



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING, TRANSPORT
AND CITY SERVICES**

(Reference: [Inquiry into ACT Budget 2021-22](#))

Members:

**MS J CLAY (Chair)
MS S ORR (Deputy Chair)
MR M PARTON**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

**MONDAY, 18 OCTOBER 2021
(AFTERNOON SESSION)**

**Acting Secretary to the committee:
Ms J Rafferty (Ph: 620 50557)**

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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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 4.16 pm.

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Climate Action, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism

City Renewal Authority

Snow, Mr Malcolm, Chief Executive Officer

Gillman, Mr Craig, Chief Operating Officer

Suburban Land Agency

Dietz, Mr John, Chief Executive Officer

Sharp, Ms Irena, Development Director, Development Delivery—Urban

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the 2021-22 ACT budget inquiry of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. The committee acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We acknowledge their continuing culture and their great contribution to this city, and we acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. We acknowledge and welcome any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who might be attending today's event or watching.

The proceedings this afternoon will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, the City Renewal Authority and the Suburban Land Agency. Before we start, we have a little bit of housekeeping. We are doing this by video link. If there is a technical problem, please just be patient and we will resolve it quickly. If you could also, the first time you speak, please state that you have read and understood the privilege statement.

As you know, the proceedings are covered by parliamentary privilege, which provides protection to our witnesses, but it also obliges them to tell the truth. With that, we might begin our proceedings. I will start with the first question.

Chief Minister, we have got a really big infrastructure spend in our budget and I am concerned that we make sure that we are taking the right steps so that we do not accidentally increase our emissions. I will put that in context for you. We have got a new social cost of carbon, we have also got a growing awareness of scope 3 embedded emissions in the built environment, and I understand we are getting some work shortly on that from the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. We have also got the statutory obligations about how we manage emissions in major projects over \$10 million. Can you run me through how you are taking into account all these items to make sure that we are not increasing our emissions too much?

Mr Barr: In relation to the City Renewal Authority or the Suburban Land Agency urban renewal?

THE CHAIR: The City Renewal Authority, if you could.

Mr Barr: A lot of the authority's capital works would be below the thresholds, but for the projects that would be above, the authority would meet the requirements that are ACT government policy. In relation to the preamble on the question, cabinet has just seen that particular work that you are talking about. I just finished talking about that about 25 minutes ago. It will be tabled in the Assembly and there will be a government response as it relates to scope 3 emissions.

THE CHAIR: Has the government been doing any work on embedded emissions in the built environment for this new renewal authority and perhaps for other agencies?

Mr Barr: The authority would not undertake that work itself. That would be undertaken by another area of government and then a government-wide policy framework would be put in place.

THE CHAIR: Is the City Renewal Authority doing all the basics that we would expect of buildings: without gas and making sure that we are fitting any of our car parks with the cabling that we need for future retrofitting of electric charging and all those very simple steps?

Mr Barr: Most of that asset management sits with Transport Canberra and City Services but the answer is yes, across government. In relation to the work of the City Renewal Authority, your question is somewhat out of scope.

MR PARTON: Can I delve into land sales revenue. Land sales revenue for the financial year 2022-23 is estimated to be \$67 million, and \$22 million in the financial year 2023-24, despite being \$0 in the last financial year and \$200,000 in this financial year. What is that based on? Why are there such large fluctuations in those figures?

Mr Barr: It is about whether a block of land is put to market or not, in short. I will get Mr Gillman, who is the Chief Operating Officer of CRA, to talk about that. But, in a nutshell, if we are not selling a block of land there is no revenue. If we are scheduling one then there will be.

Mr Gillman: I acknowledge that I have read and understood the privilege statement. Yes, the Chief Minister is correct. The reason that it is significant next financial year is that in the ILRP we are planning to bring forward three blocks to market, being the former Westlund House site, section 63 and a settlement on the Dickson block that was sold some time ago. Those are the three blocks that are available in that financial year.

The reason that it was none last financial year is exactly that. We had a significant transaction with the ANU in the year before, which was part of a 2004 deed with the ANU, and we sold land to the value of approximately \$17 million in the prior year. It is a little different to the Suburban Land Agency, which has a high volume of lower value transactions as it releases blocks. We have a small number of higher value transactions planned in the city renewal precinct.

MR PARTON: Given the government's track record of, dare I say it, under-delivery, particularly in land sales, surely there is a strong possibility that this revenue will not actually materialise? Several of the sites that we are talking about certainly have been

released in this current ILRP. But they have been on the market previously or were identified for release as early as 2020 and then obviously delayed. What will be the effect on the whole budget if these sales are not made, if there are further delays?

Mr Barr: The Indicative Land Release Program outlines the time frames for block release and, given that it is a small volume—it is one or two blocks each year—I do not expect there to be delays; so no budget impact.

