



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMY AND GENDER  
AND ECONOMIC EQUALITY**

(Reference: [Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022](#))

**Members:**

**MS L CASTLEY (Chair)  
MS S ORR (Deputy Chair)  
MR J DAVIS**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**MONDAY, 7 NOVEMBER 2022**

**Secretary to the committee:  
Ms S Milne (Ph: 620 50435)**

**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**

<b>Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate .....</b>	<b>61</b>
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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## **The committee met at 10.30 am.**

### Appearances:

Steel, Mr Chris, Minister for Skills, Minister for Transport and City Services and Special Minister of State

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Hocking, Mr Stuart, Under Treasurer

Rutledge, Mr Geoffrey, Acting Deputy Director-General and Chief Digital Officer, Digital, Data and Technology Solutions

Holmes, Ms Lisa, Motor Accident Injuries Commissioner and Lifetime Care and Support Commissioner, Executive Branch Manager, Insurance, formerly Acting Executive Group Manager Economic and Financial Group

Tanton, Mr Graham, Executive Group Manager, Property and Shared Services

Mirzabegian, Ms Sanaz, Acting Executive Group Manager, Procurement Reform

Saddler, Mr Scott, Executive Branch Manager, National Arboretum and Stromlo Forest Park

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning. Welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economy and Gender and Economic Equality for its inquiry into Annual Financial Reports 2021-2022. This morning the committee will be hearing evidence from Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, ACT Insurance Authority and the Motor Accident Injuries Commission. The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's hearing.

The first time witnesses speak, please state your name and the capacity in which you are appearing here today. Please be aware the proceedings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. When taking a question on notice please clearly articulate that as it helps the committee secretary get things organised and it helps with our transcript.

In the first session we are hearing from the Special Minister for State. Welcome Minister Steel and all your officials today. Can I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement? When you first speak, as you introduce yourself and the capacity in which you appear, please confirm for the record at that point, that you understand the privilege implications of the statement. As there are no opening statements today I will kick off with a question.

Minister, I have a few questions about the Procurement Reform Program. It was tabled in the last sitting period and there was language in your speech that I was not quite sure of. I am wondering if you can tell me a little bit about the strategy and do we have a copy of that?

**Mr Steel:** This is all up on the website. All the information is there about the initiatives contained in the Procurement Reform Program including the short term actions we are undertaking to 31 December 2022, through to those longer term actions we are planning to undertake through next year. This includes a status of where those are up to. We have already completed a number of actions up until 30 September and those include; investing in our people - the ACT Government Procurement Capability Strategy, enhancing our data and systems through the delivery of a design and implementation road map to deliver an integrated procurement ICT system, supporting procurement through the delivery of an Accreditation Framework and tiered service delivery model to ensure consistency and effectiveness of procurement processes, supporting businesses to work with the ACT government through a series of e-learning modules which will be released on areas such as accessing early tender notices and tendering to win ACT government work, and undertaking a review of existing panels and standing offer arrangements to ensure equitable access and consistent management.

So we have been working through our list of actions. These of course have been informed by a number of different reviews and inquiries including the government's self-initiated review undertaken by Renee Leon, *Review of Procurement ACT*. It has also been informed by the work of the ACT Better Regulation Taskforce, to try and make dealing with government easier for businesses in particular. So balancing the need for transparency and probity of procurement processes with making sure it is easier to do business with the ACT government. A range of initiatives there and it is all up on the Procurement ACT website.

**MS ORR:** Minister, on the e-learning. It is a new initiative. I think it was outlined on page 119 of volume 1. Can you run through a little more about that and how it will help improve the training and understanding of successful procurement practices please?

**Mr Steel:** No worries, I will hand over to the team of Procurement ACT to provide some further detail.

**Ms Mirzabegian:** I acknowledge I have read and understand the privilege statement. There are a range of e-learning products that Procurement ACT is developing at the moment. I suspect you are referring to those for the suppliers in particular?

**MS ORR:** Yes.

**Ms Mirzabegian:** So the e-learning for the suppliers is really to assist them to be able to log on to the Procurement ACT website where the procurement opportunities are made available. We have something called advanced tender notices you can sign up for. On the website you can nominate the areas or the industries that you are interested in, and you will get a notification, once you have signed up, of those opportunities that are upcoming. That is one part of it. The other part is about taking a tenderer or a prospective tenderer through how to respond to the tender process in a way that will help with their chances of winning it. It is not to show them how to win but it is to say such things as you must make sure you are answering or responding to questions fully and so forth. It is to help them better understand how to respond to a government procurement proposal.

**MS ORR:** There is also reference to 16 new and updated better practice guides and fact sheets. Can you run me through a little bit about what those are going to achieve?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Certainly can. Procurement ACT has usually published fact sheets and better practice guides. These are generally aimed at public servants trying to undertake procurement. Procurement ACT from time-to-time publishes additional ones to address a particular need that has been identified or feedback that has been provided.

**MR DAVIS:** A very brief but also very broad question. Minister, given all the media reporting about cybersecurity attacks on Optus and Medibank can the ACT government assure Canberrans their data is safe that the ACT government holds?

**Mr Steel:** It is something that all organisations, I think, have been thinking very deeply about. If they were not already thinking about it before the Optus data breach, they certainly are now. It is the top of their agenda. It is something that we have been consistently investing in—our cybersecurity maturity and capability in the ACT government—to make sure our systems are at a level that will resist those attacks. The reality is those attacks will happen in the future. I think it is about how we respond and making sure we have the maturity and capability in-house to deal with those attacks when they occur in the ACT. Unfortunately, we have seen that in relation to Legal Aid just over the last week or so, noting that they are a statutory authority and have different ICT systems to the ACT government. I might hand over to the Deputy Director-General who is acting on behalf of the Chief Digital Officer, Geoffrey Rutledge to provide some further detail about what we are doing in digital data and technology services around cybersecurity.

**Mr Rutledge:** Thanks, Minister. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thanks, Mr Davis, for your question. As you say, this is really at the forefront and it has been at the forefront of DDTS for some time, cybersecurity and ensuring we hold the citizens' data safe. What we have seen through Optus and then Medibank Private and then more recently locally here at Legal Aid is that no organisation is safe from the threat of cyber threats. We have seen increased activity, global activity and anything with a .gov or a .org is under threat—as is .com, but we are talking about how we are doing it here in the ACT.

To date we have spent a lot of time in hardening our infrastructure. If you think about cybersecurity as how big is the fence and then also your response time and what is behind the fence? So if I think about it in those terms, we have spent a lot of time hardening our infrastructure, making sure our firewalls are done, making sure we keep updating our patches, so keep doing patch applications and ensuring we have newer infrastructure. I think a challenge for all organisations is older servers have fallen out of support. They become a vulnerability and when you have a network as wide as ours, we have to go back and make sure those legacy systems are up to date.

