returned from active combat or needed not to be in the Defence Force anymore. There were a number of different perceptions. By having this broad definition the intention is to make clear that we are providing support in a more coherent and more cohesive way.

We do know that there are in the ACT a significant number of veterans, people who are currently serving, people who have previously served. There are at least 20,000 in the ACT, as we understand. I think what it does mean is that we can provide that broad-based recognition and then as part of that recognition see what the appropriate form of support is. I think one of the things about, again, that broad-based definition is that it enables us to work more from a strengths-based approach as well.

One of the difficulties I think that we have had historically is that the definition of veteran has guided us in some ways—not just in the ACT but much more broadly than that—in seeing veterans as people who had some sort of gap that we needed to fix, some sort of difficulty that we needed to support. I think that gap-based understanding has meant that it is harder for veterans right across the breadth of the community to be valued, supported and have a true sense of belonging in the community.

The work that we have done nationally and are seeking to roll out here in the ACT in a number of waves, I think, helps that. That then leads us into some of the work that we are doing, for example, with veterans employment in the ACT public service—again, acknowledging that the reason for wanting, potentially, to employ veterans is not that we are being kind to them and that we need to go out of our way to support

them, so to speak; it is that they have great skills, training, assets, capacity that is good for the ACT public service. It is good for any employer. It is about swapping that around. I think it is an important initiative. I think it is a welcome one and it is certainly one that, as I have worked with veterans organisations and directly with veterans, has been very positively received.

**THE CHAIR:** And speaking of the transitioning program for veterans, how has that been going? Do we have any numbers on those veterans that have taken up the transition packages or the transition program?

**Mr Ramsay:** It is still pretty early days in terms of the employment strategy. The intention is that the ACT public service would be clearly known as a leader in the recruitment of and the transitioning for veterans. One of the things that we did originally was the survey across the ACT public service to enable people to self-identify as veterans. We have now made it so that it can be for people who are working in the ACT public service. The HR system here now has been modified so that people can self-identify as veterans. I think that is an important initial step as well.

What we have done is establish a network of executive champions. I met with some of those just last week about how they might be able to provide a level of support. One of the things that we have picked up in the survey across the ACT public service is the difficulty that veterans have expressed in finding their position of employment. For 80 per cent of the people who are now veterans working in the public service, it was not their first step out of the Defence Force. There was a movement to somewhere else and then potentially to somewhere else before becoming part of the public service. They have expressed that that transition has been a difficult one at times.

The role of the executive champions and the broader work is to see how we may be able to get mentoring support. When I was meeting with the champions recently, it was about trying to see not only what they may be able to take the initiative on but what are the things that they might be able to provide back to me and to the Veterans Advisory Council from being on the ground with people in the public service: what it is that our veterans are finding helpful, what it is that they are finding unhelpful and what are the things that we might be able to do to modify our behaviour as an employer to become the employer of choice.

The next part of that is for us to be able to work with private industry in the ACT so that we can share our learnings with them. But we have also had the chance to meet in some informal ways already some of the employers who have significant elements of their workforce coming from the veterans community about what it is that they can help us with. We have also recently had one of the Defence Force transition seminars, and it was great that our public servants were able to be at that. I am not sure if Ms Evans would like to provide some of the feedback that we got from that particular time, but I think that is an important place for us to be present and to be seen to be present.

**Ms Evans:** The commonwealth run the transition seminars and we partner with them and send along some of the ACT public service members to meet with people who are just turning up to find out a little about what else is available in their employment journey. It is a very positive experience twice a year for Defence Force personnel to

pop in and find out a little more.

The ACT public service can be attractive in a range of ways. As the minister referred to, the areas that we particularly want to target are so that people feel comfortable and see that there are a range of opportunities—opportunities for, I guess, people coming out without the highly professionalised skills that maybe a more senior or more mature person coming out of the forces is coming out with. They may be young, 18 to 25-year-olds who are coming out after a short period in the Defence Force and who are looking for other roles that suit them. We have that in the ACT public service in terms of transport services or being a ranger. There could be all those kinds of roles, right through to people who have got excellent skills in cybersecurity or IT. The transition forums are a really important part of that partnership that we have with the commonwealth to make things a bit more seamless for veterans.

**Mr Ramsay:** And one of the other things I think that are important to note with that—not necessarily ACT-specific information but something that we have been working across the jurisdictions on—is that, while we do want to uphold the strength-based approach that we are working with in employment transition, employment strategies, we also know that the most likely at-risk group of people who are separating from the Defence Force are males aged 18 to 24. And that is the issue across Australia that has been highlighted. That is where the issues around mental health support or other forms of support are most important. I think that will be one of our next stages here so that we can have a strength-based approach more generally, but noting that there is a group that is experiencing high levels of difficulty in separation from the Defence Force, what we might be able to do to provide better, targeted support for that particular group.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I would like to talk about the older persons ACT legal service, the OPALS, which I believe is being launched the week after next. I saw the invite for the launch. This seems to be a really good idea. What data collection will you do to try to work out whether this is meeting the needs of older people in Canberra?

**Ms Evans:** As the service is just underway, initially we are collecting the common data that we would collect with anybody ringing in to an ACT public service support role. In the previous session, we were talking about safety. The critical thing that we need to collect that we probably were not collecting with the APRIL line was referrals and what then happens for people. One of the things that we will be looking to collect in that data is getting a greater sense, for people who connect with the support line, of what they then receive in terms of that, and some outcomes-based data. The office for seniors and veterans will continue to work with partners at the seniors rights centre to make sure that that data is being collected.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I assume it will not be purely numeric; some of it will be more anecdotal—that people said that this thing worked or did not work?

**Ms Evans:** I would assume so. I have not asked that question, to be honest. Given that, for all of us, when we are doing our annual reporting, it is really useful to have that sense of people's actual experience, I would assume so. That is something we can definitely put to them as a request.

**Mr Ramsay:** One of the other things that is important with the OPALS is that it is being provided through Legal Aid, but there is a broader reference group that has been created. COTA is on it; a number of other organisations and individuals are part of that wider reference group, to help reflect on what is coming in and what the appropriate services are or what is the appropriate guidance for the future of that service.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That is very good, because I am sure that not every issue is legal.

**Mr Ramsay:** That is precisely right. Again, with elder abuse, the reality is that, firstly, the majority of people do not seem to understand that the issue may well be a legal issue. It does not necessarily manifest itself in people's minds as a legal issue. It may be a relational issue—a different relational dynamic. There might be a social issue. The reason for having that OPALS line is that, as people are speaking with someone there, the person who is speaking with them on the phone can identify that what might be being talked about in a relational way actually has legal implications; or it could be the other way around—what might be voiced as a legal issue really has some profound social and other forms of support. Getting that combination of services and supports right will be one of the key things for the service.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Will the OPALS call-taker be able to provide help and advice, or will it be purely a referral to other people?

**Mr Ramsay:** It will depend on the content of the conversation itself. The people who will be answering that line and having that direct conversation will be trained in a number of areas. One of the key things for them to be trained in is to be able to identify what other issues are sitting beyond the surface level of the conversation. Therefore, they will know what sort of support might be needed and what referrals may be appropriate.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Will it have a face-to-face component as well?

**Ms Evans:** That would be dependent on the referral—where the referral goes. The partnerships with other community organisations or supports would probably be the face-to-face element, unless the person is coming in for legal advice.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** In 2017-18, for the Conflict Resolution Service, we see \$10,000 to develop resources to empower individuals and families to resolve disputes and understand how you can access specialised conflict resolution support services for seniors. Has the CRS received further funding this year and, regardless of whether it has or not, how does this interact with OPALS?

**Ms Evans:** Have they received funding this year? I would have to take that on notice because I have not checked for the 2018-19 year. What was the second part of your question?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How does this service interact with OPALS?

**Ms Evans:** In the sense that any of our community organisations would be a point of referral. If OPALS felt that conflict resolution was the key issue for someone—or an

issue, not necessarily the key issue—they could refer to that service. Certainly, with those grants that are received, often it is about that particular organisation developing greater capability and strengthening their capacity to respond. That would be the case with the toolkit that the Conflict Resolution Service have developed there.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Could you take it on notice?

**Mr Ramsay:** The Conflict Resolution Service has some funding in relation to the restorative cities project. The restorative cities project is about how people can develop their skill sets in working to move beyond that first level of conflict. That is part of the overall aim of establishing Canberra as a restorative city. Some of the funding for the restorative cities work has gone to the ANU. Other parts have gone to the Conflict Resolution Service.

**MR HANSON:** Minister, you would have noticed that the Prime Minister has recently announced a veterans card. Have you had any conversation with the federal minister for vets affairs or other members of the federal government about that?

**Mr Ramsay:** Yes. I recently attended the veterans' ministers round table, which was held to coincide with the Invictus Games. As part of that I met with Minister Chester the day before the round table and then at the round table as well. The veterans card was announced on the day of the round table, and we found out about it the day before the round table. It is still a little unclear what is going to be involved with it. Certainly, we have had some level of conversation about it. Step 1 is that broad-based recognition of veterans that the round table endorsed 12 months previously.

**MR HANSON:** The Prime Minister has indicated that he is looking for business partners. Coles, Woolies and others, I think, were mentioned. Has the ACT government considered being a partner on that card? Obviously, there are services—public transport comes to mind, but there are others. Vets could get a discount on public transport, for example. Have you started considering that or are you open to that?

**Mr Ramsay:** We have already done some work. In fact, at the most recent round table the ACT had taken the lead over the previous 12 months to look at what we may be able to do across Australia to harmonise some of the transport concessions. At the moment there is a different level of concession for public transport for veterans in just about every state or territory. With the acknowledgement that veterans sign up to serve their country and not their state or territory, the ACT has led the work over the last 12 months on seeing what it is that we may be able to do to harmonise that.

That work was underway long before the veterans card announcement. Coming out of the round table, the next part of the work is: is there a relationship between that card and concessions for transport or is it in another form? Obviously, who is eligible for the veterans card and who is eligible for what level of transport still needs some further work, as do the budgetary implications for each state and territory. It is certainly something on which we are working with other jurisdictions, and we will be looking at it further. We have not, in the time frame since the announcement of the card itself, had any opportunity as a government to look further into the details of what might be involved with a veterans card or what might be able to be signed up to.



That work is still to be done.

**THE CHAIR:** I note the time, minister. It was a very short session. We might have to look at that for next year. Thank you very much, minister, for coming in and having a chat with us.

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

Wood, Ms Jo, Director-General

Collis, Dr Mark, Deputy Director-General

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Director, Inclusion and Participation

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

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back. We have moved on to the Community Services Directorate community participation portfolio, with Minister Steel. I thank you, minister and officials, for appearing today.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Given the basically positive feedback from stakeholders about how the carers strategy was developed, what other deliberative and collaborative processes are underway or being planned within the directorate in service design and delivery?

**Mr Steel:** Thank you for the question. We have been working with 49 carers for quite a period of time to develop the carers strategy and also the three-year action plan under the carers strategy. We were able to launch that on 16 October with carers present. They really did feel it was a strategy designed by them for them. We met a few of the carers at the launch and the feedback we got from them was that they were quite sceptical, going into the deliberative democracy process, about what the outcome might be but, having gone through it, they found it incredibly useful and thought the strategy and action plan really reflected the sorts of issues carers face.

It is certainly something the government will be considering when we look at future strategies, but I am not aware of any further work going on in relation to any other strategies using a deliberative democracy process. But, given the positive result we have achieved through this piece of work, it has clearly been a worthwhile process.

It requires quite a significant amount of work by officials to provide input into the development of the process, and certainly from the stakeholders involved. Carers ACT should be acknowledged in that regard; they put an incredible amount of effort into the deliberative democracy process, but I think that work has been acknowledged as being very useful in terms of the outcome that we have achieved. I will pass on to the department officials to provide some further information about that process.

**Ms Sabellico:** We are committing to having a look at how we develop more collaborative approaches to consultation and engagement with community on a range of different issues and strategies. Within the portfolio for strategic policy we also have the office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, and we are looking at working with the community on how we develop community-led solutions to issues. We are also starting to have a look at some of the innovative ways we can engage with people who currently do not access services so that that can start to inform what we need to do to improve and develop the service system and the way in which people

need extra support to access services.

There are a range of different approaches, but definitely with deliberative democracy we will continue to have a look at where we can best use that to achieve a similar result to what we needed with the carers strategy, where we needed the voice of those with lived experience to direct and guide the responses to better support them into the future.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you expand on some of the feedback? Minister, you noted that the carers were really happy that you listened to what they had to say. Is there a bit more feedback you could provide the committee with from those who participated in the development of the strategy?

**Ms Sabellico:** I am happy to talk through that. As we went through the process we collected a lot of information from the carers about what they saw to be the positives of the process and, in particular, what it was about the process that meant it was meaningful for them. We can provide you with a list of quotes. Also, there is a short video that we presented at the launch which was quite positive and in which people talked about what they got from that process. That is documented as part of our review of the process, so we can have a look at what it is we need to consider as underpinning principles when we move to using it again and for what sort of cohort or strategy.

**Mr Steel:** In some ways this is just the beginning of the process because carers will continue to be engaged in overseeing the implementation of the action plan. It is really important to make sure the government is held to account in implementing those actions. We will be continuing to work with the carers and the carers voice panel on looking at how we meet those important actions.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, can you outline how the review of the 2017 Multicultural Festival is helping to ensure that the festival continues to meet community expectations and needs?

**Mr Steel:** For the Multicultural Festival last year we decided to undertake a review by Spring Green Consulting to independently look into how to improve the festival for future years. The key themes that emerged through the review included making sure it continued to celebrate the diversity and cultural diversity of the ACT community.

The findings of the review are that it is a universally valued festival and that we should continue to make sure it is safe, free and inclusive and provides opportunities to celebrate and recognise all cultures. There is certainly a high level of satisfaction with the festival. There is also a strong desire to grow the value of the festival and for the community to fully understand and engage in policy development, supported by clearer decision-making processes and planning improvements. Certainly the view came through the review that we need to provide greater clarity on the sale of alcohol at the festival. That work is going on now, ready for next year's festival, which we are certainly looking forward to.

**THE CHAIR:** Not far away now.

**Mr Steel:** No, it is not. Applications have already closed for the festival. And the application process reflected many aspects of the review in making sure that we are clear about the sale of alcohol. Importantly, at this year's festival the sale of alcohol will be allowed where it is culturally relevant to multicultural communities at the festival.

**THE CHAIR:** So the applicants have been in favour of the stance for next year's multicultural festival?

**Mr Steel:** I will pass on to Jacinta Evans to provide some feedback about the application process.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, minister. We worked extensively with the community, given that we had the review as a basis for that consultation. We went back around the community, even though we had the review, to check in when we made changes to the policy. The most significant change, of course, was that we heard loud and clear that community groups wanted to be able to sell alcohol. We also, however, heard from a number of groups that they were concerned that the sale of alcohol in their community was inappropriate and they did not see that as a really high priority for them. The balance was for us to provide the opportunity for the sale of alcohol that was culturally appropriate, so we have done that.

The feedback we have received from our showcase coordinating committee, the voice of the major groups within each of the areas of the festival, has been that they are very accepting of and positive about that policy. We reviewed it with them before it was finalised with the minister. The policy has been out since August. It has been part of the application process. So everyone has had to look at those terms and conditions for applying for a stall, whether that be for food, alcohol, information, whatever. It has been so far very well received by the community and we are very happy with the number of applications we have had.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the footprint looking like for the 2019 festival? I know that over previous years it has got bigger and bigger, and we are in a confined space. So what is the footprint looking like?

**Ms Evans:** Last year we were quite pleased with the number of stalls and this year will be quite similar. Of course, the city keeps changing around fixed structures and things like that and different businesses now have seating outside, which means we cannot have stalls there. So we adjust, but the number of stalls and the basic footprint are much the same as last year.

**THE CHAIR:** The fringe festival was held a couple of years ago. Are we looking to do more of those sorts of things in the future?

