



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS**

(Reference: [Inquiry into Auditor-General Report: 5/2021 –  
Management of closed-circuit television systems](#))

**Members:**

**MRS E KIKKERT (Chair)  
MR M PETERSSON (Deputy Chair)  
MR A BRADDOCK**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**THURSDAY, 12 AUGUST 2021**

**Secretary to the committee:  
Mr S Thompson (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.

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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

**The committee met at 10 am.**

**HARRIS, MR MICHAEL**, Auditor-General, ACT Audit Office

**HANDLEY, MR MARTIN**, Director, Performance Audit, ACT Audit Office

**STANTON, MR BRETT**, Assistant Auditor-General, Performance Audit, ACT Audit Office

**ACTING CHAIR** (Mr Pettersson): Good morning, and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts inquiry into Auditor-General Report No 5 of 2021, *Management of closed-circuit television systems*. Firstly, I wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. I wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of the city and this region. I would also like to acknowledge and welcome other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who may be attending today's hearing.

In the proceedings today, we will hear evidence from the ACT Auditor-General and officials and the Minister for Transport and City Services. Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and web streamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses use the words, "I will take that as a question taken on notice."

Could I please confirm that you have each read the privilege statement on the pink card that is in front of you?

**Mr Handley**: I have read the privilege statement and understand it.

**Mr Harris**: I have read the privilege statement and understand it.

**Mr Stanton**: I have read the privilege statement and understand it.

**ACTING CHAIR**: Thank you. As there is no opening statement, we will go to questions. Could you explain to the committee whether there was any logical rationale for CCTV cameras in the ACT?

**Mr Harris**: The main conclusion of the report is that there is a lack of clarity, a lack of definition and a lack of documentation, in fact, around the purpose and objectives of CCTV systems within the territory. Given that conclusion, the answer to your question is no.

**ACTING CHAIR**: If there is no logic or rationale for it, is there any measure of their effectiveness?

**Mr Harris**: Again, the report is fairly clear. I will go to Martin in a minute for the detail of it, but the report is fairly clear that, despite requirements in standards for reporting on a regular basis on the effectiveness of CCTV camera networks, there appears to be intermittent, at best, reporting by agencies responsible for these sorts of systems within the territory. Martin might like to give a bit more detail on that.

**Mr Handley:** Where the purpose and objectives are vague, or they are described variously in documentation that we have seen, in any reporting process or review process it is quite difficult to review the performance of the system when those requirements are vague in the first place.

There is a good example from the Australian standard. All of the systems in ACT government need to comply with the Australian standard due to the code of practice for CCTV. The Australian standard requires the performance of a CCTV system to be reported, and there is a part in there that is very explicit, and it talks about the effect of CCTV on crime rates. We have not seen, in any of the systems we have looked at, any reporting on how CCTV systems have affected crime rates.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Just to clarify, there is no evidence that the CCTVs are reducing crime or preventing crime from happening in the ACT?

**Mr Handley:** There is no evidence that we saw.

**Mr Stanton:** There is no reporting in that particular space. Just to echo what Michael and Martin were saying, there are two components that we looked at for the purpose of the audit. One was what the agencies were doing in terms of their annual reporting of the CCTV systems, and that was a requirement either of the standard or of the code of practice. The other was what the agencies were doing in relation to an annual review of the system. Again, that was another requirement of either that standard or the code of practice; I cannot recall.

To echo what Martin said, that is where the purpose of the objectives comes in. We have to be very clear and very explicit about what the purpose and objectives of the CCTV system are, so that we can accurately report against that or review against that. There is a call for an annual report and an annual review of those systems, and the standard itself was quite clear about what you would cover off in the report and in the review. It is detailed in chapter 2 of our report.

One of those things that you would want to cover off, if that was the clear and specific objective and purpose of the system—public safety, preventing crime or whatever it might be—is how it is actually affecting that, impacting that or reducing that.

We saw JACS, the Justice and Community Safety Directorate, produce its first annual report on the public safety CCTV system in late 2020. That was for the 2019-20 year. Paragraph 2.50 of the report talks about what was reported in that report, utilisation data, how many times CCTV data had been used for policing operations, governance arrangements around the network, changes to the public safety network where new cameras were put in, and the like; and, lastly, what the future intentions were for the public safety work. That is in paragraph 2.50 of our report.

We go on to say that, in our view, that report, whilst providing some information that is of use, did not provide details of the system's achievements for the previous 12 months or an assessment of the operation of that network against its purpose and objectives. Some useful data or information was put out in that report, but it could go further and explicitly cover off what its achievements are.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I have a question about the report. Because it provides data, as you say, in terms of how many times it might have been provided to police, did you see any data that indicated how that was actually used by the police to identify, arrest or convict someone as a result of that?

**Mr Stanton:** No, and that is the sort of information that would be useful to be covered off in such a report or an annual review.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Was there any demonstrated ongoing need for the cameras, that you could find?

**Mr Harris:** We did not see evidence of any systematic assessment of either the need for cameras in the first place or a review of their performance and therefore evidence of ongoing need in the future, despite the fact that the standards require an annual review to cover off on those sorts of questions.