The other thing we have been doing more recently and certainly since Optus—what we saw in the Optus thing was Optus was retaining a lot of personal information it probably did not need to hold at all. As you saw, former customers were getting contacted for the first time in many years. So what we are doing is checking our

systems, as we are, about whether we are retaining personal information any longer than we need to. It is an interesting balancing act because people want to talk to the government once and expect the government to know who they are but then also we do not want to retain information for any longer than we need to. So that is our current focus. I think what we have done is we have hardened the fence. Now we are looking at what is inside, what personal information we currently hold and whether or not we need to continue to hold it. And then also working on our response times when something happens.

As the Minister said in this case, which is still a live operation around Legal Aid, although they sit outside the ACT government network and they have third party providers, the whole of our cybersecurity expertise has been applied to this, to be able to shut down the systems and respond quickly to that.

**MR DAVIS:** I think it was a couple of days ago that the Chief Minister was on *Chief Minister Talkback* on ABC and was asked a question about this long-term vision for the government to have, I think the phrase was, a digital wallet or a one-stop shop, a place where all of your relationship with government is held. That goes to your point about not wanting to have to duplicate. It creates efficiencies but I wonder if the government has done any work to provide Canberrans an extra assurance. My worry is we are investing in this infrastructure that will create efficiencies but Canberrans may not have appetite to take it up when they see these data breaches from other private companies. So what additional assurances can we provide? There was a long question in that, a bit of a preamble I know. We are spending a lot of money to get to the utopian vision of a one-stop shop, what if people do not use it because they are afraid?

**Mr Steel:** It is a good question. At the moment when citizens deal with a range of different services provided by both government and private companies, when trying to access telecommunications services or whatever services it may be, they are asked to provide information about themselves in order to access that service. At the moment they are doing that with a whole range of different companies. What we have been discussing with other states and territories, including the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting on Friday, is developing a trusted digital identity framework for Australia. It is currently in development at the moment. That would potentially mean we could have less information sharing by the citizen to some of those companies who might become third party members of this scheme and also governments; commonwealth, state and territory, to try to reduce the amount of information they have to provide. That might be through the development of an ACT digital identity, a digital wallet, as you have described. Or it could be utilising something like myGovID that could be used to access telecommunications to prove that Chris Steel is Chris Steel and provide any information that is necessary.

So we are working through that at the moment—what that means and what the user benefits and experiences will be. There is a bit of clarity that needs to be provided but the commonwealth is certainly keen on moving on this identity framework. It requires legislation to be passed through the commonwealth. New South Wales is also currently trialling a new, different approach to this, where effectively the citizen has control of their identity rather than it being provided through myGovID for example.

Already myGovID has, I think, over 9 million users, so that is quite a number of people who have downloaded the app and used it. I am not sure all of them quite understand what that app actually provides for them at this point in time. So there is a bit of work to do to refine what that trusted digital identity framework looks like and what the benefits are and then explain to citizens what those benefits are. I appreciate some citizens may not want themselves to be involved in that process. I think we should certainly provide citizens with options around that so it is not the only way they can engage with a service or engage with government but it might be one way that certainly streamlines the process in getting a service and also makes sure it is as secure as possible. And at the moment I think some people would be of the view that having some of your identity stored with government should be more secure than it is with a private company, like we have seen recently with Optus.

**MR DAVIS:** You have both spoken a lot about the long-term work that is happening across government to try and protect us from cyber-attacks, to protect people's data. I wonder if there has been any reactive or new investments or decisions that have had to be taken in the last couple of weeks and months in light of the reports of the Optus hack and the Medibank hack. Have we had to change tack at all or spend more money than we were intending based on what looks to be the uptick of these sort of attacks?

**Mr Steel:** We have seen this happen to other organisations over the last number of years. We have seen that it has been increasing over time. That has probably sharpened our focus on this issue. We have been making investments through recent budgets in establishing that response capability.

We are already seeing the benefits of that. We have provided support to Legal Aid during recent days, and we will continue to work through what we need to do on some of the more strategic pieces of work as well. That includes how we can improve our capability, maturity and hardening of our systems, particularly those systems that relate to critical infrastructure.

The federal government has recently passed legislation around critical infrastructure, which means that we have to do this for some of our infrastructure and systems. The two that come to mind are public transport—we have a new ticketing system coming in; that will need to meet those requirements—and our hospital system.

There is quite a bit of work happening there. I will hand over to Mr Rutledge to talk through anything further.

**Mr Rutledge:** In the last couple of months, we have probably had a redirection of some resources. It has made us rethink, particularly around privacy, and privacy impact assessments. What we have done right across government—it is not just driven from DDTS—is to focus the mind on why we are collecting personal information and whether we have got it right.

Within DDTS, as the minister said, we have had ongoing investment and uplift in capability. We have also seen numerous attacks on our own firewalls, which have held to date. Every time we have one of those, and we have to direct resources to warding off that attack, that is a new focus. We have not seen any brand-new investment in this short period of time, but we have certainly put a lot of energy into



this space in the last couple of months.

**Mr Steel:** With respect to a few of the things we have done, we have boosted our resilience to harmful security events by strengthening the ACT's cybersecurity system and establishing a whole-of-government cybersecurity centre. Digital data and technology solutions implemented a new security incident response system, which provides enhanced visibility to monitor, track and investigate cybersecurity events.

We have also onboarded the Australia Cyber Security Centre protective domain name service, to help to protect both the ACT Government and ACT Education internet gateways. It forms part of a defence in-depth approach to help mitigate a successful cyber attack. We are continuing to improve our response to these issues, and we do take a continuous improvement approach. I think that we can learn from every incident. We will certainly be looking at the learnings that come out of the most recent one with Legal Aid as well.

**MS ORR:** Minister, how is the ACT government working with community groups to understand the future needs of community facilities across the ACT?

**Mr Steel:** As we discussed during estimates, we have recently embarked on a piece of work to look at renewing our community facilities held by ACT property group. We are looking in depth at where those facilities are, what they currently offer and whether they can be better utilised in the future. That is not just the buildings themselves but the land around them.

It is still at a fairly early stage. We have been doing some scoping, with a focus on particularly the Woden Valley and Belconnen, where there are some older facilities, many of which are coming to the end of life; they are not really fit for purpose and are not even meeting the needs of the community groups that are using them currently, let alone the 57 or so which I believe are on the waiting list.

In this piece of work we are looking at those two regions initially, before branching out and doing some further analysis, and working out what opportunities there might be to renew facilities and provide more space for the range of groups that are coming forward to ACT government and saying that they need room to do whatever they need to do, whether it is delivering community services to vulnerable people or a whole range of different things—recreation-type activities.