MR PARTON: But, having said that, when these blocks were released previously, I am sure you did not expect there to be delays.

Mr Barr: I do not think these blocks were released previously.

MS ORR: With the blocks that the CRA is looking to release over the next financial year or even the next couple of years, what sort of renewal do you see coming from those sites and how will they contribute to the areas around them?

Mr Barr: Mr Snow will respond to that question.

Mr Snow: I have read and understand the privilege statement. Thank you for that question. The City Renewal Authority is very clear that any opportunity to bring territory land to the market must make a significant contribution catalyst to the renewal program. And that is achieved through the terms of sale,

The ILR process that we undergo clearly sets out the ambition and aspirations of the authority in relation to how submitters interested in purchasing land or taking up a lease must, as part of our selection of the successful bid, demonstrate how they are going to achieve the goals and objectives of the authority and its renewal program. That is a very conscious, deliberate thing. Certainly, as I said, our assessment of the merits of those submissions, when we do receive them, in part will be against how satisfied we are that their proposals meet those objectives.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, can you run us through the implementation of the Haig Park place plan and where the project is currently at, if there are any COVID-related impacts that you have been able to manage and what we will start to see next as we come out of COVID with that project?

Mr Barr: Yes. There is a lot of construction activity underway in the park at the moment in terms of building the new footpaths and the like. There has been work underway for a while now, some of which was completed ahead of schedule and at a point that has allowed a range of new activities within the park, like the Haig Park markets, for example.

The community feedback consistently, be that in women's safety surveys or community surveys, was that it was seen as one of the most dangerous places in Canberra. There has been a real emphasis, in partnership with TCCS and the Heritage Council, around improving visibility, line of sight, lighting, and more structured pathways through the park that are along desired lines, as in where people normally would seek to walk through the park. There has been quite a significant amount of consultation and, given that Mr Snow has been involved in the detail of that for many

years, I will hand over to him to talk about that.

Mr Snow: The Chief Minister is correct. Haig Park has been the subject of our attention as an authority almost since our inception, and that process that we have undertaken has involved very extensive consultation with the community. The development of a comprehensive place plan, which itself was the subject of almost 12 months of engaging with the community, sought to answer the question: “What do you want this park to be?” understanding at the same time the significant heritage values associated with that landscape and the need for the community to understand that that was both a limitation but also an opportunity.

A landscape masterplan and a heritage conservation management plan have both been produced in that time frame, and those documents now clearly guide and inform the work that the Chief Minister talked about. They continue to inform further capital improvements which we will be undertaking this year, which will be for the completion of those paths and lighting and, commencing early next year, the development of a new community centre and adaptive re-use of the old former depot—again, one of the ideas that emerged through that community engagement. We also want to continue the activation that is occurring in that park, ultimately the goal being that it is the community who see it as their park and contribute to its further success.

MR BRADDOCK: The parliamentary and governing agreement has as one of its targets 70 per cent of new housing development to be infill. I am just trying to understand how much is urban renewal contributing towards that target. Do you have a number or a percentage available for me?

Mr Barr: In which fiscal year?

MR BRADDOCK: I would say across the four years.

Mr Barr: The four forward years, this year and the next four?

MR BRADDOCK: Yes.

Mr Barr: And just for the City Renewal Authority or the City Renewal Authority and the urban renewal elements of the SLA? Just to be clear, the two projects there are the Canberra brickworks and the Kingston arts precinct, that Kingston foreshore precinct. They are the ones that are represented by the SLA on this side of the room, and then the City Renewal Authority obviously has some land that is released for residential purposes as well. All of it would contribute towards the 70 per cent. If you are wanting to know the total number of dwellings released, we will have to tally that across the land release sites. We are happy to take that on notice.

MR CAIN: I have a question about the boards managing the CRA and the SLA. Chief Minister, do you have a conflict of interest policy, and when was that last updated?

Mr Barr: Yes. I will have to check the date when it was last updated. Given that both organisations came into effect in the year 2017, they are relatively recent.

MR CAIN: Are staff and board directors required to declare conflicts of interest and does that also apply to any spouse or domestic partner?

Mr Barr: Yes, it would, consistent with ACT government requirements around declarations.

MR CAIN: What efforts are made to ensure that those declarations are current—for example, changing spousal relationships?

Mr Barr: That would be a requirement on the individuals. I will need to check within what time frame the updates are required to be lodged. I think normally there is a grace period of some weeks. It is not expected that things occur instantaneously, but there is a requirement to keep those registers up to date.

MR CAIN: On how many occasions in the last two years has a board director recused themselves from a board meeting due to a conflict?