**Mr Stanton:** We know that CCTV systems have proliferated over the years. The systems that we looked at, particularly the public safety network that was installed in the early 2000s, have been built on and have grown since then, through individual cameras around the city, and in other areas as well. Absolutely, it would have been helpful if there were documented needs for those cameras at the time. We did not see that, to echo what Michael said.

As the cameras have proliferated, and whilst cameras can be a fairly low cost technology at this point in time—comparatively speaking, cameras are cheaper now than they were years ago—we are looking for an agency that has undertaken to do a cost-benefit analysis of the system—looking at the cost of operating the system and the benefits of that system. That would clearly cover off and encompass benefits in terms of needs of the system as well.

**Mr Harris:** There does not seem to be any rigorous analysis undertaken prior to the installation of new cameras or, indeed, the replacement of existing cameras in relation to cost benefit, actual need and those sorts of questions—risk analysis. None of those questions appear to be examined before new systems are put in place or old systems are replaced.

**ACTING CHAIR:** How prevalent are CCTV cameras in the ACT?

**Mr Harris:** Extremely.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Can you give us some examples?

**Mr Harris:** The government network itself has better than 4,000 cameras in it. Most of those are on buses, to be fair. There is a quite distinct separation between the cameras on buses and the general public safety network around the community. Nevertheless, I do not know what the split between the two is, but on buses there would be less than 1,000. The majority of these cameras are out and about in the community.

**Mr Stanton:** In chapter 1 of the report there is some information in relation to

cameras and the systems across the ACT. I would suggest that it is not perfect information. We were engaging with the agencies to try to get a handle on the number of cameras, and that was quite difficult to do. The best information we had at the time of the report is in table 1-1 in our report. It talks about the number of cameras across TCCS, Health, CMTEDD, JACS and EPSDD. There are 4,900 or so. There are other cameras in other settings, such as Corrective Services, ACT Courts and Tribunal, and even Capital Metro as well, for example, that are not in that number there. We cannot provide you with a definitive number, as to the number of cameras.

**Mr Harris:** It does not cover, of course, the private networks that are around the territory as well, or the commonwealth government.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Combining all of them together, are there any places in the ACT where someone could reasonably expect not to be surveilled?

**Mr Harris:** I do not know the answer to that. I suspect that the answer is no, but I cannot definitively say that.

**Mr Handley:** With cameras on buses, that provides a lot of coverage, because obviously they are moving. That provides more coverage than one might imagine. They are moving not for 24 hours a day but for a lot of the hours of the day, so that provides a lot of coverage.

**Mr Harris:** The bus cameras are on the outside of the buses as well as on the inside, so you are getting multiple coverage from a moving bus.

**Mr Handley:** Even the cameras that are on the inside still capture what is on the outside, through the windows. They provide a lot of coverage.

**Mr Harris:** Indeed, as the report indicates, the police access the bus cameras for the purposes of investigation more frequently than they do the footage on the public safety network.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Is adequate consideration given by the ACT government to people's privacy, whenever they roll out a new camera system?

**Mr Harris:** It is not a question that was directly examined in the audit, although, as I understand it, the guidelines have particular standards to be met in relation to privacy. I suspect that is more in the nature of what can and cannot be used with the footage once it is collected, as opposed to the taking of photographs in the first place. As I understand it, most of these cameras have signage attached to them to warn people that there is a camera in the location. How effective that is, is not a question that we examined in the scope of the audit.

**Mr Stanton:** I would agree with what Michael said there. In the nature of the Australian standard—and the code of practice, as it was—what was pervasive throughout both of those documents was the weighing up of what a need might be for a camera or a system, as opposed to the right to privacy of individuals.

In talking about having a documented objective, with conducting a needs analysis,

reviewing the operations of the cameras on an annual basis and reporting on those on an annual basis, all of those are safeguards that are in play. If they are followed through, they provide that framework to actually balance an individual's right to privacy with the system operators' needs for the cameras. If we follow those rules, those protocols and those guidelines in those documents, and then there are rules, you have a framework there to safeguard individuals' rights.

**Mr Harris:** The key safeguard is in the usage of the footage, who has access to it, and for what purpose. It is fair to say, from what we saw, that there are strict protocols in place in respect of who can access the information and for what purpose.

I suppose the deficiency, which is again highlighted in the report, is the fact that these protocols seem to have been put in place by the people who are actually in charge of the data at the point of collection and retention. If there is a criticism, it would be that there seems to be a lack of guidance and policy direction from the top down in respect of the way in which that data is managed and held.

I suppose that a general conclusion you could come to from this report is that the people at the operational level are doing a good job. Where there is a deficiency in the system, it is that they are doing a good job despite the fact that they do not have clear policy direction and clear guidelines within which to operate.

**MR BRADDOCK:** So they are following those privacy protocols at the operational level but they are lacking that strategic guidance or direction from management?

**Mr Harris:** That appears to be the case.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Is there consistency across the network in how long the data is retained?

**Mr Harris:** No. The public safety network is better at it. The Territory Records Act requires data to be destroyed after 30 days. In terms of the public safety network data, that requirement appears to be being met. In terms of the bus network, it is a bit more problematic.