**Ms Evans:** I am not aware of anything in relation to the National Multicultural Festival. The fringe is outside my area.

**THE CHAIR:** There was a fringe festival as part of the National Multicultural Festival?

**Ms Evans:** Yes. Nothing like that is planned this year, and I am not aware of anything else.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Are you able to table the independent review?

**Mr Steel:** It is publicly available.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Page 46 of the report notes that challenges require collaborative and innovative solutions which are appropriately resourced. But former Chief Minister Jon Stanhope stated in his 2018 budget analysis that this government has made effective cuts to housing and community services, with the agreed growth in funding less than inflation. Considering that demand is increasing, as noted in the report on page 46, why is funding for things such as community participation not keeping pace with inflation?

**Mr Steel:** Certainly we have been working with various community groups. As the new minister I have been meeting with a variety of different community groups, including discussing their funding needs but also the demand on their services. We have been working through a process with Minister Stephen-Smith, called early support by design, on how we can move to more of an outcomes-based framework for community services and particularly how we procure community services in the future. We are working on those strategies and they will help to inform the future needs of the community.

**MRS KIKKERT:** While you are coming up with a strategy, what are vulnerable Canberrans meant to do when they are turned away or put on a long waiting list?

**Mr Steel:** Can you be more specific?

**MRS KIKKERT:** When they are coming to a service or an agency and they are turned away because the agency are unable to meet that demand, while you are working on a strategy to help that, what are they expected to do?

**Mr Steel:** I will pass on to Anne-Maree Sabellico to provide some further information about what we do in relation to our community services and the different programs we offer and fund through community participation.

**Ms Sabellico:** We have in place supports for agencies that are providing services through their relationship managers. They are able to address through them and also through their reporting where they are identifying significant issues with demand or waiting lists and everything else so that we can then get a better picture of what is occurring across the sector.

Part of that is looking at where we need to potentially look at other options to support a way to look at better connection with other services and developing pathways, having a look at what we have and how we can work a bit differently, as well as moving more towards identifying that we will be funding for outcomes rather than outputs. Therefore, the extent of the services that can be provided might look different to what it does now in order to achieve greater and more seamless service delivery across services as well. We can take a number of actions to look at it on a case-by-

case basis, as well as when we are moving towards looking at a far more needs-based assessment that considers the whole of the service system and how it connects in the delivery of supports for different cohorts.

**MRS KIKKERT:** You just said a key phrase there—there are actions you can take. Are you committed to taking those actions at this very moment so that we can improve the agencies and the services provided to vulnerable people? Saying that you can do something is very different to doing it.

**Ms Sabellico:** We would absolutely be committed to working in partnership, to have a look at what we might be able to do on a case-by-case basis.

**Mr Steel:** Part of this work in early support by design is trying to start earlier in the life of the problem in addressing issues. That is critically important to stop the manifestation of those issues then becoming a much larger problem which then requires more community services and more investment. So by starting early we can reduce the need for further support into the future, working with children and young people in whatever support they need earlier in the life of any issues that may be arising.

**THE CHAIR:** When you are looking to make those changes, a lot of work needs to be undertaken to make sure you are supporting people and children in those situations. It cannot just be a snap, yes?

**Ms Sabellico:** Yes, I agree. It is about better planning for some of that as well.

**Dr Collis:** There has been significant service design and improvement of recent years. One of the exemplars of that would be OneLink, which was developed to coordinate services. That has achieved some really great outcomes for vulnerable people in getting services stitched up and referring the right people to the right service.

There has been service design and within that kaleidoscope of services for vulnerable people—you would appreciate that vulnerable people do not necessarily think about their vulnerabilities in relation to our output classes—where demand for particular areas becomes evident the funding is moved around. With OneLink in particular, the child protection service puts significant resources into that to intervene early within that service. That service design came from a need established by our working closely with our service sector.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** We have been talking about it very much from the point of view of the clients and the government, which is all very well, but I would like to ask about the impact this is likely to have on the non-government sector funding, because a lot of these things we are talking about are provided by non-government organisations who may find either that government expectations have significantly changed or that their funding has just ceased. What sort of information and support has been provided to the sector?

**Mr Steel:** I will pass over to Jacinta Evans to first explain what we are doing in the child, youth and family services program. Generally speaking, many community sector organisations are moving towards more of an outcome-based framework for the

delivery of their services, which is very much aligned with where the government is heading in the early support by design work that is happening. Generally speaking, there is quite a bit of alignment with community organisations that want to look at how they can deliver services based on outcomes, not necessarily just on outputs.

**Ms Evans:** In terms of our children, youth and family support programs, we have spent about \$10 million in the last financial year across 26 organisations delivering those programs. Mrs Kikkert was asking about what we are doing rather than what we can do. The current state of affairs with those 26 organisations is that they are very much not just our partners in that but actually leading this work towards outcome-based approaches to their programs and to what they offer.

Currently they provide case management, group programs, youth engagement, therapeutic supports, youth engagement with people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and support for young carers, so a whole range of programs that we support them to do through our funding and through the relationship we have with each of those organisations. Ms Sabellico might be able to talk about how we are working with that sector to make sure the funding they currently have can translate into a new approach in future years.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That is what I am interested in. For the sector, how can they think of the future? What is going to happen to them?

**Ms Sabellico:** Under the early support by design work, in support of the NGO sector we are going to be working with them on looking at how we seek their commitment to progress changes to move to a more strategic commissioning by outcomes approach: what that means, what tools and resources we need to support that change to occur across the sector, and how we then progress the work of shifting to a service system that focuses more on early support, wellbeing and building resilience and development in families, children and young people, rather than waiting for that to come to a crisis, when the risks in those situations are higher. We will continue to work with the sector on that, particularly on what their contracts will need to contain going forward, how we move from an output to an outcome, and what that means in terms of government expectations and government accountability to the NGOs to deliver certain resources and supports to enable that to occur going forward.

Part of the early support by design work is about looking not just at how we shift the NGO sector but also at how we shift the government's service delivery so that we start to get far more of a connection between the two, rather than their being separated by the fact that we have services that are providing universal and some diversionary services, and then the rest is crisis, and the two are not connecting, apart from, say, through a reporting line. It is really important to look at how we can get that all working well so that a client experiences it seamlessly, gets the support when they need it and does not need to meet people's criteria to get the support. They are some of the changes we will look at going forward.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Are you anticipating that the amount of funding to the sector will be pretty much the same as it is, or are there likely to be increased resources, or is too early to say?

**Mr Steel:** There have been increased resources to many parts of the community services sector in recent budgets, but part of this is about using a resource that we already provide much better by reducing the need in the future for issues that become a much greater problem down the track, by intervening early and getting that early support. We are hoping to achieve better outcomes with the funding we already have, as well as continuing to look at whether further funding is required. We have been doing that in relation to a range of different organisations over the past few years.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Following up on early intervention, the early intervention by design initiative aims to create a more responsive human services system that identifies vulnerabilities and responds earlier. This is on page 63. Where exactly is this project up to in its staged approach? Is any part of it functional and, if so, what?

**Ms Sabellico:** At this point in time we have completed our early policy development work. That work has identified that we are looking at a 10-year plan to significantly change the service system, because it will take a lot to look at how we shift from being really crisis driven to being far more about the early support approaches.

From our research when we were developing the program for the 10-year plan, we know there is a significant amount of money spent at the tertiary end. We have got some funding down at the universal end, which is great. But then we do not have much in between in terms of supporting those that need more assistance in order to put in place some better early support and diversionary services from those crisis services. So we are focused on how we can bring both the government and the NGO sector together to deliver for that part of the system that is currently limited.

We have two horizons of work. The first is the 10-year plan. We have looked at: “What are all of the elements that you need to support that?” One of them would be clearly establishing an outcomes framework for an early support intervention focused service system, as well as some practice principles that sit right across the continuum so that everybody is joined up when somebody needs more and extra support. That feeds into looking at how you commission differently, rather than just contracting for output. As part of that there is the whole look at establishing a new baseline for what we have in the service system, particularly what we are looking at in terms of gaps, looking at the research and the leading practice and feeding that in so that we can have a clear view of what we want to commission. That is the 10-year program.

In order to be able to develop our evidence base around what we need for the ACT we also have some try, test and learn sites that we will be putting in place over the first two years. That will focus on some particular areas or gaps in service delivery that we have identified from our consultation with stakeholders, including with individuals and families that are not accessing the services, to understand why not. We will join up then with the other human services directorates in looking at how we progress with those try, test and learn sites so that we can get the information we need to form an evidence base about what works in the ACT and then progress it even further with policy work and design work around how we implement it going forward.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Was the design of this initiative influenced by successes in any other Australian or overseas jurisdiction?



**Ms Sabellico:** Yes. We have undertaken a review of research and some cross-jurisdictional analysis looking at better ways to build support services prenatally, as well as support once they have had the baby. We have been looking at the research around the first 1,000 days and what you need to provide all of the supports in order to support a child and a family to enter the early childhood system so that they are better ready for education and kindergarten, and what transitions we need to support them through into their middle years and adolescence. We have looked at a cross-section of research there to help inform the development of the models that we will try, test and learn from.

A lot of the models we have looked at have come from the United States. They have done some longitudinal studies, so we can use their research in a way that assists us to understand exactly what change in behaviour we want to see and how that impacts on the tertiary system. We have looked at research where we can identify that so as to put it into a cost-benefit analysis approach so that we can see what the true impact will be going forward.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Are you able to—

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Le Couteur actually had a follow-up question.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** A follow-up, yes. Minister, you said that the amount of money provided to this area had increased. But the note on page 34 relating to strategic indicator 3, “Value of community services support programs”, states:

The lower than targeted result is due mainly to a redesign of Family Safety initiatives and re-profiling of funds into 2018-19 for delivery of these initiatives.

**Mr Steel:** I am talking about across the board. This is a project that is sort of formed across the whole of CSD. There have been increases in support, particularly around family violence, in relation to housing and, of course, the new housing strategy. All these things have been funded over the last few budgets across a whole range of different community services areas, but I think you are pointing to one specific part of the budget—

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am pointing to one specific thing where—

**Mr Steel:** rather than looking at the holistic view of community services.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** as it said, it has gone down.

**Mr Steel:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What has been cut as a result of strategic indicator 3, the value of community services support programs, going down?

**Ms Wood:** Minister, I can take this one.

**Mr Steel:** Yes, thank you.

**Ms Wood:** Ms Le Couteur, that strategic indicator covers a subset, I guess, of funding that was provided to the community services sector; so it is not about all the community services that the ACT government funds.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I should hope not, with that amount of money.

**Ms Wood:** No, exactly. The shift in that particular indicator was driven by the fact that some of the family safety money was sitting within that funding envelope and some of that money was for front-line worker training. As we have developed a strategy for that, we rolled some funding forward. The funding is still there, but it has been rolled into this financial year. That is why it does not show up in last financial year. That is the thing that has affected that strategic indicator.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is it a timing issue, basically?

**Ms Wood:** It is a timing issue, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, is the volunteering statement action plan part of your responsibilities?

**Mr Steel:** Yes, it is.

**THE CHAIR:** Obviously, this is the new action plan. Can you give us a little more detail than is in the annual report?

**Ms Evans:** Certainly. We have partnered with Volunteering and Contact ACT to develop a plan that is for the ACT government and for Volunteering and Contact ACT to increase the support that is available for people that volunteer across the whole of the ACT in a range of ways. The kinds of actions that we are looking at are: how do we recognise people who volunteer, and give greater recognition, and how do we engage them in activities that they are interested in?

For instance, just before the multicultural community forum we had the opportunity to have a volunteering forum with people from diverse backgrounds to get a sense from them of what would suit them best for volunteering, what would be a good pathway for them into employment, and also what would they enjoy in terms of social engagement through volunteering. Volunteering and Contact ACT are facilitating that with the support from the office of multicultural affairs so that we can engage with a whole range of people. It is about practical actions like that within the plan but also a whole range of promotional activity as well around volunteering.

**THE CHAIR:** And are we talking volunteering as a—I do not know how to put this. Some people volunteer as an opportunity to build skills to gain employment and some people volunteer out of generosity or the nature of their being. Are both sides captured in the strategy?

**Ms Evans:** They are, absolutely. That is the benefit of having a peak body, in Volunteering and Contact ACT, engaged. They cover all of the kinds of volunteering that people might like. As you know, things like volunteering by visiting someone in hospital can be quite different from volunteering to develop new English language

skills. People have a range of ways they like to volunteer. Canberra is an incredibly generous population. Many people volunteer in our city. That is why we thought the focus on people from diverse language backgrounds was really important, to make sure that they feel as much a part of the community as many others do in engaging through volunteering.

**THE CHAIR:** Do we also capture things like people that volunteer to sit on boards?

**Ms Evans:** That is probably better captured through the diversity register at the moment.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Talking about capturing and volunteering, I am sure you have statistics about the ages of people who are volunteering. The experience I have is that it tends to be younger people and then older people and that in the middle years volunteering takes place through school social activities, school sport and such things. Do you have statistics on this?

**Ms Evans:** I do not have them available, but I am sure they are available through Volunteering and Contact ACT. I can take that on notice.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Thank you.

**MRS KIKKERT:** The strategic policy division provides performance data for the *Report on government services* and also for the national datasets for child protection and youth justice. Will this division be collecting and reporting the data for the national data collection and reporting framework that is due to begin operation in 2020? If not, who will?

**Ms Sabellico:** Yes. Strategic policy have what we call our strategic portfolio and data excellence team who are responsible for coordinating the national reporting requirements. Of course, we undertake that by making sure that we have the data that we need to consider. We provide an initial analysis, but we actually work then with either the rest of the divisions in the directorate or, where we need to, with other directorates to understand what that data is identifying for us so that we can appropriately feed into those national reporting systems both in terms of the data and then any qualitative information that might support that.

**MRS KIKKERT:** That is great. Thank you. That is all I have on that question.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that we have about two minutes remaining. I will ask a very quick question about the diversity register. Seriously, I hope it is going to be really quick. You answered my previous questions about the diversity register collecting data. Is it correct that it collects data across the board on all of the participants that the diversity register covers: LGBTIQ, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, multicultural directorates?

**Ms Evans:** That is correct, and I can tell you a little about that.

**THE CHAIR:** Please.

**Ms Evans:** It is a great story, actually. We launched the new diversity register on 1 June of this year. We only had about 66 people registered on an old form of register. By 30 June we had 192 people registered, and now we have 565 people registered on the diversity register, which is fantastic.

Seventy-two per cent of them are women; 11 per cent are people with disability; five per cent are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; 34 per cent are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and four per cent identify themselves as coming from the Defence Force at some point. It has really been fantastic to capture that.

That is the thing about having a common dataset that we are using everywhere; we all get the same information. Of those people that are on there, we have had about 146 registered applications for board positions, which is really great. That does not capture all of them, because some people advertise through the diversity register, but the applications go through another process such as SmartyGrants or their own in-house application process. We know that there is activity. It is not just people sitting on a register. Certainly, there is a strong amount of interest and activity.

**THE CHAIR:** Obviously, that is to help ensure that we are getting more women on boards and getting more diversity to support our community better.

**Ms Evans:** Absolutely, and growing people's leadership skills. Again, it is part of that social cohesion story of making people feel that they are part of the decision-making that we have in the city. I think it has been a really great initiative.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Do those people appointed to the boards have to undergo training and networking? I understand that it costs between \$330 and \$1,282. Is this part of the training? Is this training compulsory? If it is compulsory, are they required to pay the full amount or will they get some sort of financial support from the government? How is that done?

**Ms Evans:** This relates to funding through the office for women. There are a range of grants that provide board traineeship leadership training. We have a leadership program that provides about 25 women a year with training in leadership and board membership. We have at the moment also a mentor/mentee-ship program that is underway. We also have some other smaller grant amounts—we referred to them under the office for women's portfolio earlier—that provide that sort of support. Most boards would not require a paid training opportunity, but a lot of women would like to engage with these free opportunities that come up.