Often, we understand that organisations do not have a significant ability to raise revenue, so we are mindful of their need to have low-cost accommodation. It is a significant piece of work. I will hand over to Mr Tanton.

**Mr Tanton:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. As the minister pointed out, a body of work has commenced which is focusing on Belconnen and Woden at this point. It is starting to look at establishing a framework for assessing the current portfolio of properties that we have, noting that the majority of the portfolio is ageing.

It is looking at the physical structures around fit for purpose; it is also looking at how we could manage some of those sites to make the portfolio that we have more available. Traditionally, you would rent a space to an organisation, even though they

may only use it once in a while. It is about looking at how we can free up that space for more organisations. An organisation may go into a site a number of times a week. It is about how we can actually free up the other times, to make it more useable for those other community groups who would like to use the same space.

That is what we are looking at. As the minister mentioned, it is in the early stages at the moment. There is a lot of complexity. We are having discussions with a number of community groups within those areas, and more broadly as well, in regard to their needs going forward. It is a bit like a game of Tetris; it is challenging to try and find availability for organisations who want to take up space.

Some of the spaces that groups are looking for are very specific. It is amazing to see the amount of interest by community groups and what sort of facilities they want. Sometimes we do not have the space available that would suit their needs. It is an ongoing bit of work at the moment, but it is something that we are moving forward on.

**MS ORR:** As part of that work, what cross-directorate discussions are you having, to get a better understanding of what government might need out of these facilities?

**Mr Tanton:** We are having discussions with EPSDD and TCCS. We have also established a governance committee, to look at the community facilities. We are bringing cross-directorate consultation into that process. They are getting an understanding of what we are looking at. There are a lot of linkages with the Education portfolio—after-school care, and some other facilities such as halls. There are the community centres that are being planned through EPSDD. I refer also to CHS and Health, and their differing needs; they do come into contact. That is ongoing. We have a broad range of consultation, and the steering committee around the body of work that we are doing looks to engage them in that process as well.

**MS ORR:** You said you have focused on Woden and Belconnen; what plans are there to expand in some other regions?

**Mr Steel:** We would like to scope out what the opportunities are in those two regions first, and be able to demonstrate what is possible in those locations before we look at expanding to other parts of Canberra.

There will be a range of different opportunities. We are not exactly sure what those are that we will need to consider. We want to make sure that we are working with the non-government and community services sector around any changes, and make sure that they are changes that those organisations support. We have heard from a number of organisations who would like to move to a place that is more accessible for their clients. We will try and demonstrate what is possible in providing, hopefully, newer accommodation to organisations that want to move. That might free up an existing location for another organisation to move in.

We want to demonstrate some of those benefits, and wins, before we undertake a wider program. We certainly know that, looking at the city holistically, all of the government property is important, and it might provide more opportunities. It may be that an organisation does not want to move just within Woden, if we are just looking at Woden and Belconnen; they might want to move to the city or another district. We

will have to look at the whole portfolio.

As we have discussed before, the portfolio, for historic reasons, because these properties have come into the property group from various sources—Education, with surplus, old school sites and so forth—are typically located in established suburbs rather than in some of the newer suburbs. We know that we need new accommodation in those newer suburbs as well. We will be looking at what opportunities there might be to do that through the program, and realign the current portfolio. We need to make sure that we continue to have community facilities available in existing suburbs as well. With densification starting to happen, there might be more of a need for those services in a particular location than there has been in the past. That is also why we are working with Education, because it is possible that some of those sites may need to be reactivated for an education use at some point. We do not want to lose those sites for that, if that happens, even in 40 years time.

**MS ORR:** Given that there are a lot of moving parts in this piece of work, what do you see as the time line for the progression of it?

**Mr Steel:** I will hand over to Mr Tanton to talk through that. We are in the scoping stage at the moment, following some initial feasibility work that was undertaken by a consultant in relation to those two regions. We do not necessarily agree with all of the recommendations that the consultant has put up, but we will certainly work through them and work on some opportunities where we can demonstrate a benefit, before we move on to the rest of the Canberra regions.

**Mr Tanton:** We do have the work from the consultants that we are looking at, in regard to some of their assumptions and views that they have put forward. We will look to progress that in the next six to 12 months, in regard to looking at what can potentially be done, and what are some of the test sites that could be utilised. There is then the feasibility, regarding how much it would actually cost to put that together, how we go about it and what sort of mix there is. That will be the next part of the work. We have done the initial scoping, to see the potential opportunities, and now we need to test some of those going forward.

That will be the next phase. We will come back to government in due course and say, “This is what we’re proposing; this is how much we think it will cost,” and then get a sense of the appetite in regard to that. I note that there will need to be a lot of consultation through the community and across directorates in that space.

**MS ORR:** Given that it seems to be a longer term project, what are you doing in the meantime to maintain the properties and invest in what you do have? What works have you undertaken?

**Mr Steel:** Through each budget we make investments in maintaining the properties. We have an ongoing maintenance budget for that, which we utilise. A lot of the upgrades are often around heating, ventilation and cooling. It is not necessarily hugely exciting stuff, but it is important to help to maintain the properties and bring down the costs for organisations that are occupying those properties, in terms of their energy costs.

We have also been looking, as Mr Tanton alluded to earlier, at how we can better utilise existing properties, and get more out of the community facilities that we have, potentially, by opening up some of those surplus spaces for bookings, including through implementing new booking systems. An example that I have given previously was when I visited Holt Community Hub. It is on an old school site; it is a typical property in the portfolio. It is largely occupied by Carers ACT. We have been starting a conversation with them about whether we could use some of those old classrooms, which have been refurbished and are quite usable spaces—whether we could open up some of those through a booking system, and enable other organisations to use them when Carers ACT is not using them. That might get more out of the spaces that we have available for the community.

We have also been working with the Weston Creek Community Centre. It does not have a management role just at Weston Creek; it has also been engaging with property group to help to manage the bookings for a range of community spaces on properties across Canberra, particularly the school halls. They have been working with the property group to make sure that those spaces are available to the community and can be booked more easily, particularly at places like Holt Community Hub and some of the other community hubs around Canberra—Chifley Community Hub, and I think they are involved with Cook as well. Mr Tanton, do you want to make any further comments?

**Mr Tanton:** On the maintenance, we have, for the current financial year, roughly \$9 million assigned for maintenance works. We do site checks on a rotation basis, in which we look at condition reports for those sites. That starts the planning around the maintenance program of works. It is fair to say that water ingress has been a topic this year, with the amount of water that we have had. But it is an ongoing body of work. It is a large portfolio. We work with our tenants and the people utilising the sites on those matters.