The bus network has cameras which are not downloaded on a regular basis. The data is simply held on the hard disks on the camera until it gets overwritten by the next set of data. There is actually no formal protocol in place to destroy that data, which is a breach of the Territory Records Act in itself. It is destroyed as a matter of course when it gets overwritten. If it gets overwritten within 30 days, by default, the territory records management requirement is being met. However, if a bus is not used on a regular basis, stays at the depot for a period of time or is out on a route that means it stops for a long period of time, it may well be that there is data held on those cameras for more than 30 days. Nobody actually knows.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Is there a rationale for the 30 days? Is that a short period of time or a long period of time, when considering data?

**Mr Handley:** I do not know what the rationale is. I think it is a reasonable amount of time. If there is an incident, that allows somebody to then archive the data, and it may



be used in an investigation at a later date. If there was an incident, you would think that within 30 days they would be able to find where that data was and be able to archive that off. If it was any shorter, it might be overwritten. If it was any longer, then you have the risk that you are retaining too much data.

**Mr Harris:** I suppose it puts an onus on those who want to examine the data to do so within a reasonable period of time. It puts an obligation on those who hold the data not to simply hold it forever and a day in case somebody might want to look at it.

**Mr Handley:** Just to clarify, although it has to be deleted after 30 days, it can be archived off for police—those sorts of reasons.

**ACTING CHAIR:** We spoke briefly about the rationale for installing CCTV. Are there any policies to remove cameras?

**Mr Stanton:** No. That is where it is incumbent on the operators of the system to understand what the system is and understand what the cameras in the system are—and, on an annual basis, at least validate and reaffirm the purpose of the system and the cameras. By extension, that would be considering the merits of having this camera here and that camera there. That would be part of that particular process. However, we acknowledge that, particularly for fixed cameras, once you put a fixed camera in—spend the capital money to put a fixed camera in and have it in place—there are the costs of actually operating that camera on an ongoing basis, going forward. Perhaps removing that camera would be potentially a larger cost than having it continue to operate. That is where you need to be judicious in where you place your cameras and what you need your cameras for. You need to continually look at reaffirming their purpose and their need.

**ACTING CHAIR:** But they do not reaffirm their purpose?

**Mr Harris:** Not on any evidence that we saw, no.

**ACTING CHAIR:** So every camera that we see is probably going to stay there, regardless of any point?

**Mr Stanton:** I do not think we came across any instances where cameras were removed. Where you have mobile cameras, and part of the public safety network is mobile cameras, they have the opportunity to deploy and redeploy those, of course. There is an opportunity to shift those around.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Did you uncover any evidence of an evaluation of a camera that has been installed and its effectiveness or usefulness?

**Mr Stanton:** No. In chapter 2 we talk about what annual reports have been prepared, most recently in 2020 for the public safety network. We looked at what reviews had been conducted. There was a review conducted of the public safety network back in 2014. That was the only other evidence of a review that we saw. I do not quite recall whether that review went to the merits of the different cameras and the individual cameras.

**Mr Handley:** It was more of a technical review, to look at older cameras that were providing poorer images and the cost of replacing those with newer cameras, especially for cameras at night, where the technology had improved.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Are you aware of any instances of cameras being installed and the people in that area, or that workplace, did not want those cameras to be installed, and they were still installed?

**Mr Handley:** With the cameras that are in libraries, having spoken to Libraries ACT staff and the directors there, it seemed that there was some reluctance to have the cameras there, mostly because of the reasons why the public go to a library, in that it might put people off going to the library if they feel they are being watched, for want of a better term.

**Mr Harris:** This comes down to an example of a lack of clarity in specifying the purpose and objective of having the camera in a particular location. This was an example where libraries, it seemed to us, were questioning the objective and purpose of having the camera there, and whether it was going to have a negative impact on other aspects of operation of the library, as opposed to the reason and objective for putting it there in the first place. There seemed to them to be an inconsistency which they were uncomfortable with.

**Mr Handley:** In the libraries, the reason that the cameras were there in the first place was for the internet terminals. People used to book in, and there used to be disagreements with people about when their time was up. They removed that system or changed how the system worked. From memory, they might have moved to an online system for people to book in. That issue and reason for the cameras went away. That could well be because it was more expensive to remove the camera than to leave it there.

**Mr Harris:** Again, it comes back to this needs analysis question and the lack of a proper needs analysis being undertaken in the first place. What is the objective? What are we trying to achieve? Where is the evidence to suggest that this will achieve that objective? The library people had a different view about all of those things compared to those who wanted to install the cameras.

**ACTING CHAIR:** With the camera network that we have set up now, would it be possible to activate that network with software that utilises facial recognition?

**Mr Harris:** I am not a technical expert by any stretch of the imagination. What I would say is that, with respect to the way in which the cameras themselves have advanced, in terms of their own technology, particularly in the last five or six years, many low-cost cameras available on the market today have the capacity to provide image quality that would be consistent or compatible with software that allowed facial recognition. My understanding is that it is a combination of the software and the camera that would provide that capacity, not just the camera itself. I may be wrong on that because I am not a technical expert.

**ACTING CHAIR:** There being no further questions, thank you. If you have taken any questions on notice today, could you please get those answers to the committee

support office within five working days of the receipt of the uncorrected proof transcript. We will take a short break.