**THE CHAIR:** That was managed in the answers that we were given earlier about—

**Ms Evans:** That is right.

**THE CHAIR:** I note the time. We have unfortunately come to the end of this session with Minister Steel. We will come back at 1.45 pm for a second session with Minister Steel on multicultural affairs.

**Hearing suspended from 12.16 to 1.45 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back. This afternoon we will move to multicultural affairs to start with. Thank you, again, minister and officials, for attending. Before we go to questions I remind witnesses who appear for the first time to confirm for the record that they have read and understood the implications of the privilege statement before them. You were all here before.

I have a question for you, minister. There have been reports in the media about some recent comments that federal parliamentarians have made. What has been the effect that they have had on community harmony in the ACT?

**Mr Steel:** Since I became minister I have been meeting with a whole range of different multicultural communities to understand how they contribute to the community, and so many of them contribute in very significant ways and really build on their diversity and support inclusion in our community. Some comments that have been made by the Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton, have been noted within many multicultural groups in the community. I think they are incredibly unfortunate comments and are targeted in a very blanket way at the whole African communities that we have in Australia, particularly those in Victoria.

I certainly have been concerned about the effect that that might have had on the African communities that we have here in Canberra. At the end of September we celebrated the African-Australian awards, which was an absolutely fantastic celebration of the significant contributions of African Canberrans in particular to our community. I think there is certainly work that we can do to continue to support those communities and highlight the really significant contribution that they make rather than make those sorts of comments in the media which are inflammatory and which do not reflect a significant portion of the African community and the contribution that they make to the life of our city.

**THE CHAIR:** We are recognised as a refugee-safe zone, is that—

**Mr Steel:** Refugee-welcome zone.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for the terminology correction. How is that being managed and how is that being seen across our multicultural communities?

**Mr Steel:** It is, firstly, a very high symbolic commitment but it is one that we take very seriously. We are the only state or territory jurisdiction that has been able to make that commitment. I might pass over to Jacinta to talk about what the detail of that commitment actually means for particularly refugees.

**Ms Evans:** I suppose the main aspect of that is the way in which we are welcoming and greeting new arrivals to our city. In October we had 21 new refugees arrive in the city. Across the ACT we have got 170 people on safe haven visas and 25 on temporary protection visas. They are different categories set by the commonwealth around people's entitlements and the way that their access is being processed, I guess, into Australia. For us in the ACT the opportunity with the welcome zone is to be able to work with the commonwealth to make sure that people who do arrive, under whatever status they arrive, have the best possible start in their life in the city.

**THE CHAIR:** I attend a lot of the multicultural community events and people just love Canberra. Are you getting that same sort of feedback from some of the new arrivals in the ACT?

**Mr Steel:** Certainly. I recently met with a group of Commonwealth Games athletes who had chosen to stay in Australia after the Commonwealth Games and had made Canberra their home, supported by a range of different community organisations here but also by a range of community members who were prepared to support them and wrote a letter of reference for them to the commonwealth to support their claims for refugee status. A number of those individuals were from the LGBTIQ community as well and obviously that was one of the reasons why they were seeking refugee status here in Australia.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** On language schools, the annual report says there has been funding provided to the ACT Community Language Schools Association. Can you tell me how much funding?

**Ms Evans:** I probably do not have that right in front of me. I will just take a moment to find that for you. Before I do, can I just say that the agreement that we have with the language schools is to provide that funding based on the number of students they have accessing the schools. It does increase depending on the number of students in the schools. I probably have got it but it might just take me a moment.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is it a set amount; you get \$100 per term?

**Ms Evans:** Something along those lines, that is right. We have a meeting with them and discuss and have a look at the numbers that have come through and then set up our contract based on that. But I will just be a minute while I find that information, if you wanted to go to another question for a second.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** At the bottom of page 34 you can see our target for the number of people who agree that Canberra is a community that accepts people from different cultures has actually gone down very slightly, by one per cent, which I agree is a tiny amount. I am not getting too upset about that. Following on from Ms Cody's question, are we going in the wrong direction? One per cent is just noise but do you think it is indicative that the thing is probably bigger than the Australian parliament should announce? Look at President Trump et cetera.

**Ms Evans:** Obviously those kinds of variances are often not statistically significant, given the size of the sample. Nonetheless, what you want to see is an increase and not a decrease. And it is always really a good flag for us to be checking in on these kinds of indicators closely. What I would say is that in Canberra we currently are going through the process of heading into our multicultural summit where we have just had a series of round tables, community participation and an online your say forum for people to get engaged as we head into the summit which will inform the next action plan under the multicultural framework.

What I have really heard from people is that they love being in this city, that they feel highly engaged. We are talking about a very diverse group of people. Of course there

are things that people feel we could do better, and that is the feedback that we are asking for. That is great. But in terms of people saying do they feel accepted, in the main the feedback we get is yes, they do.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Can we get back to our language schools?

**Ms Evans:** Yes. \$200,000 goes out to schools annually, with \$74,000 to the association who do the coordination and provide some services.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And that \$200,000 you said is based on our having X pupils times Y?

**Ms Evans:** That is right.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** If there are more pupils—

**Ms Evans:** They have more for that setting, yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And is it generally CPI indexed or something as well as that?

**Ms Evans:** I do not know that it is CPI indexed. I think we have had a set amount per student for a little while now. But what we have had to adjust, because the numbers of students have increased, is adjusting for that. The minister was able to permit us to use some of the funding that we use for our more discretionary programs to further fund the language schools this year, which has been really valued.

**THE CHAIR:** How many language schools do we have?

**Ms Evans:** I only just signed that off yesterday, but let me look that up.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And when you look that up, can you also look at the number of pupils?

**Ms Evans:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How many schools and how many pupils are in them? “Students”, is that a better word?

**Ms Evans:** Yes.

**MRS KIKKERT:** And a follow-up question, you mentioned the multicultural summit. I understand that the 2015-18 action plan remained unfulfilled. There were many action plan items that were not being done. Will you be seeking to get caught up on these outcomes or will you just let these slide into the new action plan?

**Mr Steel:** I think any actions that are ongoing need to be considered in the new action plan as well. We are keen to make sure that the actions that are provided are measurable and achievable outcomes of the summit. And that is what I am looking forward to discussing.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Are there any action plans from 2015-18 that are in progress and that you can update us on?

**Ms Evans:** I can. One thing I would say about our frameworks is that we have quite a number of frameworks in the inclusion and participation area that have many actions, some of which, when we set them, we might have set for the particular year, 12-month period, and they will not be realised in that time simply because of the kind of work that is involved. But, having said that, that does not mean we just let them go. We usually have them ongoing. We call them open or in progress or whatever. Even under the new action plan there will be a number that will still be ongoing and in progress.

But certainly there have been a number of pieces of work in the 2017-18 framework—things like promoting the work experience and support program, WESP. We have had an enormous amount of interest in that program and it certainly has shown us that anything of the kind that helps people engage with employment is very valued. The WESP in itself is a really valued program but what the government has done is invest more in employment through our other services.

The Multicultural Employment Service have been engaging with our refugees, asylum seekers and others and they have given me some recent figures around the work that they have been doing. In this calendar year, from January to October, they have had 160 people added to their job search and been able to offer employment to 122 through their services.

I think that there are a number of actions that are very explicit in the way that they are stated, for instance, promote the WESP program, but actually the work is broader and it does go on and it might not be captured in the action plan in some cases, the other work that has been done.

The other one that I was going to draw your attention to is: “ensure members of the culturally and linguistically diverse community are informed of, including government policy development”. We have the commencement of our Multicultural Advisory Council this year. They have met, I think, four or five times now this year, and they are facilitating the summit. They engage but also, through those round tables that I previously mentioned, we have had a much broader range of people talking to us about policy, talking to us about programs and how they feel about the city more broadly, which will influence the way we go forward.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Multicultural community participation grants have been split into two streams, one for supporting participation in the Multicultural Festival and one for everything else. In addition, the criteria have been updated. Is the total value of the grants the same as it was in the past? Or more, or less? And if less, why?

**Ms Evans:** It is the same. The way we divided it was based on the kind of demand we had. For the festival, we have allowed 85,000 for festival participation, with the remainder for the other participation grants, to the same total as we previously had.

Certainly, the demand continues to grow in that space. In this year’s, we have finished the festival participation grants. The demand was around 430,000 for an offering of



only 85,000, so there is much more demand out there than there are grants. That is why we divided it. We wanted to give the community the opportunity to clearly consider what they are participating in. If it is the festival, they can ask for that funding and then come back for the second event, which is sometimes around things like celebrations that they are holding or other cultural events. That is why we divided it.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I understand that the funding for the community radio grants last year was \$41,890, but CSD received a request for funding that totalled more than \$126,000. That is a bit similar than what you were saying before. Consequently, many applications were denied, including some for radio programs that had been up and running for a number of years. Has the funding for community radio been cut or reduced in any way?

**Ms Evans:** No; it is the same.

**MRS KIKKERT:** It is still the same?

**Ms Evans:** It comes under the same grant round.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Because you have been receiving applications so much for community radio, will you be thinking about increasing the grants so that many more communities can participate?

**Mr Steel:** The government notes that there is a significant amount of demand for those grants; those are things that will have to be considered by government.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Have there been any changes in the criteria to receive those grants in the past several years? I understand that in previous years some community radio programs received a grant and then the following year they did not; however, everything was the same there: the same radio station, the same hosts. Were there any changes in the criteria?

**Mr Steel:** The nature of the grants is that they are assessed every year. They have to be assessed every year. There are different applications every year, some with more merit than others. I am sure that there are a lot that are meritorious that cannot be funded. It is a very tricky decision that the directorate has to make about where those grants are allocated. But there is not an ongoing funding agreement with some of those organisations; it is a grants program that is done year to year and assessed year to year.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Are you saying that the criteria have not changed over the years?

**Ms Evans:** The criteria have not changed. It is more around the merit of whatever we receive each year.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Who decides who receives the grant?

**Ms Evans:** We set up a panel for every round of our grants.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Who is on the panel?

**Ms Evans:** It always includes some government officials and some community members. The community members will be people who are, for instance, from the multicultural community but not people who would have, for instance, a radio program in that round. We try to pick somebody who does not have a conflict of interest around what is being promoted. For instance, with the seniors grants we might pick somebody from the multicultural community, and for the multicultural community we might pick someone from the seniors grants. We try to make sure that community members understand the area that they are going to be considering the grants in.

**MRS KIKKERT:** How many people are on the panel?

**Ms Evans:** Usually three or four, depending on how many community members join us.

**THE CHAIR:** And that would be to come in line with all grants that are administered by all government agencies? They have guidelines that you have to follow?

**Ms Evans:** Yes.

**MRS KIKKERT:** That sounds good. For people to be on the panel, what are the criteria? What did they have to do? Do you select them? Do they apply for it? Do you send out an application form? What is the process for having people on the panel, for them to be chosen? And is it an annual rotation type of thing?

**Ms Evans:** We generally have a range of people who have done it in the past. Or we might just put out a call into the community, usually through things like our Multicultural Advisory Council or equivalent bodies, to say, “This is a grant round that is coming up. We would like to make contact with people who might be able to assist us with this.” We can go out to our community leaders. It just depends on what the need is and who is available at the time.

Once the person has said that they are willing to do it, and if they have the time available when we need them, there is some basic training or upskilling for each person around things like conflict of interest, understanding transparency, making appropriate choices and taking into account the guidelines that apply to all grant processes.

**THE CHAIR:** With the grant processes, we are talking about multicultural communities. Do we look at ways to help support the multicultural communities to apply for grants? English is their second language; it can be a bit difficult to understand government processes.

**Ms Evans:** Yes. We have definitely tried to take approaches over the past few years where we have made opportunities available to people. On occasion, ACTCOSS have run things like grant round training for people to understand how to best apply. Also, when we have done some of our rounds, we have had our own stand-ups where people can drop in and ask questions. And any time someone applies through our

processes, there is always a phone number or an email address for people.

Often, also, the team can see in the SmartyGrants system who has applied. When people have started an application and not finished it, we will often contact them and say, “We can see you have opened a process. Is there anything that is stopping you from finishing it? Can we help you with something?” Sometimes it is just a matter of people getting into it and then thinking, “I don’t know what to do next.” So we do follow up in that way.

We occasionally get feedback from our communities saying that it is a bit difficult for people, but we put as many structures in place as possible to help them if they have a problem.

**THE CHAIR:** Ultimately, you want to be helping as many as possible.

**Ms Evans:** Yes. We keep it as open as we can.

**Mr Steel:** We are currently working through the opportunities for streamlining the application process, particularly for the Multicultural Festival participation grants, and looking at the options in regard to whether, when you are making an application as a stallholder for the festival, or as a performer, you might be able to complete an application form as part of the same process online, to make it as easy as possible.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I have heard from many community organisations that they were not able to sell any of their food stalls. That is at Civic Square. Can you explain why?

**THE CHAIR:** What are you referring to?

**MRS KIKKERT:** At the Multicultural Festival. Community members have been told that they cannot sell food stalls just outside the Assembly.

**Mr Steel:** Outside the Assembly area.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Do you mean sell food at stalls?

**MRS KIKKERT:** They are not allowed to have their food stalls just outside the Assembly.

**Ms Evans:** Mrs Kikkert, we might have responded to a question on notice on this matter. We always have members of our community as part of our planning, and the Legislative Assembly member raised with us that there were concerns about oil spillage and that having heaters and things like that outside the Assembly could affect the paving. Their request was that we did not put the stalls right in front of the Assembly but that we reconfigure the way the stalls were set up in that square. Obviously, a very important part of what we do with the footprint at the festival is that, with our business owners and our government institutions, we have to think about how the festival affects them. On that occasion we made some changes to where food stalls were located, versus information stalls or other stalls that do not have the issue with oil spillage, heating appliances and that sort of thing.

**THE CHAIR:** There would be ongoing work, every time you have a multicultural festival, looking at what happened last year and how we can improve on that for the next year.

**Ms Evans:** Absolutely. We have to take into account the feedback we receive in any given year. That may not have been raised with us as an issue before. For instance, last year we had a number of open-grill barbecues, which were putting out a lot of smoke. It had not really been raised with us as an issue before, but, for whatever reason, last year it was an issue. Of course, that smoke can affect art installations and people's health. We have had to ask people whether they are going to be using this particular kind of smoking grill, and think about where they are situated. That is part of how you manage the footprint.

**THE CHAIR:** The CSD report talks about citizenship ceremonies, and becoming an Australian citizen is an important milestone. I have had the great privilege of officiating at a couple, and the people are so excited. What about next year's citizenship ceremonies? Are we going to keep them going? Are we making any changes to the way we manage them?

**Mr Steel:** Citizenship ceremonies are a really important part of how we welcome new citizens and make them feel included in our city. That is certainly something that we want to continue to do. We are always looking at new ways of how we can support those events, which are some of the happiest events that we have the privilege of being a part of as members of the Assembly.

We have been working at some of the events with some partners. The Wattle Day Association was involved in some just recently. We are certainly keen to hear of any ideas about how we can strengthen those. When we look at inclusive cities around Australia, one of the benchmarks is how well we do those events. It is certainly something we can always look to strengthen; it will no doubt come out at the multicultural summit this month as well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am looking forward to attending the multicultural summit on the 23rd. Can you tell me a little bit more about it? Who will be attending?

**Mr Steel:** 150 members of the community. We would love to have more, but unfortunately the venue size is limiting us. That is why we had a series of round tables ahead of the summit, which have enabled everyone in the community to participate. We initially started with four round tables. We heard from the community that they wanted even more, so we put on an additional two during October. Those will help to feed in to a paper that will be released for members of the summit so that we can capture all of the ideas from the round table and have that feed directly into the summit discussions. I will pass over to Jacinta to elaborate on what the themes are for the summit.