The core of our focus is around safety, making sure the buildings are safe and can be occupied. That is the focus, as we prioritise the body of works. As I said, we do work with our tenants closely. If things do come up that we are obligated to fix for their tenancy and the like, we progress those and we will activate those on a needs basis.

**THE CHAIR:** Great. Thank you.

**MR DAVIS:** I appreciate that, at the moment, a lot of other work is happening in Woden and Belconnen but, as you can appreciate, I get contacted by community organisations in my electorate of Tuggeranong who are currently renting Property Group facilities with a peppercorn rent. They have proposed to me that they have been either approached or have proactively approached other community organisations who have a dearth of space. How would those organisations, if they had a vision for how that site could be better realised, make that pitch to government? Would that be via the unsolicited bid process or is there a more formalised process for these particular pieces of property?

**Mr Steel:** That might be one pathway, but I think Property Group could be approached directly by those organisations. If there is an agreement between the existing tenant and a prospective tenant—they might have a sharing arrangement—

I think we would be really interested in that. That goes to exactly the sorts of policy objectives that we are trying to seek at the moment. So, absolutely, if that is something that an organisation is interested in, they should approach ACT Property Group directly. They know who those people are because they are in touch on a regular basis, managing those tenancies.

**MR DAVIS:** Fantastic. I just want to confirm that there are two different types of groups I am talking about here: those that already have some sort of plan—it might be a one-pager, but some sort of plan—or have had a conversation with another organisation who might be willing to construct something, and others who are really, really hungry to be supported to facilitate those arrangements. Could Property Group assist with both or would Property Group be more able to assist with those that are already a few steps along in the process, if that makes sense?

**Mr Steel:** Yes. One example just recently is the Blue Gum school, which I appreciate is not in your electorate; it is up in the inner north. There has been, I think, a proposal put forward by them to use some of the land and have a continued presence on that site. We are working through that issue. That has required a little bit of brokerage from ACT Property Group in working with Blue Gum on their future aspirations for the school and the larger number of students that may be attending that school in the future and how that then works with some of the other tenants who are also using the ACT Property Group facilities. They have played a brokerage role. But, yes, I think it is always helpful when there is some collaboration and agreement between organisations beforehand. Certainly, we can have those conversations if there is a proposal that looks like it has merit. Mr Tanton might be able to provide some further detail.

**Mr Tanton:** Yes. Thanks, Minister, and thank you for the question, Mr Davis. You are absolutely right: it does depend on what they are looking to do. You said “construct”. If it is a greenfield site and they are looking to build a facility, that would be something that would need to go through planning and a broader consultation process. If they are looking to build on or change an existing facility, that is something that would come to ACT Property Group. We would need to assess it to see what they are looking to do. There are a number of different planning rules about land. Some land is ACT Property Group land but other parts then adjoin TCCS land and the like, so there are a number of different directorates that may need to be consulted as part of that process.

Also, it is about making sure that whatever has been proposed by one organisation is not going to impact on other tenants. This can be quite complex when you have multi-use facilities where you may have five or six different organisations and one wants to expand and become really big or maybe take over other rooms. It is then about equity and you have to consider the longer term view of what you want from the site. There is also then the question about some of those smaller organisations who do not have the financial funding to move and to find other accommodation. So there is a balance.

If you do have folks within the area that are currently renting but looking to do more with it or making more available to other renters or tenants, we are absolutely happy to have a discussion with them at ACT Property Group, to start that consultation and

to try and get an understanding of what they are looking to do. Obviously, having a bit of a plan, for four or five years, is helpful.

There is that other question that the minister raised also, with regard to: if they are looking to go broader on a piece of land or a facility, does that facility then need to be potentially used for something else down the track, for education or another use? Those are the things we need to take into consideration, but we are always happy to listen to organisations who have got a vision for what they are looking to do. Very often they are very passionate about what they are doing and the community that they serve. I would be pointing them to ACT Property Group and then we can assist them through the process of pointing them to the right area.

**MR DAVIS:** That sounds great. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, you mentioned the booking system. I am wondering: does the charging process from facility to facility change at the discretion of the business manager in a particular school? Is it the same cost across the board?

**Mr Steel:** I will hand over to Mr Tanton to talk a little bit about the fees for bookings.

**Mr Tanton:** Yes. Thank you, Minister. I do not really have visibility of the regime around schools, but for the ACT Property Group site it does depend on the space, because it is basically on a cost recovery basis. If it has been leased out to a head property manager, so to speak, that can change as well, subject to the cost recovery basis for that building. Different buildings have different costs to run them. They have different outgoings in regard to cleaning, energy and the like, so they do vary, but it is generally based on the principle that it is on a cost recovery basis.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it per venue? Are there different usage or booking charges per venue, depending on who is booking it, or is it just a standard: "If anyone wants this room, it is this much money"?

**Mr Tanton:** It does vary.

**THE CHAIR:** It varies?

**Mr Tanton:** Yes. It does vary from site to site, and from the operator who may be using that facility or who may be in charge of that facility in regard to the cost of running it and the cost recovery model that they may be using. For events, I think there is more of a standard booking fee for a particular site, but for some of the smaller organisations and the buildings that we have, it does change, subject to the site.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. You mentioned special events, but is there consideration of concessional treatment for specific groups if they are able to give you a valid case for using the site?

**Mr Tanton:** We would consider it. If, again, there were reasons, on a case-by-case basis we would consider it, noting that the rents and the rates are based on a cost recovery model. But it is something that we have the ability to waive, if need be, subject to the arrangements with the potential head tenant there as well. Also, with

properties that we run directly, there is that ability if need be.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, on Wednesday last week the Auditor-General described the culture of procurement in the ACT public service as follows: “Lack of expertise, lack of practice, unawareness and, in some cases, even naivety.” On the back of three very critical procurement reports, two last year and one this year, Minister, do you agree with the view of the Auditor-General? And could you answer my question and give your reasons without unnecessary background?

**Mr Steel:** We are currently working through the implementation of recommendations from a number of Auditor-General’s reports at the moment. That, together with a review that was undertaken by Procurement ACT, and together with the work of the Better Regulation Task Force, is forming the basis of the procurement reform project. Some of the key actions and deliverables from that which have already been progressed go to the issues that you are talking about, around capability within directorates—

**MR CAIN:** So do you agree with the Auditor-General?

**Mr Steel:** That is why we are going through the process of establishing an accreditation framework, so that we can make sure that procurement practitioners do understand and have the skills to be able to deliver procurement in their directorates. It is why we have been working on enhancing learning modules to make sure that people understand the various facets of procurement across ACT government. That—

**MR CAIN:** Do you agree with the Auditor-General?

**Mr Steel:** needs to be a continued process that rolls out over a long period of time to make sure that people have the capability to undertake this work.