**Hearing suspended from 10.26 to 11.05 am.**

**STEEL, MR CHRIS**, Minister for Skills; Minister for Transport and City Services; and Special Minister of State

**GLENN, MR RICHARD**, Director-General, Justice and Community Safety Directorate

**BURKEVICS, MR BREN**, Executive Branch Manager, Security and Emergency Management Division, Justice and Community Safety Directorate

**PEACH, MR JON**, Executive Group Manager, Security and Emergency Management Division, Justice and Community Safety Directorate

**McGLINN, MR IAN**, Executive Branch Manager, Transport Canberra Bus Operations, Transport Canberra and City Services

**McHUGH, MR BEN**, Acting Deputy Director-General, Transport Canberra and Business Services, Transport Canberra and City Services

*Evidence from Mr B McHugh was taken via telephone.*

**ACTING CHAIR:** We will now hear from the Minister for Transport and City Services and officials. Could you confirm that you have read the privilege statement on the pink card in front of you and you understand the privilege implications of the statement?

**Mr Steel:** I have read the privilege statement and acknowledge its contents.

**Mr Glenn:** I have read and understand it.

**Mr Burkevics:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

**Mr Peach:** Yes, I have read the statement and I understand it.

**Mr McGlenn:** I have read the statement and acknowledge its contents.

**Mr McHugh:** I have read it and acknowledge the requirements of the statement.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Minister Steel, you have got an opening statement.

**Mr Steel:** The ACT government acknowledges the work of the Auditor-General to complete the audit and present recommendations for consideration to enhance the effectiveness of CCTV systems. The government is currently considering the recommendations and will formally table its response to the Assembly in October. The recommendations that have been provided by the Auditor-General, on the face of it, seem very reasonable recommendations and we are happy to take questions in relation to them and any other contents of the report.

CCTV is a critical tool in the ACT's fight against crime and bringing alleged offenders to justice. It is used widely across the ACT government in providing security to public places, at events, around our assets, assisting our emergency services to respond to incidents, improve traffic control and monitoring, and broader security.

The ACT government provides transparency in how the public safety network is utilised and the benefits of the technology through the ACT Public Safety CCTV

Network annual report. The latest report is for 2020, and an annual report will be provided again for this year as well. I am happy to take any questions, together with officials.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I was wondering if someone could explain to me the logic and rationale for cameras in our network.

**Mr Steel:** There are many benefits, as I have mentioned, of the CCTV network and it depends on, of course, where they are deployed across different directorates. If I can talk specifically to public transport, because that is an issue that has been raised through the Auditor-General's report, it provides a sense of safety for passengers when travelling through or transiting interchanges. It improves staff safety and security and is a deterrent to any antisocial behaviour. Asset protection in particular is another use and benefit. It is a useful tool for transport officers to monitor interchange platforms and, if required, can coordinate a response to passenger needs such as medical attention or police intervention, if necessary.

It is a useful resource for ACT Policing in their investigations into missing persons and other offences by establishing a factual account of a moment in time, an ability to identify persons of interest, and it provides evidence for investigation of traffic incidents and any subsequent third-party liability claims.

There are a range of benefits and I think we can more clearly articulate what those benefits and purposes of the CCTV systems are. I think that is one of the recommendations from the Auditor-General. Those are the benefits in terms of the public transport, but of course there will be a range of other benefits across the system.

I might hand over to both Bren and Jon to talk a little about the broader benefits across the ACT, particularly from a security point of view.

**Mr Burkevics:** The purpose and objective of the public safety CCTV network is documented on the Justice and Community Safety Directorate's website, and I will explain the contents of that. The primary purpose of the public safety CCTV network is to enhance safety and security at Canberra's public places, venues and events. Specific objectives include supporting ACT Policing to monitor and respond to threats to the public; supporting ACT Policing to investigate crime and prosecute offenders; supporting authorised users of the system to deliver and manage business operations, events or response to emergencies; and, finally, supporting authorised users to investigate incidents or complaints.

I think we see some of the greatest benefit of the public safety CCTV network through active monitoring of the system, which ACT Policing do on a Thursday, Friday and Saturday night. Over the last couple of years we have worked very closely with ACT Policing to identify statistics that would be of use in terms of the benefits of the system.

One of the achievements is the use of the system to proactively deploy police resources to something that the operator has seen prior to any call on triple-0 or 131 444. We now have some really good statistics of that use of the system, where police have identified something of concern and have responded resources to an

incident before there has been any public calls for help—a very proactive use of the system. We have also collected—

**MR BRADDOCK:** Sorry to interrupt you, can I please have those statistics? I would be interested to see those.

**Mr Burkevics:** Those statistics are reflected in the annual report that is on the Justice and Community Safety website by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, yes. You can access that now down at the lower part of the web page.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Do you have any other forms of measuring the effectiveness, outside police responses?

**Mr Burkevics:** We do. One of the challenges for CCTV, of course, is to establish a baseline of crime and other incidents that are happening, to notice a difference before and after a CCTV installation. For example, the city cameras have been in place for well over a decade. Understanding their impact is challenging when they are already in place. There is a high degree of variables.

However, with the use of the solar-powered network we have been able to identify where the solar-powered cameras have been installed for specific purposes—crime targeting, antidumping, for example—that they have had a significant impact. For example, at the Mount Taylor car parks—a popular public amenity, both the north and south car parks—solar-powered cameras were installed at both those locations to ensure that the public had confidence that their vehicles, whilst left unattended, were safe and that, with any vandalism crime, there was a better chance of identifying those offenders.