**Ms Evans:** The summit is a great event for us in terms of our multicultural community, and one of the opportunities we have to spend time with everybody in the community, from the grass roots through to the community leaders. The community leaders have been fantastic in telling us that what they wanted was to give people in their community the opportunity to engage, which is why we had the extra two round

tables.

In terms of the themes, we are working to the multicultural framework. We have covered off on the first few years of that. We now need an action plan for 2019-20. The summit will help us to prepare that action plan for the two years. What we are looking to have, as the minister mentioned earlier, are some really good, measurable and achievable goals for that period. Even if they are not achieved in that period, what will the milestones be in 2019 and 2020 that our multicultural community have told us that they are interested in?

We have been looking at the themes of employment, and the future of Canberra in terms of our youth. We have been thinking about what social cohesion looks like, really broadly. We have included people not just from the multicultural community but from across the whole diverse range of Canberra's citizens, including older people, younger people, and people from different life and gender experiences, to try to make sure that this is about what makes our city livable for everybody. What comes out of that summit should increase people's perception of Canberra as an inclusive city.

**THE CHAIR:** I note the time, and I would like to thank the minister and officials for joining us today.

**Ms Evans:** Chair, may I give one piece of information?

**THE CHAIR:** Please.

**Ms Evans:** Earlier, I said I would say how many language schools we had. We have 42 funded schools and three playgroups. In terms of student numbers, it is \$90 per eligible student. That is how the funding is distributed.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Can I confirm, in regard to the stalls in Civic Square, that there will be no food stalls outside the Assembly; however, they will be replaced with information stalls. Is that what you are saying?

**Ms Evans:** Yes.

**MRS KIKKERT:** But there will still be food stalls in Civic Square?

**Ms Evans:** There will still be food stalls, just not in front of the—

**MRS KIKKERT:** Just not in front of the Assembly?

**Ms Evans:** That is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** We will break for a moment.

**Short suspension.**

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

Collis, Dr Mark, Deputy Director-General

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

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Executive Director, Inclusion and Participation

Dunne, Ms Ellen, Director, Office for Disability

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

Robinson, Ms Jodie Robinson, Senior Director, Practice and Performance

Saballa, Ms Melanie, Director, Children and Families

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

Calder, Ms Robyn, Senior Director, Corporate Services

**THE CHAIR:** I welcome to the next part of our hearing the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister Stephen-Smith, and officials. I remind witnesses when they appear for the first time to confirm for the record that you have read and understood the implications of the privilege statement before you.

Minister, I want to talk about our first Reconciliation Day in May. Can you expand on how the Reconciliation in the Park event went?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Well, it was fabulous. And I will hand over to Anne-Maree for some more detail.

**Ms Sabellico:** Thank you, minister. So with our first Reconciliation Day public holiday we had our Reconciliation in the Park event at Glebe Park. Estimated attendance was about 8,000 people, and the feedback has been very positive about the event. A survey was undertaken on the day where we asked people in attendance to answer a range of questions. We got some very positive feedback in terms of people saying it gave them at least a basic or a deeper understanding of why we acknowledge reconciliation and its relevance as well as it being important to mark Reconciliation Day with such an event.

From that feedback as well as some feedback from another survey that was on the your say website, we are looking at all the information to look at how we progress for Reconciliation Day public holiday number two and the event we organise. We will, of course, work with the Reconciliation Day council around looking at how to establish the program for next year.

**THE CHAIR:** I understand a Reconciliation Day council was engaged to shape the day's events and tone. How involved was the council?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** They were very involved. You are probably aware that the co-chairs of the council, Chris Bourke and Genevieve Jacobs, emceed on the day, so

they were involved right there. Other members of the council participated in and facilitated various activities. A particular shout out should go to Matt Davies from Red Cross who facilitated a lot of the children's and school engagement activity and was a driving force behind the engagement of the community sector in Reconciliation Day. But all of the members of the council played an important role in shaping the day and the messaging around it.

Prior to the day the council and the ambassadors they identified were talking to various community groups and businesses around what reconciliation means in the ACT, why Reconciliation Day is important and how you can get involved. That was a learning experience on both sides.

The Reconciliation Day council has recently met to review the outcomes of the event and the other activities around Reconciliation Day and has made some recommendations to me about how we go forward in terms of both the council and Reconciliation Day activities. I recently received that letter and I am considering how to take that forward.

**THE CHAIR:** Grants were provided to community groups to engage in the involvement in Reconciliation Day. Were they well received?

**Ms Sabellico:** They were well received. We had \$50,000 to expend on the Reconciliation Day. We expended about \$61,000, and that supported 19 applications for activities leading up to Reconciliation day, Reconciliation Day and then post Reconciliation Day, including supports for schools to engage closely with their communities as part of their ongoing reconciliation process.

**THE CHAIR:** Will the government continue to support community organisations to be involved in Reconciliation Day?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes. The funding that was provided in 2018-19 budget includes the same amount of funding we had last year ongoing, and will include both the event and a grants program.

**Ms Sabellico:** A group meets regularly to look at how they support the program of work.

**MR MILLIGAN:** In relation to the 2018-19 grants that were awarded, can you confirm that only three Indigenous organisations were awarded grant money? Have you got a strategy to put in place to try to increase the number of Indigenous-led organisations to take part in Reconciliation Day?

**Ms Sabellico:** Can I take that on notice?

**MR MILLIGAN:** Yes, sure.

**Ms Sabellico:** I think it is more than three, but I just want to confirm how many and then give you the details.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** But the broader point you make, Mr Milligan, is a valid point.

One of the things we were really keen to ensure about both the Reconciliation Day event and the pre-event activities and engagement was that it was not about non-Indigenous people feeling good about talking about reconciliation and that it was actually about bringing the community together and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community leaders and members to talk about the true history of our city, our region and our nation.

It is really important to emphasise that even where the grants went to non-Indigenous-led organisations, part of the criteria was you must be involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to tell their story about reconciliation. That is a critical part of how we manage Reconciliation Day going forward.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Were applicants not awarded grants because you had run out of funding or did you provide funding pretty much to all the applicants?

**Ms Sabellico:** We provided funding to all the applicants who met the criteria and were able to demonstrate they were achieving the purpose and intent of the grants in order to support reconciliation.

**MR MILLIGAN:** You awarded more than what you have budgeted for. Is there a possibility that you could increase the available grant money into the future beyond that \$50,000?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Well, we have the \$50,000 budget, so I guess it will depend in part on what is available through our other grant streams. One of the things to be said about the applicants for this particular grant program—and we do it across our programs—is if we identify an alternative funding stream that would be more appropriate we will direct people towards that. Some of the additional funding Anne-Maree talked about came from an underspend in the cultural grants program.

We have the experience where the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants programs have been underspent over the past few years. We are in the process of having of conversation about how we can be more flexible about using that funding to ensure that it is going to the community and not given back at the end of the year.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I want to go to page 22 and talk about older persons accommodation. It says that community engagement is going to start in August. Has it started? And what is the plan and how is it all going?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** The Mura Gunya culturally appropriate housing complex for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is actually a project in the housing portfolio.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It is reported on page 22, so I thought that you would have something to do with it.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** That section of the annual report actually reports about our outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the entire directorate. Each directorate has a section in the beginning of the annual report that reports on



outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay. So you will say exactly the same if I ask you about the next subheading, which is “Specialist homelessness services”? And the same will go for child, youth and family services? It would be in the same boat, I assume.

**THE CHAIR:** We do have a section on child, youth and family services this afternoon.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You do not have anything to report specifically from your point of view?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No. We probably will talk about those this afternoon.

Probably the most significant development in the children, youth and families portfolio around supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families is the establishment of the Our Booris, Our Way process. We would be happy to talk about that later or we can do it now.

It is important to acknowledge that having a review of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care and child protection that is entirely led by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander steering committee is, I think, a unique process. Other jurisdictions have had reviews. Victoria had task force 1000. Queensland produced the our way process. But this is a unique process in empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to identify the issues and the solutions themselves. From an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs portfolio perspective, and in line with the agreement objective of really highlighting self-determination, that is an important process.

**THE CHAIR:** I am sure we can talk about it more; it is just that we have a very short time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but we have a long time for children, youth and family affairs.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am told that the position of director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs is vacant and has been for some time. That is one which I think must be yours.

**Ms Sabellico:** Not anymore. Lisa Charles has been recently appointed as the director for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs unit.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You have your portal designed as a central access point for all government initiatives. Can I make a suggestion? Shouldn't you have a link to ACT Housing and OneLink?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I do not have strong families open in front of me, but we are happy to take that on board if it does not have the links.

**MR MILLIGAN:** I want to refer to the 2015-18 agreement. There is a section where you talk about actions and initiatives, quality of life, outcomes and so forth. The annual report is not yet out for 2017-18. Do you have any feedback on outcomes that

you have achieved over the last 12 months, will they contribute to the agreement going forward, how can people provide feedback based on that from the community, and will they get an opportunity to provide feedback that will contribute to a new agreement?

**Ms Sabellico:** There are probably a lot of questions in there.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** One of the advantages and opportunities that was presented by having each directorate summarise the outcomes they have achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the front of their annual report is that it does provide a succinct summary for each directorate on what they have done to progress outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. That is in line with the agreement. The current agreement has seven areas of focus, so each directorate has one or more, and mostly more, areas that are related.

The other two really important elements are: what opportunities does the community have to (a) hold the government to account and (b) provide feedback? Obviously the elected body holds annual hearings with directorates, and that is a really important process for the elected body: to be able to ask any question they want across any directorate as to how they are contributing to achieving the outcomes that are identified in the agreement and how specific programs are working.

You are probably aware that I have asked the elected body for some advice about anything that they would like to see to strengthen the hearings process. We have not got the report from the most recent hearings yet, but my understanding is that that process went really well. The elected body were very pleased with how prepared directorates were. The elected body themselves had questions from the community as well as their own questions.

In terms of the community's capacity to provide feedback on the current agreement and the agreement going forward, the elected body and the office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs have been, throughout the year, conducting various consultations, including a consultation on your say around what should go into the next agreement.

**MR MILLIGAN:** How many public community forums has the elected body held during 2017-18? Was it one?

**Ms Sabellico:** According to their consultation plan, they were to look to four within this year. They have had three, with the fourth being planned.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** That is within the 2018 calendar year.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Referring to the 2015-18 agreement, the shared vision in that agreement states that you are going to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the community and their organisations to develop the opportunities, knowledge and skills, to build an empowered, resilient and sustainable future. How do you think the government is performing in relation to those targets to achieve that, considering that 28 per cent of our children are in out of home care, we have Indigenous kids two years behind our non-Indigenous students, fewer than 20 per cent

of Indigenous students are completing year 12, and 27 per cent of our inmates in AMC are Indigenous? How does the government mark itself, grade itself, in relation to the outcomes the Indigenous community are experiencing now in the ACT?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** We recognise that we have a long way to go. That is why we have started the Our Booris process in relation to child protection and out of home care. Minister Rattenbury is very focused on reducing over-representation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the corrections system. We have obviously invested in the Yarrabi Bamirr and family support initiatives both through Winnunga Nimmityjah and through the Aboriginal Legal Service and Women's Legal Centre to try to support families who have a parent who is incarcerated. There is a lot of work going on in the child and family centres in early intervention and case management for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. And the Education Directorate's cultural integrity strategy is a really significant change in the way that they are thinking about how they support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. It is a really big cultural shift.

We know we have a long way to go. We measure ourselves against the closing the gap targets set at the national level. We have seen improvement, but it is not good enough. We like to take—and the agreement takes—a strengths-based approach. We want to celebrate the fact that we have strengths in the community. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is incredibly resilient and strong, and we need to build on that.

We do not want to always be talking about the gaps and the deficits, but we know that we have gaps and we need to address them.

**MR MILLIGAN:** How are you going to manage it, assess it and make sure that those outcomes are improving over the next, let us say, 12 months? And will these measures be put in place in with the new agreement being put forward?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes. The annual report on the agreement that I tabled last year included the new outcomes framework. We have been continuing to work on the outcomes framework throughout this year for the annual report that will be tabled later this year. One of the things we were really keen to ensure for the next agreement was that it came with a developed outcomes framework. Those measures need to meet the SMART goals; I cannot remember what all the letters in SMART stand for, but essentially they need to be meaningful and measurable outcomes measures. The data that we collect has been part of the challenge: sometimes with the things we want to measure we do not actually have the data to measure those things.

But you are right: we need an outcomes framework. We need to measure. It is also really challenging to measure year on year. We are talking about often addressing intergenerational disadvantage and intergenerational trauma. We need to be improving every year, but we are not going to close those gaps in the space of 12 months or even a four-year budget cycle.

**Ms Sabellico:** In consideration of that, we are looking at the next agreement being for 10 years so that we can appropriately track the outcomes that we are achieving to align to the focus areas. We are working very closely with all of the directorates

around looking at how we start with the work that we are doing now, which will leverage for change going forward. It really is more of an incremental approach to looking at achieving for the outcomes rather than doing it each year and then looking at doing something a bit different. It is a longer term approach.

**THE CHAIR:** Are they the only changes that will be made to the agreement? Is the 10-year plan the only change or will there be other changes after consultation?

**Ms Sabellico:** We will be refining the plan in order to be able to achieve it for the 10-year time frame. We are also looking to align a bit more to the closing the gap focus areas and targets, because we will need to embed them in order to report appropriately to the commonwealth on that. And the key themes that have come out from our community consultations will be incorporated.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** The current agreement identifies seven key focus areas; the focus areas that went out for community consultation identified by the elected body to date were 10 focus areas and included some focus areas around addressing systemic racism, driving that cultural change.

**MR MILLIGAN:** In relation to the lessons learned from the current agreement, how have they been incorporated into the new agreement and how will they be applied to the office? How will the office apply those lessons learned and then communicate them with all the other directorates?

**Ms Sabellico:** In looking at the agreement refresh, we have undertaken to look at how we have gone in terms of being able to measure against the focus areas and the outcomes within the outcomes framework.

One of the things we have identified is that there needs to be far more focus on looking at how we embed some of those outcome indicators into our core business systems across directorates so that they can be appropriately then reported upon. We are also looking at the baseline we are currently at, so that we know what success looks like as we are going forward, and setting up a process of continuous review so that if we need to make a change or amend as we go in order to be able to achieve for the goal at the end of the 10 years, we can do that sooner rather than later.

We have been working very closely with each of the directorates around looking at supporting not only the development of the agreement but also the ongoing implementation of the agreement across all directorates. We are also working together in terms of looking at primary leads as well as supporting leads, because we know that if we are going to achieve the results, we will need the coordinated efforts of those directorates that need to come to the table to achieve. It cannot be done by one directorate alone.

With the office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, one of the things since Lisa has started is that we have been talking about what their role needs to be in terms of progressing the agreement. A lot of that is about how we better support and coordinate across government in order to achieve further results: what else can we do to support each directorate to achieve some of the actions that might be identified there by way of policy support and cultural advice? The office will be looking at

establishing that process across government.

**THE CHAIR:** I thank the minister and officials. We will resume at 3 o'clock with the minister for disability.

### **Hearing suspended from 2.41 pm to 3.00 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** We will move on to disability services, including the NDIS, disability and therapy services, as well as human services regulation. Thank you again, minister, for attending today. Before we go to questions, I will remind witnesses appearing for the first time to confirm for the record that you have read and understand the privilege implications of the privilege statement that is before you. Thank you.

Minister, I would like to start with the disability justice strategy. What is the current status of the disability justice strategy?

**Ms Dunne:** The current status of the disability justice strategy is one of its development. We have just completed quite an extensive consultation process. We have consulted very broadly within the sector and we are gathering information from people who have disabilities, people who care for people with disability, and people in organisations, both in the sector as well as in the justice system.

The intent of this first phase of the development of the strategy is to look at the evidence that is available nationally, to look at what has occurred in other jurisdictions. We have done a literature review, gathering information from people who have life experiences and who have stories to tell about their journey.