Mr Barr: I will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Chief Minister, I am really pleased that the City Renewal Authority factors into its KPIs community consultation and engagement. We have heard a lot from the community about a need for more place-making. That came up on our first community day, but it has actually come up in a lot of different hearings before this committee. Can you let me know what your budget spend is on community consultations and how you are using those consultations to satisfy this need for greater place-making and for multi-stage consultations?

Mr Barr: I will take the dollar figure on notice. It will vary from year to year, based, essentially, on the number of projects or consultations that are being undertaken by the authority at a given time. They have generally involved multi-staged and broad-based community engagement. For example, the engagements around the Lonsdale Street and Woolley Street upgrades in Braddon and Dickson respectively have involved not just tenants, business tenants on the street, commercial property owners but also residents who live in the immediate area and who are users of the area. That means that consultation extends broader than just those who are immediately geographically proximate to a particular upgrade or area.

The Haig Park consultation has involved not only residents, businesses, but also statutory stakeholders like the Heritage Council, for example. Upgrades in City Walk involved consultation not only with businesses and commercial property owners but also residents, because there are residents within proximity of those particular projects. On the bigger picture, city-wide projects, for example, the Acton Waterfront has involved 15 years of consultation, not all of it undertaken by the City Renewal Authority but also by some organisations that existed prior to it. There is depth and breadth of consultation that extends beyond those who are immediately geographically proximate to a works project or an upgrade project or a landscape project.

The consultation periods and methods have been extensive and often involve multiple

stages, as I say; for example, a place plan being provided and then a more detailed set of work that follows that level of engagement. At the very beginning of particular processes there are consultations that focus, really at a higher level, on what the authority is endeavouring to achieve or what the government policy objective is for a particular area.

Sometimes the particular problems that are endeavouring to be solved have been identified at a community level through previous ACT government consultation. I would say Haig Park is a good example of that. In relation to the issues that were raised around the park and what the priority areas for capital works or programming of activity in the park were originally—some of it before the authority existed—the authority was able to pull together different strands of community engagement from other government agencies or the local community council or business organisations, for example, all of whom have contributed to the final outcomes, noting that in any consultation it is often the art of compromise. Not everyone gets a hundred per cent of what they want out of every single project.

But I think the authority has been very effective in engaging with a wide variety of stakeholders and endeavouring to balance often competing objectives for the use of public space. A good example is around traffic and parking versus pedestrian and cycling and other forms of more active travel, trying to manage conflict of use in limited space in particular areas as they have evolved over time. Lonsdale Street, Braddon, is a very good example of that. The authority's work in coordinating activities, working with agents, other ACT government agencies and private sector partners to deliver outcomes on the ground, has been very, very effective.

Another example I would give, which has been a wicked challenge for this city for the best part of a century, is managing the Sydney and Melbourne heritage buildings, with their multiple different owners. We have put in place enabling legislation to have the authority be the government entity that is undertaking the coordinated activity of publicly funded works in the immediate precincts, coordinating with the private sector owners around improvements either to stormwater or garbage collection and the like. That has enabled the use of public open space in a more efficient way and, I guess, to create a more pleasant environment for people utilising the laneways and the internal spaces of the Sydney and Melbourne buildings. Before, it was a bit of a free-for-all with everyone's waste bins out the back there, not exactly a great space for people. That has changed and I think that is another really good, practical example of the sort of engagement that the authority does.

There is a high-level heritage issue here. There is a lot of community interest. You have got, what, 150 different commercial owners and you have got publicly owned land, different government agencies responsible for different service delivery to both the public and private land, and the authority has been the anchor in pulling all of that together to finally address some issues that have been wicked problems, not just for the 30-odd years of self-government but stretching right back to the commencement of those buildings as the anchor commercial buildings of our city, going back a century.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that comprehensive answer. I am pleased to hear you explain the complexities involved and explain how the CRA is actively managing

those complexities to get that place-making built on the ground. I think what we often hear is that government asks the questions, but actually getting the tenants in and building the place in the way that it was briefed to community is where it falls down. Do you think that perhaps that is easier for the CRA to manage because they are quite well resourced to be able to manage all these complexities?

Mr Barr: I would argue that they are not, with only 27 staff across the board, I think, and the multitude of tasks and responsibilities that they have. I think the legislative guidance that the Assembly provided in the empowerment of the authority to undertake some of those activities has helped. I would suggest that the authority has, with limited resources, been given a number of tasks but not too many. We are very conscious that there is only so much that 27 people can do and, although they are very, very enthusiastic and often go above and beyond and do a lot of engagement, we are conscious of the limits of that work and the number of projects that can be taken on simultaneously.

As you will see in the statement of intent for the CRA, there are one or two major works, a couple that I would describe as medium sized and then a range of smaller projects that are managed, essentially, with the authority being the contract manager for procurement of a range of smaller scale projects. I do not know whether Mr Snow or Mr Gillman want to comment any further on the works that you have got.