ACT Policing recently ran a report comparing previous years prior to the installation of those cameras to post installation. What we are seeing is a significant reduction in the number of offences that have occurred at both those car parks. They were in double digit-type numbers and are now down to very low numbers of offences. Whilst there are a range of factors that could be influencing that, other measures by government to counter crime, such as proactive security measures, it is highly coincidental that it aligns with the installation of those solar-powered cameras.

I think we have anecdotal evidence over several years since the installation of cameras at the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, again an isolated car park, and the feedback from rangers on duty has indicated that the amount of illegal dumping of rubbish, car break-ins and other issues—including down to, and I quote, McDonald's wrappers—has been considerably reduced because of the visibility of the solar-powered camera now operating at that car park.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I understand the argument put forward for the benefits of these cameras. Is there any policy in place for the removal of a camera?

**Mr Burkevics:** I think it is fair to say that we have arrangements for the removal of a camera. We have very, very specific guidelines that guide the installation of the cameras, and I think it is important to recognise that when there is an investment made by the government in fixed cameras—because of the cost of civil works, poles,

cameras—unless there are exceptional circumstances, that civil infrastructure is unlikely to be removed unless there is significant redevelopment of the area. Particularly and primarily those cameras are in high-entertainment areas, commercial areas.

With regard to the removal of the solar cams, when the recommendation is made to install them, as part of that process there is advice provided on how long they should be in place for. If I could use an example: in collaboration and discussions with the Mitchell Traders Association, as one measure to target crime in that area, two solar-powered cameras were installed in the Mitchell CBD. At that time, it was decided it would be on a six-month trial basis and working with the Mitchell Traders Association. At the conclusion of that trial, those cameras were removed.

It is similar to issues at the rear of the Griffith shops and an issue in Holt. A camera was installed at each location at that time. There was generally a recommendation to remove them. For solar-powered cameras, at the time of installation there is a plan for how long generally they would be in place for. For the fixed city cameras, generally they will stay in situ simply due to the cost of the civil works associated with their installation.

**ACTING CHAIR:** The plan is drawn up for how long the mobile cameras will be in place. Is that consideration of the time due to asset management considerations or the cost of it, or is that due to considerations of the effectiveness prior to the considerations?

**Mr Burkevics:** All of the above. Initially, the cameras are there for normally a specific purpose. As soon as the issue that those cameras have been installed for is treated or litigated, the decision could be made early to remove those cameras. Environmental conditions are another factor. Cameras, like any piece of ICT, perform differently in different environmental conditions.

We may find that the camera, because of sunlight angles, because of traffic flows, because of the resolution or distance at which they are operating, are not achieving the objective of the cameras. So a decision could be made to withdraw them.

Resourcing is another issue. An example is Floriade. Normally, five cameras are deployed to support Floriade operations and the safety of the public. The planning for those five solar-powered cameras takes into account the existing deployment of those cameras and when they are likely to be released from one location to be available for Floriade.

Cameras have been installed for a little while now at the temporary car park for MLAs. That requirement has now concluded. Those cameras have now been removed and will be recycled for other purposes, based on priorities.

**ACTING CHAIR:** We heard from the Auditor-General just before about the large number of cameras across the ACT, both fixed and moving, attached to buses. Are there any places that the ACT government's network right now is blind to? Are there particular regions or types of places in the ACT that we do not have good coverage of?

**Mr Burkevics:** I think it would be fair to say that cameras cannot be everywhere, all the time; and there is a finite amount of resources that can be used. Over the past few years we have seen significant levels of investment by the government to expand the public safety network, based on priorities and discussion with ACT Policing, to treat the areas that may be displaying higher crime rates or for benefits of public safety monitoring. There is an absolute benefit.

An example is the Braddon area, Lonsdale Street. The existing footprint of the public safety network did not extend into Braddon; but, of course, as the city changes and grows, we are now seeing Braddon as a very popular entertainment area, commercial area. Working with ACT Policing, that area was identified as a higher priority, particularly after some of the more antisocial aspects of some events that had occurred in that area. Priority was placed on a public safety camera in that location, which was achieved using a network at very low cost, and there is now a camera adjacent to the Rainbow Roundabout that provides ACT Policing with live and recorded footage of that location and augments the rest of the public safety CCTV network.

Similarly, at Dickson a new camera installation on Cowper Street provides not only public safety monitoring at that location but, because of the networked approach, also supports Transport Canberra and City Services with bus operations and monitoring at the Dickson station. A camera in Haig Park, as well, last year looked to address crime issues and improve public safety in that location.

I think it is fair to say the cameras cannot be everywhere at every time. There is a formal process that is used and there is very close liaison with ACT Policing to determine the priorities for rollout and the movement of the solar-powered cameras.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Combining all those things, I could expect to potentially come across cameras in parks, commercial districts, attached to the bus network, and in nature reserves. Is there anywhere that I should not expect potential surveillance by a camera?

**Mr Burkevics:** I think you would not expect to find cameras where the law prohibits those cameras. There are very strict controls where cameras can be placed. In particular, the Workplace Privacy Act specifically precludes the installation of cameras in private areas.