The consultative process has been far-reaching. It has spanned a significant number of months. We are at the point where we are consolidating now a report which will provide all of that information. It will be published and we will then have another consultative round where we will test some of the information that is provided in that.

In the background we are working on a number of initiatives that we think fall out of that work that we have identified as we go along this journey. We anticipate that we will put to government a proposal that will be a 10-year plan, with evaluation points, and we will try to address the initiatives that are most urgent in the initial phase of the strategy.

**THE CHAIR:** What have you learned from the disability community in the consultation phase so far?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** One of the important things that we have learned is how big the definition of "justice" is. A number of other jurisdictions' disability justice strategies tend to be focused on the criminal system—different aspects of it. We have heard of experiences across the interaction with the civil law as well as criminal law, as both victims and as people being charged with crimes or being apprehended by police—different parts of the justice system.

**Ms Dunne:** I think the biggest learning is that this is a huge cultural issue for us within society. People with disability and functional impairment, in order to access

justice equally, on the same basis as everyone else, require a degree of support and adjustment to enable that to occur.

The initiatives that we think will help achieve that are very basic things like training, support tools, support for people who are required to provide evidence, and liaison officers. The training is really important, right from the very beginning, in terms of touch points that people may have within the system. How does one address issues with the police? How do the police respond to that? How are they supported through that journey? If it gets to the DPP, how does that happen? Within the Magistrates Court, what kind of support for the provision of evidence is there, and that kind of thing?

The cultural change is huge. It is probably a generational change. We are faced with: what do we do today to support young people and adults; and what are the kinds of things that we can invest in to make a difference? I note that we think this particular strategy would have at least a 10-year lifespan, to address all of the gaps that the minister has outlined.

It is then about the next generation. When we talk about early supports and early intervention, what can we start doing for the community as early as possible so that we prevent a repeat of the kinds of experiences that people have today? One should not underestimate society and the cultural barriers that people face. I think that will be the biggest challenge. Talking to people, making people aware, providing training, providing tools, providing support and the issue of general awareness are really what we have learned so far.

**MS LEE:** In terms of work around jurors and Auslan training, is there an update on that, particularly in relation to changes to the Juries Act?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** My understanding is that an amendment was made that is enabling jurors who require an interpreter to—

**MS LEE:** Yes. I am wondering how the facilitation is going. In estimates there was a discussion about there not being enough Auslan interpreters, and there was some discussion about making sure that we have them available. I am wondering whether there has been an update.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** At the last estimates we had a bit of a conversation about the availability of Auslan interpreters and the need to get to a critical mass of demand in order for it to be viable for an additional Auslan interpreter or more than one to come into the market and create a job out of it. I do not have an update.

**Ms Dunne:** We currently have two level 3 qualified Auslan interpreters in the ACT. That is the necessary accreditation required. Additional interpreters may be flown in to Canberra from interstate. That is at a cost to the organisation, of course, the ACT court. New South Wales has 30 level 3 qualified Auslan interpreters and Victoria has 40.

As the minister was saying, it is probably about supply and demand. We are working with the courts, JACS and LPP to identify contacts and keep an eye on whether there

are sufficient people available and whether the initiative of flying people in is sustainable or not, having regard to the cost. I know myself, with respect to one of the staff we have who requires an Auslan interpreter, that there must be a shortage because it is very difficult to get somebody.

**MS LEE:** Certainly, at that level, too.

**Ms Dunne:** Absolutely, yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** On page 58 Community Connections received \$50,000 to redevelop the homeshare program as a self-managed service. What does that mean?

**Ms Dunne:** Community Connections had a program in place which was quite creative and innovative. Do you know about the homeshare program itself?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I think I do; my question really was about the self-managed service. What do you mean by that? Do you mean that it is self-funding?

**Ms Dunne:** Homeshare is a service that provides a person with a disability and who has a home the opportunity, in exchange for free accommodation and whatever other arrangements are made, for a person to live within the home and provide support to the individual. That model is not supported by the NDIS. We had offered, through the sector development fund, an amount to allow the arrangement that is currently in place to continue until other funding mechanisms were sought, and I understand that that is in train.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** The seeking out of funding mechanisms?

**Ms Dunne:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Are you involved with the housing directorate's housing innovation fund? Did this program apply for it?

**Ms Dunne:** I believe that it did.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Presumably, it was not successful?

**Ms Dunne:** I am not sure.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** On the basis of what they have said publicly, it was not successful. I can tell you that much.

**Ms Dunne:** No, I am not involved with that.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** The next round of the housing innovation fund, if I recall correctly, will have a focus on support for housing options for people with disability.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I suppose you are not the right people to ask why it was not successful. The housing innovation fund arose out of a parliamentary agreement item, and we have felt for a long time that there has to be real potential for better utilisation

of houses to suit people who may have excess space, people who need somewhere to live, and people who need something more than Gumtree or an ad on Facebook to find a suitable housemate.

**Ms Dunne:** I have been passed a note to talk about the housing forum which we are organising, and which will be held on 16 November. This is as a result of the minister's discussions with Rob De Luca, the CEO of the NDIA, in relation to NDIA's approach to SDA.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** SDA?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Specialist disability accommodation.

**Ms Dunne:** In effect NDIS provide an incentive for developers to build accessible housing for people with disability. The way it works is that if a person qualifies, that money is part of their package. If people have that money available in their package, they are able to negotiate with people to say, "I've got so much money for the rest of my life; these are my requirements, so what can you do for me?"

The issue is that it has been quite slow in its implementation. We were keen to bring together people from the agency and various parts of the community to look at what is happening nationally, to see whether there are jurisdictions where they have had more success than others, to see what that was all about, and to talk about creative solutions and options for people.

That forum will be held on 16 November. We will be publishing it soon, and we are hoping that the issues that you are raising will actually be raised there, too. It is about what funding is available, what the various sources of funding are, and what the creative ideas and initiatives are. People who will be involved in this forum are people who have an absolute passion for and interest in pursuing this, and achieving good outcomes for people. Accommodation, housing, is, of course, one of those things that is really critical.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Absolutely.

**MS LEE:** I want to ask a couple of questions about NDIS providers. Who is actually responsible for ensuring that planners, reviewers, are appropriately qualified?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** That is the NDIS.

**Ms Lee:** The NDIA?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** NDIA.

**MS LEE:** And does the ACT government have any role in relation to that?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No, planners and reviewers are employed by the NDIA. We have a lot to say about the importance of planners, and of course they are supported by the LAC, the local area coordinator. As far as care in the ACT is concerned, again we do not have any direct responsibility.



**MS LEE:** No regulatory responsibility?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No. But we obviously have a lot to say about the quality of plans and the training and quality of planners in terms of their capacity to respond to the range and complexity of people's disability, and the impact of that on their lives.

**MS LEE:** In terms of the relationship that the ACT government, through the Office for Disability, has with NDIA and their office care, is it a formal arrangement? Is there a formal review process on how the plans are going, the quality of plans? How does that come about?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No, the ACT government does not have any responsibility for ensuring that quality plans are being delivered but we do have a lot of connection with and relationship with NDIA. Ms Dunne can probably talk more about the relationship with the LAC and the ECEI provider in terms of the various forums that are held to talk about the issues that arise.

We have the broader policy level responsibility of identifying systemic issues that we are seeing in the ACT and feeding those in. And there are a range of mechanisms that we use to communicate with the NDIA, which Ellen can talk more about.

**Ms Dunne:** We have an operational working group and we have a number of subgroups that sit below that which have various portfolio responsibilities. We try to deal with things at a local level and, for the majority of situations, that works fine. Sitting above that we have an executive steering committee, which is a new governance arrangement that has been put in place since the NDIA had a restructure.

We are yet to meet but we have been working on the terms of reference and standing agenda items. We are hoping that that will allow us to refer any operational issues, which might be around quality of planning or the issues that you raised earlier, and we would be able to escalate them to that particular committee. That committee would have general managers of the highest levels within the NDIA attending. Those two levels of governance are what we have currently, and supporting all that are escalation procedures, if critical issues are brought to our attention that we are unable to resolve quickly, though I think there is a two-day time frame for which we need to be able to come to a resolution.

We are quite comfortable with the governance arrangements that are in place. We feel as though we can raise any systemic issues and in fact, on an individual level, we have been very successful in advocating for individual people, and in the annual report we note that last year there were 130 cases that were referred and although we have not been able to develop a reporting framework yet—it is in the process—we will be able to analyse those issues in more detail and provide other reports through the operational working group and even up to the executive steering committee.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I guess the other thing we should mention is the funding for the integrated service response that was provided in the 2018-19 budget as supporting two additional staff in the Office for Disability to work across the interface between NDIS and mainstream systems. In that sense that will also be helping to resolve the

support cases for individual people with complex needs who are not getting the resolution that they need from the NDIS in a timely way.

**Ms Dunne:** The NDIA will know about those because we will be talking to the NDIA in respect of all referrals that we receive.

**MS LEE:** On the integrated service response provider that you just mentioned, minister, typically what are the emergency or priority situations that are likely to be funded under that program?

**Ms Dunne:** Most of the kinds of issues are respite—funding for respite, funding for support—and then the most important thing is to make sure that we have a coordinated response across all the mainstream services, such as health and education—on one occasion that was an issue—and the NDIA to make sure that we all understand what the situation is. It is the last resort, if you like, for us to dip into our emergency funding and on a lot of occasions we have been able to sort something out with the NDIA. I think that the two major things are respite and supports.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** And people.

**MS LEE:** Is there a cap on how much and is it means tested? Is that how you—

**Ms Dunne:** No, it is not means tested and there is no cap. We have issued on our website a referral form and some information about the scheme and how it works. Until now we have had, I think, eight referrals. I think that it is working reasonably well. We are not alarmed about the kinds of supports that we are providing. I think that with the two new staff on board we will be able to develop a good reporting framework and have a look at the experience and then we will be in a position at the end of the 12-month period to have an opinion about whether it needs to continue or not and the impact the pathways review and other transformational changes—and there are many—that the NDIA are undertaking to improve the experience for people. When one says “improve the experience” it is about the quality of planning, the supports and utilisation, that kind of thing.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Just to check through what Ms Dunne said there, if you just do a search on your favourite search engine for ACT government integrated service response there is now a page on the CSD website that describes the program as well as providing that referral form that Ellen referred to.

**Ms Dunne:** If I could just correct a stat that I gave you, the program supported 11 people.

**MS LEE:** Eleven, not eight.

**Ms Dunne:** Eleven. And from July to October we have paid \$88,183.

**THE CHAIR:** I want to talk about disability inclusion grants. I was just wondering: the government increased the funding for these grant rounds last year. Why was this done?

**Ms Dunne:** The reason was that we had an enormous number of applications, around half a million.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Half a million dollars, not half a million applications.

**Ms Dunne:** Dollars, yes, half a million dollars worth. They were creative and great ideas and we thought that there was a case to improve and to extend the money available through that grants process.

**THE CHAIR:** And what does the government hope to achieve with the disability inclusion grants?

**Ms Dunne:** I think one of the things is to encourage and support inclusion and participation. We feel that it is very important that people with disabilities are able to join clubs and to be part of society generally. There are barriers when people are faced with visiting certain organisations if the organisation is not easily accessible. That is the first problem.

Other problems are around being welcomed and staff having an understanding about how they could support and encourage people to participate in various events, functions and clubs. Participation in and inclusion within society generally are really important. We feel that the kinds of things that people are thinking about do demonstrate that there is an openness and a willingness to be more inclusive.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I think the other thing to note is that I announced that there were 15 successful grants in September but the directorate was really proactive, when considering the grant applications, in looking at some themes across them and trying to look at other ways that organisations could be supportive, for example, rather than funding an individual organisation to go off and do some training, actually organising for that kind of training to be delivered in the ACT.

I have been really impressed with the way the Office for Disability has thought outside the box in relation to how we best use our scarce resources, our networks and contacts to continue to foster inclusion and participation in the community.

**THE CHAIR:** How has local business responded to the disability inclusion grants?

**Ms Dunne:** We made a decision that we would extend the opportunity to profit and non-profit organisations and I think that there has been an absolute groundswell of support. To have applications in the first year totalling half a million dollars for very creative ideas across the public and private sectors was really outstanding. What we have been able to do is talk to those organisations and also keep them interested and talk about ideas that we have that they could perhaps implement without necessarily having the funding. We are collecting data and gathering evidence to really demonstrate that there are innovative ideas and solutions available to help.

**MS LEE:** Just a quick sup: minister, you mentioned, I think, 16 successful grants. How many actually applied?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I am probably being a little naughty, because this is obviously

outside the annual reports period, but the most recent grant round offers was 15 successful organisations and my recollection is we had—I do not know how many—

**Ms Dunne:** I do not know that.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** 57 applications detailing ambitious initiatives that clearly demonstrate the ACT community's commitment to promoting and including people with a disability.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I return to the theme that you started with about advocacy. Which disability peak organisations and efficacy organisations are funded by the office? What is the total amount of funding?

**Ms Dunne:** The peaks that we fund are NDS—National Disability Services—People with Disability, Women with Disabilities and there is one other.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** ADACAS, this year? ADACAS, wasn't it?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** In advocacy, both ADACAS and Advocacy for Inclusion received funding.

**Ms Dunne:** I do not have the amounts with me today, but I can give you that on notice.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Okay. Is it ongoing funding?

**Ms Dunne:** It is ongoing funding. It is built into our base. We see a real need and benefit to fund these peak bodies. Yes, I would say that it is ongoing.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** That is good. I have been told that not all the organisations feel that they are getting enough money even to cover what they are currently trying to do. I am very glad that at the least it is ongoing because I had heard earlier on that the idea was that it might be a short-term transition thing, but no.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** There are probably two things to say on that. The additional funding that was provided for advocacy in this year's budget is a two-year program that will then be assessed, because it is specifically related to the NDIS transition. It will then be assessed in terms of what people's experience with NDIS is like and whether that is improving and the need for advocacy is reduced in the next couple of years. My recollection is that the Office for Disability also has provided some additional funding for people with disabilities that—

**Ms Dunne:** Yes.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** was short term, some specific one-off additional funding.

**Ms Dunne:** We did. We provided them with, I think it was, \$10,000 from the sector development funding that we had. That was in order to allow them to have a look at their business model. At one point in time they felt that they were in trouble

financially. We provided a lot of support to them and got them through that particular period. In order for them to get on top of things and have a good, close look at their business model, we provided them this further funding. We have not really been asked to assist any further at this point.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** The other peak is Carers ACT.

**Ms Dunne:** That is right.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I note from the annual report that the Office for Disability itself, the ACT government itself, provided individual advocacy for 130 people to the NDIA. Why did you have to do this and fund all the bodies as well? How do you divvy up who does what advocacy?

**Ms Dunne:** I think the total of 130 refers to the individual cases that were brought to our attention through various means, either letters from constituents to the minister that were referred or to individuals who came to the Office for Disability for support.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Ms Le Couteur, one of the things we became aware of, and what prompted the additional funding for advocacy in this year's budget, was that ADACAS particularly was struggling to provide the level of advocacy around access to NDIS, around internal reviews. So they have some specific funding around supporting people with appeals to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal but they were struggling to meet demand in relation to other advocacy support. I think that has fed into an additional demand for the ACT government but also for MPs to provide advocacy.

I think it is an unfortunate situation that for some people their own individual efforts to have their voices heard by the NDIS have not been sufficient. When a minister gets involved or a state department gets involved, suddenly they move up in that level of importance. It should not be that way, but I think it is good that the Office for Disability is there and has been incredibly diligent in supporting some people who were not necessarily in a position to navigate the complexity of the NDIS by themselves.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Would you anticipate probably having an ongoing role in doing individual advocacy as well as funding a bunch of organisations to do it as well?

**Ms Dunne:** Yes, absolutely.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Particularly when people have an intersection with the mainstream service system as well; so the ACT government has a direct interest in ensuring that they can get the support they need from NDIS.