**MR CAIN:** Point of order, Chair. It is a simple question. He can answer the question as he chooses—

**Mr Steel:** I think I have answered the question. Thank you.

**MR CAIN:** I do not believe so. Do you agree with the Auditor-General’s comments?

**Mr Steel:** We have been undertaking—

**MR CAIN:** Yes or no?

**Mr Steel:** We respond to the recommendations of the Auditor-General, and that is what we are doing.

**MS ORR:** Point of order, Chair. He can put the question. It is up to the minister how he answers. Mr Cain’s interjections are not helping.

**THE CHAIR:** He is asking for a yes or no answer.

**MS ORR:** Yes, but it is up to the minister how he answers. Putting the same question over and over again is not actually helping anything.

**Mr Steel:** Thank you.

**MR CAIN:** When it is not answered, with respect—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Cain, do you have a supplementary?

**MR CAIN:** Yes, I do. Thank you. I assume you are taking these three critical procurement reports as part of this review. I note that you have tabled the Procurement Reform Program. Could you also table for this committee the ACT government's procurement capability strategy?

**Mr Steel:** I will take that on notice.

**MR CAIN:** The design and implementation road map.

**Mr Steel:** I will take that on notice.

**MR CAIN:** And the accreditation framework.

**Mr Steel:** Again, I will take that on notice.

**MR CAIN:** Thank you. The Auditor-General has released a report investigating several elements of the procurement and contracting activities—I mentioned this earlier—regarding the Acton waterfront project. One ongoing theme is identifying issues with the tendering process itself. I touched on that a bit earlier. On page 5 of this particular report it says:

Only a small percentage (the Stage One fee of \$361,955 of \$46,768,267, that is 0.7 per cent) of the Contract Price has been demonstrably subject to open tendering processes as stated ...

That is a quote on the quantum that was subject to open tendering processes as stated. Minister, how can a tender that is worth so much have only 0.7 per cent of the value subject to open tendering processes?

**Mr Steel:** I think those are the matters that the inquiry by the Auditor-General has gone to. We will certainly take any recommendations from the Auditor-General and consider those as part of the procurement reform project that is underway. Ultimately, these procurements are a matter for the agencies that are undertaking the procurement, including those decisions around open tender. They might be questions you could ask of the CRA in relation to its predecessor, the LDA.

**MR CAIN:** Procurement is obviously one of the areas of responsibility for you, as Special Minister of State. With respect, I have heard you pass procurement questions to other agencies before. Just exactly what is your role, as Special Minister of State, in procurement?



**Mr Steel:** My responsibility is to Procurement ACT, which supports whole-of-government procurement. Ultimately, the procurement decisions, under the procurement act, are a matter for the agency. We have discussed that before, Mr Cain. I am also responsible for procurement policy and legislation. We have a very substantial procurement reform project underway, which we have been describing, and which we have tabled in the Assembly. There is a significant piece of work going on there which will also support the capability of procurement practitioners and improvements to procurement policy right across government, which we hope will have an impact on the decisions made by delegates and those undertaking procurements in directorates.

**MR CAIN:** Do you respond, yourself, to issues that arise from procurement—say, for example, those that the Auditor-General’s reports have highlighted?

**Mr Steel:** Yes. As I mentioned earlier in the proceedings, all the recommendations will be considered by government from those Auditor-General’s reports and are forming part of the work that we are doing under the procurement reform project. We have had already a couple of Auditor-General’s reports making specific recommendations, many of which we have agreed to or agreed to in principle. We are now undertaking the work of implementing that work, as well as other recommendations from self-initiated reviews and the Better Regulation Taskforce, which has a difference focus.

**MS ORR:** My question goes to the role that ACT Procurement and the directorates play. I know you have answered a little bit, but is there anything you want to add, just to help clarify how procurement is undertaken across the territory?

**Mr Steel:** I might hand over to Sanaz to provide some clarity on the work that Procurement ACT does with directorates.

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Certainly. Procurement ACT, you could describe their role as a dual role. One is in relation to policy and capability and the other one is in relation to supporting territory entities to undertake procurement. Support can range from providing advice and assistance in relation to those high risk, high value procurements; assistance in relation to notifying notifiable contracts and so forth; or providing advice in relation to any ad hoc questions that might emerge in relation to procurement.

The capability arm of Procurement ACT also looks after the capability of staff that undertake procurement across the ACT government. The desire there is to ensure that any issues that are arising through any procurements, or any issues that directorates and agencies raise with us, are then translated into appropriate training, with fact sheets, which we discussed earlier, or through a community of practice or an e-bulletin which Procurement ACT has for its members.

**MS ORR:** Thank you.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, I was wondering if you could provide a bit of an update on the refurbishment works happening at the National Arboretum. In particular, what has

been happening over the last 12 months and what is left to do?

**Mr Steel:** Thank you. There is a master plan for the National Arboretum, so there is a lot of work to do to realise that vision over a long period of time. I might hand over to Scott Saddler to provide some further detail about what has been happening at the Arboretum. A lot of rain has been happening at the Arboretum, which has been good news.

**MR DAVIS:** Absolutely. Not in your other portfolios, Minister. I appreciate it has been rough there.

**Mr Saddler:** Thank you, Minister. I have read and understood the privilege statement. Minister, the rain is not good for the natives, so we need to get it stopped shortly.

A lot of the internal roads have been asphalted at the National Arboretum, which has been fantastic. The cork oak road has somewhere in the vicinity of 600 cars a week going down into the cork oaks, and that has been tarred, with the car park down the end. We now have a tourist bus which is booked out most days, for up to eight or 10 people. Now we will be able to take those visitors into the National Arboretum, through those internal roads that have been tarred, with some 4.6 kilometres of internal roads now asphalted.

As part of the subdivision which is going to be in place at the back of the Arboretum, there will be another 6.3 kilometres of asphalted roads once that is finished. It gives the general public another view of the National Arboretum. Rather than looking out of the window at one of the best views in the city, it now takes the people into the National Arboretum to see and fall in love with the 44,000 trees that are there.

**MR DAVIS:** We are hearing a lot about the economic and tourism recovery from the pandemic. How has that been playing out at the Arboretum? What sort of trend are you seeing in increased numbers, if any, of people coming through the facility?

**Mr Saddler:** The number at the National Arboretum pre-COVID was 770,000. During the COVID period it reduced to 638,000. What we are forecasting is that we will probably go past a million people at the Arboretum by April to May next year, which is extraordinary. There was an increase of 170,000 people, pre-COVID, per year for the three years to prior to COVID. So the numbers are exponential at the moment. We had five functions last week. The Labor Party came on Tuesday night. The Liberals were there on the Thursday night.