In terms of the installation of cameras operated by the government, there are guidelines. They are all installed within the law and in close collaboration with all areas, all stakeholders, in terms of the best placement, how they may operate, where the best effectiveness of those cameras would be.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I want to understand how effective these cameras are in supporting ACT Policing. I have seen statistics in terms of how many times copies have been provided. Do we have the statistics that show how many times it has led to an arrest or a conviction? Has that been tracked anywhere?

**Mr Burkevics:** I cannot talk on behalf of ACT Policing in terms of how they find the cameras. What I can say is: through the statistics that are provided, the cameras have a



significant impact on enhancing public safety and supporting ACT Policing to investigate crime and prosecute.

We have looked at mechanisms to track from the identification of footage and how that may lead to a successful prosecution in court. That is quite a challenging process, noting the time involved in that process and how many stakeholders, through government, ACT Policing, the DPP, there are. That is quite a challenging issue, particularly in the course of an investigation and the confidentiality requirements around that.

I think the statistics that ACT Policing are providing, particularly the proactive responses of police resourcing and the amount of downloads that are occurring to assist with investigations—and we did see an impact from COVID last year—show that the public areas were not as highly utilised as in previous years. I think the statistics are showing that there is an increasing reliance on good CCTV, particularly as the technology, the resolution, of CCTV improves.

The most recent investment by the government in CCTV upgrades allowed some of the existing camera points in the city to go from a single-lens camera on a pan-tilt, zoom-type approach to a four-lens camera. So you are getting 360-degree coverage, an increasing coverage of an area, and therefore a far greater likelihood that if a crime has occurred in the footprint, it will be picked up by that camera.

**Mr Steel:** I think the other point to make in relation to prosecutions is that the CCTV evidence may be only one piece of evidence amongst a whole range of other evidence that may lead to a prosecution. It can be difficult to determine whether that was the crucial bit of evidence that then led to a prosecution when assessing the outcomes from a prosecution point of view.

**MR BRADDOCK:** But it is part of that business case of how useful the camera is in terms of the images that it has provided to police. Is it just a nice thing to have for them or is it actually critical to their job? That is what I am trying to understand here.

**Mr Burkevics:** It all starts, I suppose, with what is the purpose and objectives of the camera? A considerable amount of planning went into the recent installation of eight CCTV cameras in Glebe Park. What is the objective of the cameras? What sort of resolution? What are the needs of the camera? It all starts at that location. Most importantly is the footage that will be collected by those cameras; will it be admissible in court and useful in court to identify offenders? So it all starts at that location—at that point.

I think a very good example of where footage has been used successfully to identify and prosecute an offender was the theft of brass at Henry Rolland Park last year. In about 2018, about \$100,000 worth of brass was stolen from that location. At that time the public safety system did not extend into Henry Rolland Park, which has become, as you know, a very popular public amenity. Investment by government to extend the public safety network to Henry Rolland Park now provides coverage of that park. As a result of the presence of that camera system, with very good signage I might I add, a person was identified stealing brass last year. The public safety system was used to identify that offender. It was well publicised in the media.

**MR BRADDOCK:** It has been the experience in other cities that where you install a camera, then the crime just shifts beyond the remit of that camera. Have you done any studies to examine that effect here?

**Mr Burkevics:** What I can say is—and of course ACT Policing is best placed to comment on crime movements across the ACT—from my perspective crime and incidents are always moving and changing. There is very, very close collaboration between ACT Policing and the government and Security Emergency Management—in fact, all agencies—where crime trends are emerging and where steps may need to be taken to address those.

In 2020 or 2019 there was an increasing amount of cars being burned in rural areas in the ACT that were leading to, of course, risks and bushfires et cetera. Through working with ACT Policing, Transport Canberra and City Services, and Security Emergency Management, there was a plan of which one measure was the deployment of solar-powered cameras to the rural roads across Canberra. Those cameras are still in place, not only from a deterrent point of view but to also identify vehicles that are associated with a crime.

It is fair to say there is probably weekly, if not daily, discussions between stakeholders involved in public safety and crime about what needs to be done to progress an emerging issue associated with crime trends. We do see, as you know, public entertainment areas are popular one minute but weeks later they might not be as popular. Hence, to reiterate my previous comment, we generally do not move the fixed cameras, noting that these areas might be popular one minute then not, and then are back to being popular. So these cameras will always generally remain in place.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I think you addressed this earlier, and I apologise if I am reiterating a question on something you have already provided as evidence. Is it possible to assess the impact on crime levels from the fixed cameras?

**Mr Burkevics:** I think it is fair to say that we have anecdotal evidence on the impact of cameras. We certainly have evidence on where the cameras have been used to identify offenders and prosecute. We have emerging evidence now, particularly with the solar-powered cameras, where they are a clean install; there has not been a history of CCTV at that location. We now have very good datasets to indicate the potential impact and benefit of those cameras. It is an issue that I think the ACT will probably take the lead on—that is, can we put a cost on the investment made by government in cameras? There is very little worldwide research in relation to that. I think it is simply due to all the variables.

One of the activities that the government has identified through the strategic CCTV plan 2020-22 is to progress and see whether we can, through the use of the ACT's fairly comprehensive network system and the solar cameras, establish a dataset to get an understanding of the benefits of the cameras, particularly the financial benefits. There is very limited, if any, research that we have been able to identify to support the financial value of cameras.