**THE CHAIR:** I am aware of the time. Is the minister happy to answer another quick question on disability before we move on?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I am in your hands.

**MS LEE:** On page 67 it is stated that there are 179 disability service providers. Is that

the current number? Are we still on that 179 number?

**Ms Gibson:** That is the number of regulated specialist disability service providers. There are actually far more providers of disability services than that, but they are not, under the legislation, considered specialist disability service providers; so we do not regulate them.

**MS LEE:** I see; that now makes sense in terms of number. In terms of the 179 that we have, are we okay in terms of ensuring that that is enough service providers for the 6,140 ACT residents that are on—

**Ms Gibson:** Remembering that those are providers of a very specific set of services to people.

**MS LEE:** Yes.

**Ms Gibson:** In fact, since the annual report, we have added another 20-odd; so we are up around 200 regulated specialist disability services.

**MS LEE:** So that has gone up.

**Ms Gibson:** It is continually growing.

**MS LEE:** What checks are in place to ensure that they are registered in the ACT and providing services for ACT NDIS participants?

**Ms Gibson:** For them to register in the ACT, they need to demonstrate that that is their intention: to deliver services to people in the ACT. There is no purpose for them to register in the ACT if they are not going to do that, because they need to be registered in another jurisdiction if they—

**MS LEE:** So they have no incentive to do that anyway if they are not providing services here?

**Ms Gibson:** That is exactly right. Some of them may or may not have started to provide services, but they certainly intend to if they have not.

**THE CHAIR:** Can they be registered in several jurisdictions?

**Ms Gibson:** Yes.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** On the adequacy question, did you have something to add?

**Ms Dunne:** Yes, what I would like to say is that we work very closely with DSS and the NDIA. We review the market. We are waiting for a strategy to be provided that gives us a framework in which to do this in a systemic way. At the moment we have a lot of KPIs that we are developing. We are having a look at where the data source might come from. There is an awful lot of work being done to make sure that the market grows and develops and that indications of any thin markets are visible early on. There is a list of initiatives that can be introduced quickly to avoid any market

failure or disruption. That is a very key piece of work that we are working with those two organisations on.

**MS LEE:** Finally, in terms of the non-regulated providers, do you have data on how many of them are around in the ACT?

**Ms Gibson:** The NDIA certainly has a number. I believe it is somewhere around 600. But that is registered to put invoices in to the NDIA to be paid for services. So that could be Jim's Mowing or it could be—

**MS LEE:** It could be the family member who is doing the caring—

**Ms Gibson:** That is exactly right.

**MS LEE:** Is that 600 ACT?

**Ms Gibson:** Roughly; we can get you an exact figure but it is NDIA's figure.

**MS LEE:** That would be great if you could take that on notice, yes.

**Ms Gibson:** We can do that, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that we have gone a little over time.

**MS LEE:** Thank you for the indulgence, chair.

**THE CHAIR:** I will start by picking up on a conversation we started in relation to one of your earlier portfolio responsibilities. Addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system has been a priority for you. I know that. You have spoken about it already. Are you able to provide an update on the work of the independent review you have set up?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** We considered it really important that the review team sit outside the children, youth and families part of the directorate. The review team sits within, and reports to Sally Gibson in, quality, complaints and regulation. Sally can talk more about how that is going.

**Ms Gibson:** The review is on to the second cohort of children and young people. So far the steering committee has provided one set of interim recommendations to the directorate about changes that they would like to make. They have also met with the minister and senior executives from the directorate. The work is proceeding in a pretty timely kind of way. They are really driven by the steering committee. It is a very independent kind of process, which is good.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Ms Gibson talked about the second cohort we are going to. The review is being run by a case analysis of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and young person in our current out of home care system. That has been broken up into different tranches, and we are into the second one now. The other thing the steering committee has recently started doing is taking consultations and inviting

people to share their stories with the steering committee or to make a submission to them if they would prefer to make a submission in writing. The steering committee has emphasised its commitment to hearing people's stories and to reflecting those.

**Ms Gibson:** The chair of the steering committee has been making herself available to meet with members of the community since earlier this year. That has led to the opening up of a formal public consultation process or a formal submission process which closes in, I think, January.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you have a time line for when you hope the steering committee's final report might be available to government, not necessarily to the rest of us, but to government?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I think it is going to be available to everyone at the same time, because they are independent and they are doing their work independently. They release their interim report publicly. I received it on the same day that it was publicly released, and I think the same thing is going to happen with their final report—

**Ms Gibson:** That is right.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** and any other interim report they choose to make.

**Ms Gibson:** Yes. The interim report was due in August and it was delivered in August. The final report is due around August-September. There is an expectation that they will meet that.

**THE CHAIR:** Obviously if there is more information that comes to light and things that you need to look at, that could be delayed a bit to make things better.

**Ms Gibson:** Indeed, although it is the steering committee's decision as to whether to delay or whether to add an addendum or something like that. It is quite complex and quite time consuming and there is a lot of information to consider.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** What is the government doing to keep pace with social infrastructure for people who are new to Canberra and young people new to Canberra—the large growth of population in young people across Canberra? We can all see the large apartment blocks going up, the development. Is there going to be more capacity in these areas of high population growth?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Minister Steel just appeared, before me, presumably in his Community Services role. I am not sure if that included the community facilities role. Mr Steel has the combined role of community services and community facilities, which includes planning around the provision of community facilities, if that is what you are talking about, to address these future growth needs.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I mean things like Woden Youth Co. It has not received any additional funding for a long time. There is Molonglo next door. I that Minister Steel's? I thought—

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Are you talking about funding for services, or funding for



infrastructure?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am talking about funding for services. The services may require infrastructure to be delivered, but what I want to know about is the services, which may lead to infrastructure.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Minister Steel recently announced a process around Woden, which he talked about last night at Woden Valley Community Council, where we both were as well.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I am aware of that. Youth Co was not mentioned last night, I think.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** The funding for all the community sector organisations that we support is indexed. But we are conscious of an ongoing request from the community sector, through the community budget process, for additional funding to address demand that they are seeing in the community. We try to work with them around prioritising what we are going to seek through various budget processes.

**Ms Evans:** The short answer is that what we are looking at in the children, youth and families space is making the most of the dollars that do go in there. I mentioned in an earlier response that around \$10 million per annum goes into the children, youth families support program, which is a whole range of services. The thing about that is that, because it is community based, those organisations will be galvanised where the need is. In terms of youth, if far out in the reaches of Gungahlin is where the growth is, then those services will start to move into that space. Where we are seeing a lot of the population growth is out that way, out towards Gungahlin. But also around the Belconnen and Tuggeranong areas we have a significant number of services for young people. The range is everything from things like arts and therapeutic services right through to the youth centres.

Growth is based, as the minister said, on the incremental growth we have annually, but also we are starting to look at what programs are offering and what the gaps are. We are doing some project program logic work with those community sector organisations to say what exactly each one of them delivers and then putting that against each delivery and saying, “What isn’t there and how can we better use the money that is existing?”

**MS LE COUTEUR:** You say you have \$10 million a year. Is this indexed in any way?

**Ms Evans:** The community sector is indexed, yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Indexed to what? The population of the ACT?

**Ms Calder:** These grants are indexed. I would like to take it on notice and confirm for you, because we use a number of indexation arrangements for different types of grants. If I can take that on notice, I will do my best to get you an answer before the end of the day.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Great, thank you.

**MS LEE:** I want to ask about the multidisciplinary autism assessment service provided by CDS. It says that it has worked in consultation with the Education and Health directorates. How does a family access that service? Is there a cost to the families in accessing that service?

**Ms Saballa:** It is a multidisciplinary assessment service that we offer in the child development service. It is a highly regarded service. That is because the nature of the model is that a multidisciplinary assessment team does that work and there are a number of components of the assessment as well. So it is not a single practitioner who does that work but a team of very allied health professionals. It is work that happens from the child development service. There are a number of tests and assessments that happen beforehand, so it would be a referral from a psychiatrist or a paediatrician. There are a number of pieces of assessment work and observations that happen before joining the autism spectrum disorder waitlist. One of the reasons why the CDS assessment is very popular is that multidisciplinary approach, particularly for more complex presentations.

**MS LEE:** And is there a cost to families who access that service?

**Ms Saballa:** No, there is not. It is the only free service in the ACT.

**MS LEE:** Is it promoted in any way, or is it purely by referral through the psychologist?

**Ms Saballa:** It is promoted in a number of ways. I was having a look at our website presence. The CDS presence on the Community Services Directorate website has around 35,000 unique views. In the financial year for the child development service website the number of unique page views was 35,135. For drop-in clinics it was 3,507. For information about the autism spectrum disorder assessments process and the CDS service offer it was 1,062. The website is very comprehensive in terms of stepping out the process and also stepping out the information you need prior to joining the autism spectrum disorder waitlist.

**MS LEE:** Did the Office of Disability lodge a submission or contribute to the consultation on the draft national guidelines for autism assessment when they were released in November last year?

**Ms Saballa:** The child development service's leadership team, the senior manager and the team leaders, were very aware of the draft national guideline and were very much part of the consultation processes. We have had an opportunity to look at the newly released guideline that has been put out by the autism cooperative research centre. We have been having a very close look at that guideline. Of course there are implications for all organisations, whether government or privately provided, and all jurisdictions. There are 70 recommendations. It is very good to see that a number of our points have been considered and are reflected in the guideline. There is work that we are currently doing with our Education and our Health colleagues to look at the implications of the guidelines, because there are some changes. Again, it is not just for the child development service; there would be implications for education and health

practitioners and also private psychologists. So it is work that we need to do very carefully.

I have also been in contact with our local office of the National Disability Insurance Agency to seek some advice about the status of the guidelines, to get a sense of other jurisdictions and what people's reflections are and also to get a sense of the process and the time frames for adoption of the guidelines. The process is about understanding the implications, and there may be some funding implications. But the authors of the new national guideline have also made some policy points around jurisdictions considering adopting the guidelines and what the cost implications are across sectors. That is professional bodies as well. So it is a really significant piece of work that deserves very careful consideration.

**MS LEE:** It says that the report is anticipated to be released later in 2018, November is pretty late 2018. Has it come out in recent weeks?

**Ms Saballa:** Yes, about two-and-a-half weeks ago. There was quite a lot of media surrounding the national guideline—

**MS LEE:** I thought it had but I just wanted to double check.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** It is the same thing you are thinking of.

**MS LEE:** Okay, good.

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is in regard to the function of family therapy. The Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre is engaged in a pilot of functional family therapy with Indigenous families whose kids are at risk. That is on page 42 of the report. The minister has stated she wants to see evidence of the success of this intervention from other jurisdictions before it is rolled out more broadly. The review data on the FFT goes back to 1985. Is the reluctance to more fully support this intervention at least in part an economic one?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I am not sure where you got a quote of me saying that.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I can find it for you. You did say it.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** The point is that we have launched a pilot of functional family therapy child welfare in the ACT as a partnership between Gugan Gulwan and OzChild, supported by the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre. We have put funding into that pilot. One of the things that quote may have been referring to was that we want to understand how the functional family therapy child welfare model will work in the ACT and specifically how it will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

The model is not Indigenous specific, and the reason OzChild has been so enthusiastic about partnering with Gugan Gulwan to undertake this pilot is because it will use the functional family therapy model with the cultural input from Gugan Gulwan and adjust the model to be culturally appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

My understanding is that that is the first time that that approach has been taken. We have invested money in that. We are not waiting to see; we understand that there is significant evidence of the success of functional family therapy in other jurisdictions, but we want to see how it is going to work here and how it going to work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

**THE CHAIR:** How many families do you expect to reach with the trial?

**Ms Pappas:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. Gugan Gulwan and OzChild have indicated they are in a position to take 40 families, family groups, not individual children, which is fantastic. We are anticipating that they will start to take referrals in the next couple of weeks, so they are ready to go. They have their staff employed, they have done their intensive training and they are ready to start taking referrals from child and protection services for those families.

**MRS KIKKERT:** How much is the trial costing the ACT government?

**Dr Collis:** It is an investment of approximately \$300,000 in that trial.

**MRS KIKKERT:** For how long, sorry?

**Dr Collis:** Twelve months. Until, in fact, the proof of concept is completed, so those 40 families.

**MRS KIKKERT:** How much is this intervention forecast to save over the long term?

**Dr Collis:** We are not forecasting anything in terms of saving over the long term.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Really?

**Dr Collis:** We are forecasting at the moment an evaluation to find out the efficacy of the trial in the ACT. Then we will be a position to forecast any sort of cost benefit from the trial. It is a really exciting piece of work when you stand back and think about it. Step up has asked people to innovate in our community to bring fresh ideas and new ideas, and that is exactly what OzChild has done in collaboration with Gugan Gulwan. It came to government with an idea and data and put down a proposal of shared investment into this outcome.

It is an exciting new trial for us in a number of ways. It is a different way of doing business as well as another string to our bow in terms of early intervention and restoration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Ms Lee talked about autism services. Are all the early intervention services now delivered through the three child and family centres?

**Ms Saballa:** As you are aware, we have a child and family centre at West Belconnen, one in Gungahlin and one in Tuggeranong. We provide a suite of early intervention and prevention services. What is interesting is the success of the model. Well, it is not interesting, actually, more a credit to the success of the model that we are a universal

service. We are across areas of Canberra, we are place based, we are universal and we are a culturally safe and inclusive environment that welcomes families with young children.

We have seen over a period of time families accessing the child and family centres with a range of needs. It may be visiting the maternal and child health services, for example. We have 46 community partners working with us across the three sites in various ways, and that is an important point. The child and family centre model is much more than the infrastructure and the services that we are funded for and provide. It is actually a network of services where families with young children are able to access a range of supports tailored to their needs.

In terms of early intervention and prevention services, a suite of services is available at the CFCs, but a range of services are also happening from the child development service, and that is located at the Holder site.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** It is important to note also that the early childhood early intervention NDIS service—EACH—is co-located with the child development service at the Holder site. Obviously, as the name suggests, it provides early childhood early intervention for those young children who are NDIS eligible.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** So all the early intervention happens in Holder?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No. As Ms Saballa just said, a lot of early intervention services happen from the child and family centres, but there is also the child development service and EACH in Holder.

**Ms Saballa:** To check I am answering your question accurately, Ms Le Couteur, you are interested in early intervention and prevention supports for children with development delay and disability?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes. I am trying to work out how a family would access them. When I work that out I then might be thinking we need more child and family centres. That is where I am going. If this is the place where it is all happening and there are only three of them, maybe we need more of them.

**MRS KIKKERT:** If you turn to page 33 the report notes a 21 per cent increase in the number of occasions of service to child and family centre clients over the past year. Are these centres adequately resourced in order to meet this demand? I think that is probably where Caroline is leaning towards.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, and do people know about them? Are they adequately resourced? I am still trying to work out how central they are. Do people know about them to get there in the first place?

**MRS KIKKERT:** And are they being turned away or being put on the waiting list?

**Ms Saballa:** Thank you for clarifying that. There are a number of points I could speak to. Firstly, the child development service offers a range of its service offer at different locations. It does outreach work with a number of organisations, including the child

and family centres.

I am happy to share a very recent example from this morning. I was at the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre, and one of their initiatives as part of growing healthy families is the murra reading chair. On a monthly basis the child development service has a speech pathology drop-in clinic. It is offered across the CFCs on a schedule, so I was there this morning for the West Belconnen speech drop-in clinic.

It was full of families with young children and it was an opportunity to read a story and share that with families, talk with families, connect with children. Feedback from one of the mums I spoke to was, "This is such a great service. I just live across the road and I have been able to drop in to my local child and family centre and get this service for free. It's fantastic." I want to share that little anecdote because it shows that what we are doing is making sure we are going to where families are. We are going across Canberra, so that is one thing we do.

In terms of early childhood early intervention partner EACH, they play a really important role in early childhood early intervention. We have worked with them and they also have a presence at the child and family centres. They are there at least a couple of days a week and that is to facilitate their meeting with families.