**MR DAVIS:** I take that as a challenge, Mr Saddler. I have got to get my mob there.

**Mr Saddler:** Yes. I will not talk about it. The functions are going great and Ginger Catering are doing an amazing job up there. To answer your question: the numbers are exponential. Even last Sunday 5,700 people came through the door.

**MR DAVIS:** Great. How do you track where those people come from? Obviously, it is great when Canberrans go to the Arboretum and check out the view, but I am interested in trying to figure out how many people are coming to Canberra to see the Arboretum, not just necessarily our locals?

**Mr Saddler:** It is a difficult question to answer but we have surveys. We have done surveys consistently. There are pads at the front where people can do surveys. There is also the concierge, who asks questions. We are supposed to have a rating of 85 per cent excellent or very good. This year we just got 98 per cent for our rating and it was done over a few thousand people. To answer your question about interstate numbers: we have not got that yet. But some of the surveys are that Canberrans are turning up five to six times a year and they are bringing anyone who comes to Canberra to the Arboretum.

**MR DAVIS:** Tremendous. Thank you so much.

**MS ORR:** You mentioned that the rain is not good for natives. How is the rain impacting at the Arboretum and how are you managing that, with the forests and the growth?

**Mr Saddler:** We have had probably five or six years of drought and we kept the trees alive through that period. The water is a concern. The average rainfall in Canberra is 617 millimetres. In the last 22 months we have had 2.17 metres of rain. It is quite difficult. There are a number of native forests, probably four at this particular point in time, that are struggling, because it is easier to water a tree in drought but it is harder to take water away from a tree. The 2.17 metres of rain is extreme. In October we had the most rainfall since records were taken here in Canberra. We are digging some small trenches away from those particular trees and water is traversing away, but it is difficult. But there are only four forests that are in some difficulty.

**MS ORR:** With the visitor numbers, I want to get a bit more of an indication from you as to what you are doing to continue to grow what are quite impressive visitor numbers as it is.

**Mr Saddler:** I think the National Arboretum is attractive. We have the best bonsai collection in Australia. Every bonsai artist wants to have their tree there. We have a list of bonsai artists that want to train and get in there. We are continuing to have a look at futureproofing the National Arboretum for those one million people and beyond. It is through the master plan and it is through surveys and it is through a number of things that we are putting together to make sure that, once those million people come through next year, it will still be a magnificent place to visit.

**MS ORR:** Thank you. Minister, just back to procurement, what training is being done to improve inclusive procurement practices and ensure that tenders are developed with an eye to opening opportunities particularly, say, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander businesses and other groupings?

**Mr Steel:** I will hand over to the team shortly. We have an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy. We are about to review that policy, after a number of years of operation. I think we have now hit just over two per cent of procurements that have engaged with a supplier that is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business, which is really great.

There was a showcase just over the last week, up at parliament, of some of those

businesses. There are a huge variety of them, delivering a range of different services. Part of the approach has been to work with government agencies on making them aware that those suppliers exist and that the policy is there to support them to engage with those suppliers for procurements under a certain size.

Also, we have the local procurement plan process for procurements. That helps us to meet some of those inclusion objectives in infrastructure procurements in particular, where we can engage with meeting our targets around making sure that we have women in trades, for example, which is something that we have been trying to do through projects like the CIT Woden campus; and projects supporting not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses as well through that plan.

Suppliers, through the tender process, obviously have to provide information on how they are going to meet those local procurement objectives. That is part of the decision-making on those projects. I will hand over to Procurement ACT to talk a bit further about those inclusion objectives and how we meet those.

**Ms Mirzabegian:** You would be aware, Ms Orr, that we have procurement values in the ACT government, and those values do speak very directly to inclusion in procurement practices to support our territory entities, our directorates and agencies in relation to this. We have rolled out training for those offices. The procurement values are spoken about in the procurement communities of practice, as well as through the e-bulletin that I was referring to before. We also have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander procurement policy champions that are embedded in all directorates and agencies, and they will further assist to encourage and support their staff in ensuring that we are targeting those areas that our community values in relation to our procurement.

**MS ORR:** Thank you.

**MR CAIN:** Regarding the Procurement Reform Program, Minister, I note that the design and even the implementation road map have been completed, according to materials you presented on 30 September this year. What integrated ICT systems are being delivered for this?

**Mr Steel:** We have not actually implemented the ICT system. We have been in the stages of designing that system and setting out an implementation road map to deliver it. We think that, once set up, this will enhance the transparency and the data that we have about procurement that is occurring across the ACT government, which will help to inform the improvement of our procurement practices over time. I will hand over to the team to talk a little bit about where the ICT system is up to.

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Certainly. We are currently undertaking a discovery process to understand the various procurement ICT systems that are utilised across the ACT government. Out of that, the idea is to better understand what the needs are, what are the disparate systems, and then to propose a solution that brings those systems together, such that we have data that covers the entirety of the life cycle of a procurement from the moment the need arises to the end of that contract. The road map is really how we would go about ensuring that we have undertaken that task.

**MR CAIN:** When do you think the ICT recommendations will be available or completed?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** I understand that the recommendations will be made by the end of this calendar year.

**MR CAIN:** Is the legislative review also part of this, particularly in terms of data management?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** The legislative review is broader than this. At the moment, from my understanding, we are not really looking directly at a legislative solution in relation to data management. However, record keeping and those adjacent practices are of course considered.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, more broadly, has this Procurement Reform Program attracted particular budget line funding?

**Mr Steel:** As we progress through, we will look at what the resourcing implications are not only for Procurement ACT but also for directorates. I do not think specifically it has, but I will check.

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Mr Cain, could you repeat the question?

**MR CAIN:** It was about the reform program more broadly. Is there a separate budget line, or any element of it, for that current allocation? Obviously, you will have proposed allocations once you have got your decisions made, but is there a current budget allocation for this?

**Mr Hocking:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. At this stage the Procurement Reform Program has been undertaken within the existing resources of CMTEDD. As the minister eluded to, as we work through the program there may be funding issues that will arise, but at the moment there is no specific funding line.

**MR CAIN:** Is that diverting resources from other functions? It must, I guess. What resources are being diverted from?

**Mr Steel:** The existing Procurement ACT resources are being focused on the procurement reform project. I have been clear, on the public record, that that has set back a couple of initiatives that were in their work program, so they will be delivered at a slightly later time. They relate to matters around the implementation of further policies under the statement of procurement values as it relates to the environment and also to modern slavery.