In saying that, the public have an expectation and I think they place a high social

value on cameras. The controls and privacy that the ACT has around the protection of all CCTV data, as audit has identified, I think, gives the public a lot of trust in the government's public safety CCTV program. It is not uncommon that we will get requests to put up CCTV in public areas because I think the public know the benefit and have an expectation that it will be there.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Thank you.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Who are the stakeholders that are asking for cameras to be put up, and who are the decision-makers that approve the cameras being put up?

**Mr Burkevics:** It depends on the location and the site and, I suppose, who is responsible for the asset or the area where the CCTV is required. For example, CCTV matters—bus stations and on buses—would be referred to Transport Canberra and City Services.

Camera requests in public areas will typically come to the security and emergency management division within Justice and Community Safety. We will look at the situation and work closely with ACT Policing and other areas of government to determine whether it is an emerging crime area and does it need to be treated, or how is it in relation to other crime priority areas across the ACT? Subject to rigorous analysis and a process, a decision will then be made within Justice and Community Safety as to whether a solar-powered camera is an option. If a longer term presence of cameras is identified, such as Glebe Park, then an appropriate business case will be developed for government consideration.

**ACTING CHAIR:** How many members of the public have made a request through that JACS team for a camera?

**Mr Burkevics:** I do not have the exact number with me in terms of the requests. Those requests are lodged through Fix My Street and other communication mechanisms. I would not say they are frequent, but they do happen. An estimate would probably be under five a year.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Five a year. Can you take it on notice and get that number over the last handful of years?

**Mr Burkevics:** Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR:** That is, requests from the public for a camera. Do you know how many cameras there are, in total, in the network across the ACT government?

**Mr Burkevics:** From memory, they are in the thousands, I think the audit report identified those. I think one of the challenges with that is that public cameras are quite identifiable but, of course, individual directorates and individual agencies might have cameras for internal purposes. Typically, we do not get down to that level of cameras; it depends more on the systems. We can certainly advise on the number of cameras that comprise the public safety network, but when you are getting down to individual sheds and buildings, for example, that falls outside of the remit of the public safety network and Transport Canberra and City Services' responsibilities as well.

**Mr Steel:** TCCS, and particularly Transport Canberra, have 68 per cent of all the ACT government CCTV cameras. That makes up, according to the numbers that I have in front of me, 3,691 cameras managed by TCCS, of which 91 per cent are onboard buses. It is quite a significant number: 91 per cent onboard buses and other sites like interchanges, depots, waste facilities and libraries.

**Mr Burkevics:** We have just under 100 cameras on the public safety network and 19 solar-powered cameras currently in operation.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Do you think you should know all of the cameras? I sit here a bit amused on some level that we do not actually have a number, if that makes sense.

**Mr Burkevics:** It depends on the purpose of knowing. Each directorate is responsible for the operation of its cameras and, of course, camera installations and camera repairs are changing all the time. For example, in relation to building expansions like the Canberra Hospital, new installations are happening all the time. So it is a very dynamic operation.

In terms of the public safety network, we know where the cameras are and how many there are. Of course, there is the challenge that one camera point might comprise four camera lenses; so is that four or one sort of thing? We certainly know all the locations. If a request is made by the public through Access Canberra, there is a map that is used to identify which camera that member of the public is talking about. That ensures that it is referred to the correct agency.

**Mr Peach:** As you heard from the Auditor-General, there are some systems that do not actually form part of this network. For example, the AMC has over 500 cameras in it which would not come into the numbers that are here.

**ACTING CHAIR:** We ask questions broadly of the government; we do not ask questions going to specific parts of the government or different directorates. If we were to go around and individually ask about the different components of the government, we could probably get a good number; but if we were to ask the ACT government as a whole, we do not know the number. Is that an accurate summation of the current state of affairs?

**Mr Burkevics:** We could get the data through the Access Canberra system, but it is generally something we do not track because there is probably limited benefit of maintaining down to the camera number, simply due to the number of installations, repairs and maintenance removals that are happening across all directorates at any one time. For example, in one week we have removed a solar-powered camera and we have had to roll out five to Floriade. Even within the justice and community public safety network, there are a lot of changes in those cameras; so the resources required to track all of that would be unreasonable.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I just find that answer quite jarring, because evidence earlier was that once a fixed camera is in place, there is very little maintenance required, there is little to no cost in keeping the camera and it stays in place practically permanently. Seemingly, the cost and movement occur with the small number of mobile cameras.

I can understand you not having an accurate take of the mobile cameras and how many are out on the road at any given time, but for the fixed cameras, that seemingly we are not getting rid of and will function forever more, we do not actually have a good number. That kind of puzzles me.

**Mr Burkevics:** Just to reflect on your earlier remarks, I would not say that there is no cost associated with existing cameras. CCTV systems, like any ICT system, need to be upgraded, maintained and replaced. The danger with CCTV is that, unless it is cleaned and maintained, the footage degrades and can be unusable. There is a requirement to clean the cameras regularly—spiders, insects, dust et cetera. The camera technology is changing constantly. Generally, we find that we are replacing cameras simply to keep up with changing technologies and not because they are breaking down. There are quite reasonable to significant costs in camera upkeep and maintenance.