You asked the question about whether we are meeting demand. I had a close look at that prior to the hearings today and I feel confident to say that we are. We have some wait lists but they have relatively small numbers. The important point is that because of the child and family service offer, because of all of the partners we work with, we are able to meet the needs of families in a number of ways. It is not only one program that a family may benefit from; we can put in place a range of things to meet those needs. If a family is particularly interested in a program they would go into that program most likely the following term.

**MRS KIKKERT:** Are there any plans to build future family centres around Canberra?

**Ms Saballa:** We are certainly keeping a close eye on the demographics and the profiling of Canberra. We appreciate that there is significant growth forecast. I am aware that the ACT government population projections are due to be released by the end of the year. That is very useful information for us in terms of understanding exactly where the growth will be, the number of families, and the age profile of particular areas. It is something we continue to work on, and our model of working with partners looking at innovative ways to support families is something we will continue to do.

**THE CHAIR:** Can I ask clarifying question for my benefit? It is all very interesting. I have a child with ASD, autism spectrum disorder. He is very grown up now; he is 21. I feel very old. So we used to attend Therapy ACT. I guess that the CFC and the CDS are a more progressive form of that type of service. Would that be a good analogy?

**Ms Saballa:** It is one way of describing what it is. There are other ways, too. When I think about what we do in the child development service, through the transition to the

NDIS, we did see I guess the closing down of Therapy ACT and the standing up of the child development service—in January 2016—with slightly different functions.

The functions that we have in the child development service multidisciplinary team—a universal service, a free service accessible to the community—are really looking at providing information for families, assessment and referral, and also some diagnostic work. That is the key role.

The NDIS—the partner in the community—is funded by the NDIA. They are playing a really important role in this reconfigured service system in early childhood early intervention. My understanding is that their key role is that they pick up a lot of administrative functions in terms of supporting families, whether it is looking at plan reviews or whether it is entering the NDIS. But for us it is really important that they play the role of that early intervention therapeutic support. It is really important to us that we continue to work closely with them because as families go along the assessment journey, they also need to be able to get early intervention supports to meet their child's developmental needs.

As an indication, in the last financial year—so for this annual report—we made 176 referrals from the child development service to NDIS. I think that is a really good indication of the close work that we are doing in terms of making sure that children and families are getting a more streamlined service. I will check that figure for you; 176 is the one I have in my mind. Yes, that is it.

**THE CHAIR:** Look at that; well done! Ms Le Couteur, I butted in on you then. Did you finish?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, I finished that. I can go on to something else. I am not sure whether we have talked about this before. I turn to page 42 where reference is made to the program that provides support for 434 children, of whom 386 are new referrals. The report goes on to state:

Additionally, the CSP provides funding to deliver a parenting enhancement program, Family Foundations.

Is that the program you were talking about with Mrs Kikkert?

**Ms Evans:** No, it is a different program.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** It is a different program?

**Ms Pappas:** There are lots of families here in Canberra.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** There are lots of families. I guess my first question would be that the one that Mrs Kikkert was talking about appeared to have an Indigenous focus. Apart from that, is there any difference between the two? They appear to be early intervention with parents to build up parenting knowledge, skills and capacities. They seem very similar. I am referring to page 42.

**Ms Evans:** Yes, I am with you now. Thank you for the question. Yes, the family

foundations program is provided through our children's services program. We have a program that provides funding for vulnerable children to receive childcare places where a family cannot otherwise afford that level of support. To complement that for vulnerable families—not necessarily Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families but families that have any kind of vulnerability—the family foundations program is a range of parenting subjects: how to connect with your child, prepare for formal engagement with child care or whatever needs you have. It is a slightly different focus, and certainly not as targeted as the program that was being described earlier.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Is it delivered by a not for profit or delivered by you guys?

**Ms Evans:** It is by not for profit, and I can tell you exactly who.

**Dr Collis:** It is Belconnen Community Service. It is important to distinguish the children's services program. These are families who have vulnerabilities for a number of reasons not specifically related to matters to do with child abuse and neglect. It may be a mum who has a hospital appointment and no support, and who needs support in the recovery time. It could be a whole range of different reasons that lead to the vulnerability, which the children's services program can support through child care and also through support in regard to any behaviour support that might need to be provided as well through the foundations program.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** If you were a single parent and had to go to hospital and then recover for some period of time, and you had a couple of young kids—

**Dr Collis:** And there were no other support, that might be an approach. Or it might be family conflict; indeed, there might be a bump into the statutory system as well. But it is not a program that is targeted at children who are already in the statutory system. Many of these children and families are not engaged in the statutory system.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** To take my example; if I were that parent, would I would find out about it from a social worker or from the hospital? Given it is not statutory, how would you even access it.

**Ms Evans:** Yes, through a range of referral sources, including through child and family centre workers. You might be turning up for a playgroup, for instance, at a child and family centre and be talking to a worker there who might say, "What are you going to do when you go to hospital?" They can put you in contact with the children's services program. We can then look at how we can fund a space for you for the particular period of time you need and what other supports we can put around you.

Again, it is a bit like Ms Saballa was saying. A lot of our services do seem to overlap. Certainly, externally it can look like a bit of web. But that is quite deliberate in some ways because families come in from so many different directions. For different reasons, it is really important that we can pick them up and refer them to where they need to be. The children's services program is a bit of a safety net, I suppose.

**MS KIKKERT:** How many families are involved in that family foundations?

**Ms Evans:** I can tell you exactly that.



**MS KIKKERT:** Is it in there?

**Dr Collis:** It is in there.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes, it is at page 42; 434 children, but, of course, it could be fewer than that in terms of families.

**Ms Evans:** Yes, the 434 is children's services, not just the family foundations program. I will check my other folder. I am sorry, I am jumping between my portfolio areas. I keep bringing the wrong folder up with me. If I go back and grab the other folder I could probably tell you that before the end of this session. I will do that.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** No worries.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a couple of questions around youth engagement and, specifically, engagement. Do you want to grab your folder first? I will wait a moment before I start to ask questions.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** As a prelude to marriage, in terms of specific engagements?

**THE CHAIR:** No, before you were talking about youth services, the centres and stuff. I am interested in how the Youth Advisory Council engaged with you in particular and how they identify their work plan and priorities?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** The Youth Advisory Council is an incredible group of young people aged from 12 to 25. I think the youngest member has just turned 13. In fact, she had a birthday on the day of the youth assembly, which was fantastic. They determine their own work program. They operate very independently. I meet with the whole council on a semi-regular basis, probably every six months or every year. But I meet with the co-chairs on a regular basis as well.

Of course, recently they conducted the youth assembly here in the Legislative Assembly, bringing together more than 100 young people—I am sure that Jacinta has the exact number in front of her—to talk about four topics that they had identified as being important for young people to discuss: civic participation, youth homelessness, equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and youth mental health.

They worked in a participatory way in their groups to talk about those issues and then brought their findings and recommendations back to the whole group at the end of the day to present to me and also to Jodie Griffiths-Cook, the Children and Young People Commissioner. We both provided a bit of a response to those recommendations. Actually, it was a really great day seeing young people working together to organise the event and then to share their ideas. Jacinta might want to talk a little more about their work program and how often they meet.

**Ms Evans:** Yes, certainly. The YAC themselves meet far more regularly than that; so every six or eight weeks they meet. As the minister said, they are aged between 12 and 25 years. It is quite impressive to see how well they managed that age range.

There were 110 young people at the youth assembly.

**THE CHAIR:** Were they all from Canberra?

**Ms Evans:** Yes, from Canberra and across that age range. The leadership that was demonstrated on that day was really quite outstanding. They had an adult facilitator with them on each of the four themes. However, the young people themselves gathered the information from the themes and then presented it back to the youth assembly in the afternoon, including to the minister and to the Children and Young People Commissioner.

The YAC themselves have a really strong commitment around the work that they are doing, particularly around mental and sexual health. They have done some really significant work in that area. The other thing that they do really well, because their voices are across that age range, is give the minister that sort of advice around what is really important to young people. Then that influences our policy approaches as we go forward.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** That includes writing submissions to various government consultation processes. They made a submission, for example, to the L and P plate review process. They consulted other young people and had their own views. They put together that submission.

**THE CHAIR:** I believe that members of the Youth Advisory Council also gave evidence in a JACS inquiry recently.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes, that would not surprise me at all.

**THE CHAIR:** I was here at the Assembly when they did their youth assembly but unfortunately I was in all-day committee hearings and did not get a chance to attend. How do you ensure that there is a good mix of the age range that you have already mentioned, which is great, but also socio-economic backgrounds and cultural and diversity backgrounds? Do we have a good mix in our current Youth Advisory Council?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes, we currently have a really good mix. We have people from all kinds of backgrounds in terms of being culturally and linguistically diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, LGBTIQ young people, young people with different perspectives. Then, of course, there is the age range as well. The recruitment process is quite an interesting one because the existing YAC members participate very heavily in the recruitment of new YAC members. Obviously, it is against a set of criteria. Again, Jacinta might want to talk to this.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, minister. So there are three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at the moment on the committee, which has been fantastic. Also, as with all our councils, they look at a gender balance where that is appropriate. As well, we have people represented who identify as having a disability or other challenges. Again, through that process whenever new members are appointed, we then look at the range of applications and consider diversity as part of the criteria for the minister to consider when appointing.

**THE CHAIR:** I think you may have mentioned this in the beginning of the answer and I just looked again at page 55. How many members are there of the Youth Advisory Council?

**Ms Evans:** There are—I want to say 15.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I want to say 15 as well, but—

**THE CHAIR:** Around 15 members.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I am sure it is in there somewhere.

**Ms Evans:** It is a good brief but it does not say how many young people. I can check that. They are emailing as we speak. I can give you the numbers for the family foundations program, if that is alright?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Yes.

**Ms Evans:** A total of 143 families were supported through family foundations in 2017-18. That is capturing the details of families rather than individual children; so a family could have more than one child in the care program.

**THE CHAIR:** I have got a couple more questions on the Youth Advisory Council and then I am happy to open it up for other members of the committee. How long is the term of each person or of the council as a whole?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** It is only a two-year term, is my recollection. It is a relatively short term for advisory councils but that is because young people have so much going on in their lives and a lot of them do not even make it to the end of their two-year term because their situation changes, they go away, they finish school and go away to university or they get too busy at university or they have other interests come up in their lives. Yes, a two-year term. But I think they can be reappointed if they are interested.

**Ms Evans:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** For those who are at school, which I am assuming the majority of them would be—maybe not the 25-year-olds but the young ones—is that across both government and non-government schools?

**Ms Evans:** Yes.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Did the youth assembly that has just happened make recommendations, as I understand it?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I am yet to receive them. They have got recommendations and they gave them in their oral, verbal reports. But we are yet to receive the write-up of those recommendations formally.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Once you get them what happens then?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I have made a commitment to the assembly members that we will seriously consider them. Obviously if they have financial implications they will need to go through that budget consideration process in terms of how we might give effect to them. A lot of the recommendations were really around driving cultural change rather than necessarily a new program that would require a lot of funding.

There will be a process presumably of sharing those across directorates as well because obviously some of them were on quite specific topics. Others would affect most directorates in terms of that cultural change, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. There will be a mix of internal—we can get this work done—and something we might have to feed in to a bigger piece of work.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** How often do you intend to have the youth assemblies?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I do not think we have a particular view around that. The idea for the youth assembly was something that came up from a young person who wrote to me and I referred the letter to YAC and said, “Do you want to think about whether you want to do this or something similar?” I know that they also held a forum in 2016. I would expect every couple of years they would hold something like a youth consultation with young people.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And how did you actually choose the young people who participated? I have heard you got a good diversity, but how did they get there?

**Ms Evans:** We actually received self-nominations from the young people. There was a portal open. We said, “If you’re interested, please nominate. Pick what things you’re interested in.” We did not have to reject anybody. The numbers pretty much matched, which was really great, because we were looking for around the hundred mark and we got a little more than that. I think we had 116 actually registered and about 110 on the day, which was quite good.

We also reached out to all our schools, the independent, Catholic and public schools, to say, “This is the process we’re going through. Could you please consider putting this out to your students?” We did have a couple of schools who did send small groups of students—maybe four or five from a particular school—which was also, I think, really useful in terms of those young people being able to generate a bit of energy themselves in the space they were in.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I have a follow-up question. I attended. It was a fantastic youth assembly. I notice that there were a couple of recommendations mentioned on the day that you might have thought of since then. I thought maybe I could just raise it. One that the youth assembly raised concerns about was youth homelessness and in response, minister, you said that the government needs to consider whether OneLink needs to be expanded. How would an expanded OneLink help address the youth homelessness crisis, and are there steps that the government is considering in this area?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** OneLink sits within the portfolio responsibility of Minister Berry,

and obviously this is a homelessness issue. From my recollection, the recommendation from the young people was to expand the hours of service of OneLink. That is obviously something that would have a budgetary impact and will be considered. My recollection is that this is something that is also mentioned in the housing strategy. It is probably—

**Dr Collis:** In fact, it has been picked up as a budget initiative in this financial year as an extension to after-hours time and the weekend for OneLink, as I understand it.

**Ms Evans:** I was just going to say that the point the young people were making was that often for them when things do fall apart it is outside school hours when they have other adults they can connect with. It is the after-hours. Although they may still find themselves without somewhere to sleep that night if they have had a problem in their family home, to have an organisation or a connection they can make outside school hours was what they were seeking.

**MRS KIKKERT:** And part of the discussion as well was around mental health awareness. A lot of the students were talking about not having the right sort of tool to comfort or to uplift one of their peers in school. How is the government or how is the minister speaking with the education department about supporting students to be able to support their peers when they come down or when they go through some sort of mental health issue?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Obviously we have not even received the recommendations as formal recommendations yet and these issues do sit with the Education Directorate and the Minister for Mental Health. I do not really feel comfortable expanding on that.

**MRS KIKKERT:** But I am just asking you as minister for youth: have you taken any proactive steps to advocate to the education minister for the youth who want this to happen in their schools or in their community?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** We regularly between ministers have conversations about the challenges of mental health for children and young people in our community and what we need to do to better support children and young people who experience challenges around mental illness. And that is an ongoing conversation. There were obviously significant investments made in this budget in terms of increased outreach for adolescent mental health but, in terms of the detail, that is probably really something better directed to other ministers.

**MRS KIKKERT:** My question is on the Bimberi outcomes. In the report you mention on page 33 that the official visitors raised concerns about matters at Bimberi. I note from the annual report that they were concerned about the large number of operational lockdowns continuing, with 84 in the second half of the year. The minister has stated that since new staff came on board at Bimberi on 14 May there has been only one operational lockdown. Is this clear evidence that the main driver behind operational lockdowns has been insufficient staffing?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I think I have answered that question a number of times in the Assembly and I have been very clear and upfront in statements since, I think, October last year, from my recollection, that staffing issues were contributing to some of the

management challenges that were being faced at Bimberi.

I am really pleased that there has been a really strong recruitment drive and that since those new staff were recruited we have seen—and I think that number still stands—only one operational lockdown since those staff came on board in May.

**Dr Collis:** Certainly there was one operational lockdown at the point of the tabling of the report, which is the data I have before me. But, to your point, I think there was a combination—and the minister has raised this elsewhere as well—of significant increase in numbers of young people in Bimberi over a short period and a staffing challenge in recruitment.

The strategy for a long time was to deal with volatility in numbers through having a specifically trained and accredited casual workforce that could come in and support. The problems that exist when numbers go low are that the hours of work for that casual workforce become fewer and fewer and people find other ways of getting casual work.

That has been a challenge during that period when there was an increase in numbers to match the staffing in both the casual and permanent pools to meet that. It is quite a thorough and comprehensive recruitment, training and induction process. There is a big lag time between the recruitment process and a confident, autonomous person on the floor of the centre.