Those two matters are still on the program and will be delivered, but they may be delivered slightly later—or, indeed, by a different agency, in relation to the environment one. We are currently looking at whether we can work with Major Projects Canberra, who also have a role in the procurement of infrastructure projects, and whether we could have MPC lead that piece of work, rather than it being led by Procurement ACT specifically.

**MR CAIN:** Thank you. Regarding the accreditation framework, in your tabling statement in the Assembly you mentioned that the accreditation program will be supported by an independent governance body. Could you provide some detail about this body and its composition?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Minister, I can take that. Work is continuing to determine the appropriate body that would undertake that work. One of the options is the Government Procurement Board, but you would appreciate that the Government Procurement Board's functions are set by legislation and at this stage that function is not expressly included in legislation. What we are trying to do is explore all the available options that we have before setting up a new body.

**MR CAIN:** When do you expect that decision to be made about this body and its composition?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** The accreditation program is due to be rolled out completely by 31 March 2024. It will certainly be before that date.

**MR CAIN:** Is there a more specific date for the formation of that body?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** I could not say at this stage, no.

**MR CAIN:** What will this robust evaluation process look like, at this stage? Why wasn't this governance body specifically mentioned in your tabling speech?

**Mr Steel:** Ms Mirzabegian, do you want to talk to that evaluation?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** The evaluation itself is confirming the work that each agency has undertaken itself. Each agency will look at their own procurement capability and capacity, and provide that evidence and documentation to that governance body, and the governance body will confirm that their capabilities sit at a particular level. That is how it will work. It must be appreciated that accreditation is just one part of the ecosystem that will be used to support each agency in relation to their procurement. Based on an agency's level of accreditation, a level of support will be provided to that agency. If you are more highly accredited, it will be assumed that you can undertake more of your procurements. If you have lower accreditation, support will be provided from a central area, such as Procurement ACT. That is what that accreditation is for—to give us that transparency as to capability and capacity within an agency.

**Mr Steel:** It was a very detailed speech, Mr Cain; I am happy to provide more detail in future, if that is what you are after, including through the use of these proceedings.

**MR CAIN:** Thank you; I am always keen on detail. Minister, what is the tiered service delivery model? What does it look like?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** The tiered service delivery model, as I was just explaining, relates to or interacts with that accreditation system. There are three main tiers of delivery. At the base there is the enabled tier, which is about giving the directorates and agencies the tools that they need to undertake their own procurements. It consists of fact sheets,

guidance, training templates, as well as a helpdesk that will provide officers with the ability to ask any questions that they have on procurement. That is one tier of service.

At the next tier we have the assured services, which relate to checking in on an agency at key points in the procurement process, to give them the assurance that they have so far conducted the procurement in an appropriate manner. Above that is the managed tier service delivery, which is reserved for those higher risk, higher value procurements or where an agency itself does not have the capability to look after those procurements. That gives the highest level of support or where Procurement ACT will look after those procurements through to contract signing; then it is handed over to the relevant agency.

Of course, the relevant agency will also be involved, but it is the highest level of service. There are tiers of support, and increasing support, as the risk and value of the procurement increases.

**MR DAVIS:** Minister, could I get an update on the motor vehicle accidents insurance scheme? Obviously, it is a relatively new scheme. Do you have any data; and, in particular, complaints? I imagine that we do not keep data of people who are very happy, but I would be interested to know what the complaints look like.

**Mr Steel:** I will hand over to Lisa Holmes, Motor Accident Injuries Commissioner.

**Ms Holmes:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. Yes, we do track the number of complaints and reviews in relation to the scheme. In terms of someone who does not like the decision they have received, they have two avenues. They can do an internal review, which goes to the insurer; that is the first step. Each quarter, we report on those figures in our stats that go onto the motor accident injuries website.

For the scheme, since its existence, from 1 February 2020 through to the end of September 2022—about 2½ years—there have been 77 internal reviews. Given the number of decisions which are made, that is an extremely small proportion. Of those, there have been 24 which have then gone through to external review, which is with the ACAT.

People also have the ability to come to the commission if they have a complaint. The commission cannot look at, “Will we make a decision?” We can look at the procedures and practices that the insurer has followed in making decisions. The number of complaints has been in the handful since the scheme started.

**MR DAVIS:** What is the average time it is taking for a customer’s matter to be completed, from the day when they lodge a claim? On average, how long is that taking?

**Ms Holmes:** When it comes to the scheme, there are ongoing decisions constantly being made. If you look at the various heads of benefits that you can get, if you look at treatment and care, from a median basis, people are getting their first treatment of care payment 12 days after lodging their application. If you look at income replacement, income replacement does not flow until the interaction makes a decision as to whether or not to accept an application; they have 28 days to do that.

If you look at income replacement on a median basis, people are getting their first income replacement payment, if they have requested that, 29 days after they have made an application. Forty-seven per cent are getting their first income replacement payment within four weeks of making an application.

**MR DAVIS:** Do you have any data for those people who are making complaints—which I accept is a very small proportion of the amount of people going through the service—as to where their complaint originates from? Instinctively, I cannot imagine that it is those getting a payout within 12 days, or getting care within 12 days. Where is the pressure point for the majority of those people?

**Ms Holmes:** Mr Davis, are you talking about internal reviews or complaints?

**MR DAVIS:** Complaints.

**Ms Holmes:** Complaints through to the commission about process?

**MR DAVIS:** That is right.

**Ms Holmes:** As I said, we have not had that many. I would probably need to take that on notice as to some of the things that we are looking at. They include, for example, the amount of information that the insurer can collect in terms of prior injuries that someone might have. It is quite a broad spectrum. We certainly have not had a consistent theme as to what has been coming through on those few complaints that we have been getting.

**MR DAVIS:** On the external reviews, there is the same question: are you seeing that the ones going to external reviews are mostly a certain type of claim or, again, a bit of a mixed bag?

**Ms Holmes:** On our quarterly stats that we have on our website, we give breakdowns for both the internal reviews and the external reviews about the type of complaint it relates to. The vast majority of both internal reviews and external reviews are in relation to treatment and care.

**MS ORR:** Minister, on page 23 of volume 1 of the CMTEDD report, it lists a partnership with the revenue office to implement a system where an individual can give one change of circumstance and have their details changed across government. Can you run through the project and how it is going?

**Mr Steel:** The government has a program around digitising government services. As part of that program, the focus at the moment is on two areas: telling government once about their change of circumstance, rather than multiple times to each different agency or service provider that they are engaging with; also, we are undertaking a similar and linked project around establishing concessions once, rather than having to do so across multiple services. That piece of work is progressing well. I will hand over to Mr Rutledge to provide some further detail.