Also, of course, the network video recorders are operating on a 24/7 duty cycle. They are constantly operating and recording. In some cases, the servers, because of the location of the cameras, are in less than perfect operating conditions. They are subject to heat and potentially dust. In each area that is responsible for cameras—and I can comment; I am from the public safety network—there is, in general, an asset management plan that is managed to ensure that the cameras and the servers are upgraded and maintained at the right time to ensure that the footage is available 100 per cent of the time.

**ACTING CHAIR:** If there is an asset management plan, if these are assets that need to be looked after and there is an ongoing cost for these assets, does that not mean we should be able to tell how many we have?

**Mr Steel:** I think every directorate would have some understanding of where their assets are, how many they have and when they need to be upgraded. I think the focus of the Auditor-General's report has been on Transport Canberra and City Services in particular because there is a large number of cameras. We know where those cameras are. There are about five to six per bus. They were installed prior to 2009, which was prior to the code of practice for the use of closed circuit television. Many of them are older cameras that are still performing their function, and they are still useful, but they do not necessarily meet all of the requirements that have been outlined. So there will be a need to invest in quite a significant upgrade to that system over time.

Ian might be able to give a bit of a sense about how we manage those cameras from an asset management point of view.

**ACTING CHAIR:** Just a quick question before you jump in. TCCS knows how many cameras it has got?

**Mr Steel:** I think every directorate would have an understanding of the number of cameras that they have in operation. I am happy to see what we can provide on notice and collate that information from across the directorates to get an understanding, if you would like the total number?

**ACTING CHAIR:** That would be good.

**Mr Steel:** We can see what information we get from each of the directorates. I just do not have those directors-general with me across the whole of government to be able to do that.

**ACTING CHAIR:** I fully understand.

**Mr Steel:** I can go back to them and ask. That is absolutely fine. Ian can provide, I guess, a sense about what TCCS's approach is.

**Mr McGlenn:** Currently, we have the older system, DTI, and we have a monitoring system that we look up on a daily basis and the cameras do a self-check on the buses overnight. It will tell us if there is a failure of one of those cameras. That is picked up by the workshops. They will ask for that bus to come in and have some technical repairs done. The system is getting older and getting parts for an old ICT system and cameras is quite difficult. We will need to come forth with a business case, potentially with JACS, for a complete system refurbishment across the entire fleet.

The standard of high definition now is excellent. We have been trialling some new cameras on our new blue fleet, which is a different system—it is a Poseidon system—and that has very high quality, high def cameras. It produces the same report for us as well. It tells us if there is a fault within it and then we quickly maintain that. We either swap the camera out or do the required maintenance. That report is undertaken Monday through Friday and the buses are called off the road.

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question relates to the business case that you will use for the upgrade for your system and it also relates to the public safety network. As we do upgrades or change over to the new technology, are we conducting a business case process of saying, "This a worthwhile investment"? Are we conducting surveys of the police or surrounding businesses or what other stakeholders might be associated with that to make sure the business case actually exists? Does that happen?

**Mr Steel:** I think that, for all government expenditure, business cases require that we set out the benefits of that system or what the purpose of that upgrade is to justify the public investment in that and its value for money. As part of that process, they would have to look at what benefits it would provide to stakeholders that are beneficiaries of the system being installed.

On public transport, I think it is fairly well-recognised and pretty clear what the benefits are. It is fairly well-recognised what the purposes of that CCTV system would be. It has been in place for a large number of years. Around a replacement for a new system being implemented in new locations, I think there would probably be a bit more analysis around why CCTV would be required in those locations.

**Mr Burkevics:** I absolutely reflect the minister's comments. Any business case has to carefully articulate the benefits of the investment, and CCTV business cases are no exception.

**MR BRADDOCK:** If the Auditor-General could not clearly see that business case for systems installed to date, does it actually exist—that is my question—or are we just

saying the words “public safety and security” and so forth without actually having the underlying evidence to support that argument?

**Mr Burkevics:** An example I could give is Glebe Park, which is a popular public amenity. We certainly noted that the public safety network did not extend into Glebe Park. It is being used more frequently for government and other events, where live monitoring and recorded footage are really important in developing the case for that. There has been very close collaboration with ACT Policing to identify the number of criminal offences that have happened over the last decade and whether the investment would potentially reduce those criminal offences. From memory, over 40 robberies and other serious incidents have occurred in Glebe Park over the last decade. Now that we are able to have a clean install of the public safety CCTV network there, that will be a great test case and bed for gathering data in terms of the impact and benefits of CCTV installation in public areas.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I will be interested to see that case study when you have prepared it.

**Mr Burkevics:** Absolutely. It will take us a few years, of course, to gather the data.

**Mr Steel:** I think that what you are looking for in terms of the clear articulation of the benefits and objectives of CCTV is probably captured in policies that are publicly available. The Auditor-General did not actually comment on those in his recommendations. Most of the recommendations were in relation to TCCS, and obviously TCCS will be consistent with the whole-of-ACT government position.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Thank you.

**ACTING CHAIR:** The committee’s hearing for today is now adjourned. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank the Auditor-General, Minister Steel and all of their officials who have appeared today. The secretary will provide you with a copy of the proof transcript of today’s hearing when it is available. If witnesses have taken any questions on notice today, could you please get those answers to the committee support office within five working days of receipt of the uncorrected proof? If members wish to lodge questions on notice, please get those to the committee support office within five working days as well. Thank you everybody.

**The committee adjourned at 11.45 am.**