We have developed a whole bunch of new recruitment strategies, and I think I can pass on to Jodie Robinson, the senior director, who will be able to fill you in on more details about the actual staffing arrangements, if you like.

**Ms Robinson:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. The decision to undertake an operational lockdown is never one taken lightly and, as has been discussed, is based on a range of factors including the number of young people in the centre at any given point in time, which varies considerably from month to month; cohorts of young people within the centre including the gender, the risk classification, the age of young people, their particular presentations and their particular needs in terms of supervision at any given point in time; the programming needs of young people including the need to take young people off site for a range of activities that they do outside the centre, such as health checks, dental checks, things like that. We do the best that we can to minimise the length of time that lockdowns occur as well.

You made reference to the number of operational lockdowns that occurred within that period. Eighty-four per cent of those lockdowns in that financial year were for two hours or less, and the remaining 16 were for four hours. Four hours is the greatest length of time that young people were locked down during that period.

As Dr Collis was saying, we have invested in different recruitment processes that we have trialled over the course of this year. There are very specific requirements for staff at Bimberi. We want staff who are well suited to the daily challenges that they face working in the centre. We sought some external support this year in terms of recruitment processes, which included things like advertising on radio; additional approaches through SEEK; extended conversations with people who were phoning up

interested so that they had a very good indication of what the role was and what the day-to-day requirements were of them; as well as information evenings on-site and off-site so that, again, people could come and understand what the role is and speak to senior management staff about whether they were suited to the position.

Through the recruitment process, staff have to undergo psychometric testing. There are conversations with people through the recruitment process about their psychometric testing results. They also undertake comprehensive health screens as well to ensure that they are physically able to meet the demands and requirements of the job.

Finally, there is the interview process. And that is followed by a comprehensive seven-week induction process as well.

**MRS KIKKERT:** I note that assaults at Bimberi remain high, with 2017-18 having triple what occurred the year before: 19 versus 6. Have assaults followed the same trajectory as lockdowns and nearly ceased since new staff started?

**Ms Robinson:** What we have seen since 2010-11, really, has been a decrease in the number of assaults in Bimberi. Looking back to the 2010-11 year and around that time, the number of assaults was around 65. So we have seen a long-term downward trend. There were 19 incidents classified as an assault in the last financial year. In Bimberi we have a very strong reporting culture. We encourage staff to report a whole range of incidents, including potential assaults. Our reporting culture in Bimberi is stronger than what we are required to report nationally to the Productivity Commission in the report on government services. Staff have classified these incidents as assaults at the time of reporting them. But, for example, for that same period, in terms of nationally agreed definitions, we will be required to report no serious assaults to the Productivity Commission, and four assaults. Any number of assaults is a number that we want to work to minimise. Staff are trained through the seven-week induction process in a whole range of de-escalation strategies in order to intervene and to minimise any risk of harm that may occur in the centre.

What we have seen with the success of the blueprint for youth justice, as we have had declining numbers of young people enter Bimberi, is an increased complexity of the young people within the centre. They are typically in there facing offences related to serious assaults or aggravated burglaries. As such, one of the common features that we see of young people in Bimberi is a real challenge in regulating their behaviour. Within the range of daily interactions that they have within Bimberi, it is not unusual for them to become dysregulated. Staff do a really good job in working with them to minimise that dysregulation. We also work with our community partners, and other partners such as Health, within the centre to look at the underlying drivers of that particular dysregulation. For some young people, that is underlying mental health issues, drug and alcohol related issues or a history of trauma. So we are assisting their rehabilitation throughout the time that they are in Bimberi and exiting into the community.

**MRS KIKKERT:** What sort of case management are they given to support them in the community? What happens to them after life at Bimberi; what sort of support?

**Ms Robinson:** In child and youth protection services, in 2015 we integrated the child protection and youth justice systems and introduced what we call the single case management model. It is unique in each jurisdiction within Australia. What that means is that if you are a young person and you are involved in child protection and youth justice, you will have one case manager who is working with you and your family on the range of issues that are presenting for you at that point in time. If you happen to have a period of detention in Bimberi, that case manager will remain with you and transition with you into Bimberi and then back out into the community.

That means that the case planning that is happening for young people happens over an extended period of time and often in the community with them beforehand. Most young people have a relatively short period of time in Bimberi, and then it follows them into the community afterwards. That continuity is incredibly important. That case planning changes based on the circumstances of the young person and their family at any given point in time. There is a risk assessment that is applied, so the case plan shifts and changes depending on the risk that the young person is presenting.

**MRS KIKKERT:** That might look good on paper but I met a 17-year-old homeless girl just outside Coles and spoke to her about where she had just come from. She just came out of Bimberi. I asked her, “Did you get a case manager?” She said, “No. What is that? I didn’t receive any.” And I asked her, “How was your time in Bimberi?” She said, “All I remember is that I was locked up and they had lockdowns on a regular basis.” So you tell me one thing but then I hear and see another. It just does not add up. How is this 17-year-old girl who has spent a good deal of time in Bimberi coming out of Bimberi and not having any support system around her, so that now she is homeless and OneLink have been trying to help her out? How does she fall through the cracks?

**Ms Robinson:** I cannot talk to the individual circumstances of that young person, but all young people who are in Bimberi have a case manager and are engaged in their case planning. There is a client services meeting that happens at Bimberi every week and includes a range of support services. It includes the child and youth protection services case management staff as well as ACT Health, education and at times community service providers as well. That client services meeting engages around issues such as transition planning for young people exiting Bimberi and works with young people to develop plans.

Sometimes the lifestyle young people are leading prior to coming in to Bimberi that has added to their risk of offending behaviour continues when they return into the community, despite the best efforts of case management staff. But what young people do have is an understanding of the network of supports around them. What would be happening for that young person if they have exited Bimberi still with a supervision order—because not every young person would have—is their youth justice case manager still trying to actively engage with them and be a good point of contact with them.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that on page 82 of the annual report there is a range of education qualifications that children and youth can receive while in Bimberi. In reference to this young girl, are there things as part of the education processes and education qualifications that are provided in Bimberi that help to set up young people on their



exit from Bimberi?

**Ms Robinson:** Often the experience of young people when they come into Bimberi is that they have been disengaged from education prior to coming into Bimberi. A hundred per cent of young people at Bimberi attend the school, which is run by the Education Directorate, within Bimberi. You can see the range of education qualifications and certificates that are completed by young people within Bimberi. The Education Directorate, through the school there, also have a transition officer who, again, can work with young people in terms of transition to school or other types of education and training upon exit from Bimberi. That routinely happens as well. The other thing is that, depending on the risk classification of the young people, young people are provided with leave towards the end of their period of detention so that they can complete courses that may not be offered within the centre but may be offered at CIT, for example.

**THE CHAIR:** Does that also feed into the services delivered to young people? I note that you have Relationships Australia providing counselling, Winnunga Nimmityjah providing health and outreach support and rec programs and mentoring, and Gudan Gulwan providing cultural programs, outreach and mentoring. Do they help to engage and work across purposes for educational qualifications as well as some of these services that are being delivered?

**Ms Robinson:** Yes. The range of services listed there are ones that routinely come into the centre. They are obviously community based as well. They are a touchpoint for young people back in the community and add to the continuity of case planning and support for young people who are exiting Bimberi and going back into the community. These services and programs are a fraction of the services and supports that young people receive while in Bimberi, because of the individualised case planning approach that I referred to. While these ones are providing routine services within Bimberi, each young person in their case plan will have identified the range of supports relevant to their particular circumstances, and those services may commence—having seen the young person in the community and maybe coming into Bimberi and then seeing them again afterwards.

**THE CHAIR:** What happens to educational opportunities outside the school year per se? Obviously there could be children in Bimberi over school holiday periods. I am trying to think of the right terminology.

**Ms Robinson:** That is exactly how we refer to it in Bimberi as well. Like any other school, the school in Bimberi operates on the standard school terms. We have a full-time sport and recreational officer at Bimberi who, with our program services manager, develops the school holiday program for each school holiday period, in consultation with young people. Last school holidays they did activities like movie evenings. They had the reptile park come into the centre for the young people. They played bubble soccer. Typically a range of other programs come into the centre as well. There is scheduling that occurs across the school holiday program period.

**MRS KIKKERT:** How many of the 31 staff who started at Bimberi on 14 May are still employed there?

**Ms Robinson:** I would have to take that on notice and get that detail for you. I can say that there are only two vacancies in the centre at the moment. One is the deputy senior manager role. That has been advertised and interviews have been conducted, so we are looking to make an appointment to that shortly. And there is a unit manager position. As Dr Collis was saying before, the challenge is typically around retaining casual staff in the centre.

**MRS KIKKERT:** How many young people are there now?

**Ms Robinson:** Today there are 13 young people. That was this morning. We have had court today, so that may have shifted; I will just put in that caveat. But this morning there were 13 young people.

**MRS KIKKERT:** When I spoke with that young girl, whom I mentioned before, she talked a lot about how cold she was in her cell. What can they do? I understand that they can voice their concerns if they are cold. They can ask for extra blankets, but if one person is cold then everyone else would be cold if they are just getting the same number of blankets.

**THE CHAIR:** Not necessarily. I am always freezing in this place and not everyone else is.

**MRS KIKKERT:** This is not a cell.

**THE CHAIR:** No, it is not.

**MRS KIKKERT:** A cell is very cold and hard. How do you solve that issue?

**Ms Robinson:** There is a heating and cooling system in each of the units at Bimberi. Young people do voice their concerns. They voice those directly to their youth workers. They can ask for additional clothes. They can ask for additional blankets. As seasons change, the cooling and the heating are adjusted. There are also other avenues where young people can and do raise their concerns as well, such as through the official visitors, who are visiting regularly, and through the Public Advocate.

**THE CHAIR:** And blankets are provided if they are asked for?

**Ms Robinson:** Yes, they are.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I want to ask about the new client management system. It is due to be rolled out this financial year as I understand it. How is that going time wise?

**Dr Collis:** The client management system is a real step forward in terms of our capacity to support our workers but also to be able to interrogate the data on a more real-time basis.

As part of the procurement process we chose a commercial off-the-shelf client records management system, CRM, which is fairly standard nowadays. The challenge is, of course, to then work out how to adapt that system so that it fulfils the functions needed of a client management system for the child and youth protection service. That

is quite a challenge because we not only are doing a client management system for child protection but we have an integrated youth justice service, so it is quite complicated.

We believe that we will have the foundational system in place and live in February of next year and that we will continue to develop and extend that to the child development service and the CFCs over the course of the year. Further down the track we will be building portals which will allow providers and children and carers to have, if you like, their own space on our system so they will be able to push and pull information around that. The foundational system—cross fingers, touch wood, whatever—will go live in February.

The really important thing is that we have been keeping our eye on how like systems around Australia are going. We have been looking at learning the lessons particularly from the New South Wales experience with their client management system. We have learned from our colleagues in New South Wales who have provided their lessons learned to us—and been very generous in doing so—that you cannot under-invest in the training of staff and familiarisation of the staff. We really need to make sure we do not just turn the system on and leave staff unsupported around this. Part of the reason we want to launch in February is because it would not make sense to launch in the January period of time when that support is not around.

That is the plan and as of yesterday we started UAT. I am learning a lot of these new acronyms.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** User acceptance training.

**Dr Collis:** Yes, that one. We have workers on the system inputting mock data into it to test the system to see whether it works and whether it needs to adapt for our users and so forth. It is really exciting that we got to UAT yesterday. And that is bang on schedule for that February release at this point.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Have you existing data that you will be transiting into it?

**Dr Collis:** Yes. That is the other reason for ensuring that we get all that right, the migration of data from the old chip system into the new system. We have had a parallel project going on and we have already had test releases of that data into the system. We migrate that data across so that when we go live our workers will have access to historical records in the system.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** A while ago—nearly two years ago in December 2016—I asked about the experiences of children who had one or more parent with a disability. The answer was, among other things, that CYPS did not have any reliable data about that but that the new client management system will enable you to explore the methodology to monitor the experiences of parents with disability in the child protection system. Can you tell us more about how this is going to work for parents with disabilities?

**Dr Collis:** The system we are building now will be able to ensure that we ask questions around disability and capture that information early in the process. This

system will allow us to interrogate that data. Currently the information is manually recorded and therefore is not able to be extracted in an automatic way.

The system will allow for the extraction of that data along with a whole bunch of data that we will be able to do that way. For example, our system is built around the legislative classification of child abuse. If we want to find something about mental health or mental illness, for instance, that is not a category of abuse so it would have to be interrogated in a manual way. The new system will allow us to run queries and get data out of that.

Even so, I need to set the expectations around this a bit. The child protection system is inherently a child-based system, so the information about parents and disability is voluntary. What data we have will still be dependent upon what data is provided into the system up front. It will be better. It will be more reliable, but still with the caveat that the data around the adults in the child's life will largely be voluntarily provided to us.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** I think in many instances that will not be a problem at all. The parent will be quite willing to express that they have a disability. The reason I asked this question back in December 2016 was because there appeared to be some parents who felt that the major reason their child was getting involved in the child protection service had to do with their disabilities rather than anything else.

**MRS KIKKERT:** For the child's safety?

**MS LE COUTEUR:** Safety, but a perception of ability to look after a child which may or may not be based in reality. The people have felt that it was an automatic assumption that because they had a disability they would not be able to be a good parent. It is our interest to make sure families do not end up in the care and protection system just because parents may have a disability and that if they do have issues and a disability they are supported if possible to keep the family together rather than saying, "You've got a disability. No."

**MRS KIKKERT:** "We'll take the child away."

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** There are a couple of issues in relation to that I will touch on. Obviously the disability justice strategy is relevant to that. Child protection statutory systems are where courts make decisions around the placement of children in the child protection system. It is a justice-based system and the disability justice strategy is very relevant to the experience of parents with disability in the child protection system as well. We have under step up a birth family advocacy service that started probably in 2015.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** December 2015. That is also part of the answer I got.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Obviously we would hope that birth parents with disability would be getting a better level of advocacy support through a service that did not previously exist.

One of the things we have talked about in terms of NDIS is eligibility for parents who

may not have a high level of support as an individual but who may need support in their day-to-day lives to be a successful parent and the intersection of that with NDIS and eligibility. It is not something we have seen come up in terms of cases or something that we have been asked to pursue.

We were talking earlier about advocacy for people whose access applications have been rejected by NDIS on this basis. But we are very conscious of ensuring that parents with disability who are capable of parenting are provided the support that they need to do that rather than the assumptions you are talking about being made.

I read recently a story about a parent who has been supported in that way by the system who has achieved a really good outcome by having some wraparound support for a parent who may some years ago not have been in that situation.

**THE CHAIR:** That is a wonderful place to finish today's hearings.

**Ms Calder:** I promised in this session to confirm that we use community sector indexation for not-for-profit organisations that provide human services. I wanted to qualify that point by the end of the session.

**MS LE COUTEUR:** And the other question was how many youth advisory councillors—

**Ms Evans:** We were correct—there are 15.

**THE CHAIR:** I thank the ministers and all officials for their time today. The committee asks that answers to questions taken on notice at today's hearings be provided to the committee secretary five business days after receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript. Members' written supplementary questions relating to annual reports will need to be provided to the committee secretary within five days of the uncorrected proof transcript becoming available. Answers to supplementary questions will need to be provided to the committee secretary five business days after receiving the questions.

All answers and questions need to be provided in a signed, electronic PDF form and an electronic Word copy and sent to the LA committees HACS email address.

When a proof *Hansard* is issued it will be forwarded to witnesses to provide the opportunity to check the transcript and suggest any corrections. Please note, the transcript provided is intended to be a verbatim record of the evidence to the committee. Witnesses may correct obvious errors of transcription and spelling errors. However, if witnesses wish to alter the substance of or elaborate on their evidence, they must do so in writing to the committee via a letter addressed to the chair.

I formally declare the public hearing closed.

**The committee adjourned at 5.03 pm.**