**Mr Rutledge:** This goes back to our earlier discussion about the ACT digital account.



The idea here is that, once you have told government once, we can use it for multiple services. Where we have worked with the revenue office is around concessions, particularly about rates and land taxes. They log in using their digital account, they go through automatically to the revenue office and it gets supplied.

What is interesting for me is what it has done for the people that have a digital account, which is now a couple of hundred thousand Canberrans. This is an older age group. With the customer experience, it makes sense that the people may be a little older. There is this perception that older people are less engaged in the digital world, and we have learned over and over again that that is not the case. This is one example. Once you provide a user-friendly digital interface, age is no barrier. That is what we have seen with the revenue office on this one.

**MS ORR:** That is with the change of circumstance. Is consideration being given—you mentioned concessions—on how you can broaden this out, seeing that there is a willingness and an uptake there for the use of the scheme?

**Mr Rutledge:** We are in really early days, but we are working with TCCS around registering a pet, as a future one. Again, it will be a slightly different demographic. Many of those will already have a digital account. That is one, with pet registration, where we are doing early design work. That could be another example where you would need to do an annual registration, and that would be another way of making the user experience very friendly. We are in the early stages for that change of circumstance.

**Mr Steel:** The premise is that you can tell government once about a change of address and that will carry across for pet registration, which is the current pilot that we are working on, and, of course, any other government service that is linked to the territory's digital account. As more government services get delivered online through the digital account, that will, of course, expand the benefit in terms of those changes of circumstance applying across those services.

We have a work plan for putting more government services online. We are looking at working with Education around school enrolment in particular, and making that interaction easier in the future. It is also about how those other services that we are currently working on might link with that. It is complex for each different service. What we have learned with the Education one, in the early scoping stages, is that schools require a certain level of information about a citizen—the parents and their children. That may be more or less, depending on what service it is. We have to try and make sure that we design it appropriately, and make sure that we capture all of the information that is required, but no more than what is required to deliver the service. That goes back to the discussion around cybersecurity as well.

**MS ORR:** With the digital account, what work are you doing to get more people to subscribe to a digital account so that they can get the benefit of these processes?

**Mr Steel:** As Mr Rutledge mentioned, there are already a couple of hundred thousand users. A range of services are available there—notifying government, if you have an infringement notice, for example, that it was not you who committed the speeding offence, and transferring that to someone else. That is one that citizens may have used.

As more services come online, like pet registration integration with the digital account, for example, we expect that the number of people signing up for the first time to use the digital account will increase. We will continue to look at how we can bring more government services online through the digital account going forward. Not every service is on there at the moment. There are a number, but not every one; so we will work through that as we go through the program.

**MS ORR:** When you are putting a service online for the digital account—you said that it can be quite complex—do you have to do a design for each particular service, or is it the case that, once you have a pro forma, you can run with it?

**Mr Steel:** It can be a little bit of both, depending on what the service is. We also have certain security requirements with the digital account that will need to be applied to any system that connects with it. That is a piece of work on which we have been working with agencies, to make sure that, when they are designing systems, from the very beginning, if they are going out for procurement for a new ICT system, they are undertaking that design with all of those security requirements in mind, as well as the user experience journey, so that it is user centred.

**Mr Rutledge:** The minister is absolutely right. It is about how the citizen wants to operate that digital account. A very common service is the working with vulnerable people check. When you are doing that, we are collecting a fair bit of information from you. Other people might want to use the digital account just to receive the newsletter; so they might put up only a little bit of information.

Before we are onboarding a new service, we have to look at the interface with what the service itself requires. As the minister said, we do a full security assessment. The other thing is a privacy impact assessment. We do those three steps to ensure that it works.

I would say that the user should see a simple template, but the backing is quite complex. We spend a fair bit of time doing that. Because we user test it—the way people operate, the way they click through; we do that level of testing—we think that citizens will see a seamless service. They will think that it is a template, but there is a lot going on in the background to make sure it has that feel.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, on the reform, a review of existing panel standing offer arrangements has been highlighted as completed by 30 September 2022. Are you able to table a copy of this review?

**Mr Steel:** I might hand over to Ms Mirzabegian to provide some further detail on that one.

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Yes, a review of the existing panel and standing offer arrangements was undertaken to determine whether there would be any opportunities to group some of those, and to collect our purchasing powers across the territory, to make sure that those are streamlined. The first part of that has been completed.

**MR CAIN:** Is that something that is able to be provided to this committee?

**Mr Steel:** We will take that on notice.

**MR CAIN:** Can you talk about some of the changes that this will bring about?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Some of the changes would include grouping together arrangements that different agencies have brought about. For example, some agencies might have uniform needs; some of them might have other needs. Having regard to whatever their disparate needs are, or whether they are the same needs, separate panels have been set up. The idea is to see whether we can streamline those and bring those together to leverage the purchasing power of the government.

It also makes it easier for suppliers to understand and apply for different panels. It has two benefits. One is internally for the government and the other one is externally for the suppliers.

**Mr Steel:** It responds to some of the feedback we have received from business through the Better Regulation Task Force. Some businesses felt that it was hard to engage with government on some of these things. They are asking us, “How do I get on a panel to be able to tender for work?” This is in response to that, to make it simpler and more streamlined, and have better information available to them around how they can access those panel arrangements, and do so across a wider variety of agencies.

**MR CAIN:** Is this related to the panel management policy? What is the likely impact upon that policy?

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Yes, it is related, in a sense. They are two separate pieces but they are interrelated. The panel management policy sets and clarifies the rules and principles that apply when an agency or a directorate wishes to set up a panel. We have in our minds, as public servants, that desire to make sure that we are not setting up the same panel multiple times, as well as other principles of good practice. The panel management policy sets that. The other work that we mentioned was to give us some evidence base to inform the development of the panel management policy.

**MR CAIN:** On the reform again: minister, you also state that, by 31 December this year, you will amend the Government Procurement Act and the Government Procurement Regulation. What can you tell the committee about such intended changes and when do you think these amendments will be presented?

**Mr Steel:** To clarify, the action to 31 December is completing a review of the Government Procurement Act and the Government Procurement Regulation. That work is happening at the moment, and I look forward to making further announcements about that.

**MR CAIN:** What kind of work is actually going on at the moment, and what resources are being used for that?

**Mr Steel:** We are looking forward to announcing that in the future.

**Ms Mirzabegian:** Existing resources are being utilised in the policy and capability branch, within Procurement ACT, to review the Government Procurement Act and the Government Procurement Regulation.

**THE CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee, thank you, Minister Steel and your officials, for coming today. There have been a couple of questions taken on notice, so please provide those answers to the committee secretary within five working days of today. Again, I thank all witnesses for assisting the committee today. The hearing is now closed.

**The committee adjourned at 11.57 am.**