THE CHAIR: I think you covered it there. I think that has covered it.

MR PARTON: Regarding the Acton waterfront, has the preliminary master plan for the Acton waterfront, which is mentioned on the CRA website, been made public? And if not, why not?

Mr Barr: Mr Snow can help there.

Mr Snow: The master plan has not yet been published. It is still the subject of further development and it is an important review that the board requested because we do need to understand exactly what the costs and benefits of such a significant development are going to be. The government has given the authority a clear indication of its preferred approach to the way such an important prominent site should be developed.

The Chief Minister alluded to the fact that many of our sites in fact will be mixed-use development sites. Previous approaches to the development of the site involved much more substantial development than is now being contemplated. What has been prepared and which is guiding the work that is underway at the moment is a place plan, which itself was the subject of extensive community engagement. The value of that place plan is that it has set and, if you like, affirmed the design and planning principles that will be applied to the site.

The work that is happening in relation to the review must of course be fully compliant with the National Capital Plan controls. The review is not: "Let's start from the beginning." It is much more a case of understanding. Given the strong indication by government of how it would like to see the site developed, we have a different vision, I suppose, in that sense. The master plan, when it is finalised and released, I think will

demonstrate that those objectives, along with those requirements of the National Capital Plan, will certainly be met.

MR PARTON: Mr Snow, you have indicated that that preliminary master plan is not yet complete. The website also says that the CRA will review planning previously undertaken for the Acton waterfront, which I think you have alluded to in that answer. That review has not been completed. Will it be released to the public?

Mr Snow: Yes. Once government has had an opportunity to see the findings of that review, support the intent of that master plan, then certainly we would of course be sharing that with the broader community. What we will be doing ahead of that, however, is engaging again on the next stage of the design of Acton waterfront, which is the budget announcement related to \$2.7 million being provisioned for or set aside for design work on that 30,000 square metre new waterfront park.

We are committed, as we have said publicly, to ongoing community engagement on such an important project. Nearly 20 years of consultation has occurred on this project and we are not for one moment stopping. We are certainly continuing with that consultation to make sure that everyone in Canberra understands exactly what this project will be for Canberra, as a significant legacy.

MR PARTON: Mr Snow, notwithstanding the fact that all those things that you have mentioned still have to be completed and there is more consultation, are you in a position, are you able, to outline to the committee broadly what plans there are for residential development at Acton waterfront?

Mr Barr: I guess I am best placed to answer that one. There will be residential. Nothing has changed from my previous statements in relation to the scale of that residential and its locations within the broader precinct that are consistent with the West Basin precinct guidelines that are available on the National Capital Authority website. The commonwealth sets the planning rules in relation to this area, because it is a designated area. Everything must be consistent with the National Capital Plan and is subject to National Capital Authority works approval.

The detail of the precinct guidelines for development is quite extensive. The National Capital Authority has paid close attention to the fine detail of all this and anything that we, through the authority, go back to the NCA with in terms of actual development assessments needs to be approved by the National Capital Authority. We have to be consistent with that and we will be.

MR BRADDOCK: When it comes to mixed-use developments I want to check how you are ensuring that you are building best practice mixed-use developments in accordance with Ms Orr's motion from earlier this year in the Assembly.

Mr Barr: That obviously has to be factored in at the detail stage around a development application or a works application. The method of land release and those sorts of questions are still to be finalised. We are still some way away from the point of actually having a developer and a detailed estate development plan.

What we have is a place plan and we have precinct guidelines that set out where

various things will be and what is very clear in the precinct guidelines. The continuous public pathway, the waterfront promenade, the vision and place principles, the urban design intent, the overall features of the precinct, the design guidelines, the objectives for development are set out very clearly by the National Capital Authority. As I said, we will need to be compliant with that.

We have then provided a further level of detail with the place plan that is on the City Renewal Authority website. That gives people even further detail on what is being proposed. Then of course there is the lived experience of stage 1, the Henry Rolland Park, and what is being built right now, stage 2, that you can see being constructed before your eyes.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, can you provide a little more detail on the City Hill activation and the projects that you have been working on around City Hill?

Mr Barr: Certainly. I think the most important one at the moment—and the authority officials will laugh a little at this because I have been very insistent on this one—is the east-west pedestrian pathway. With the Edinburgh Avenue extension now being open, that obviously brings connectivity to the point of City Hill. On the eastern side of the hill you have Constitution Avenue extended and you have a pathway that takes you to the Centenary Obelisk. But if you want to get across to the western side of City Hill at the moment you have got to go a bit cross-country. That is, I think, an important project.

Again, it is on designated land and the works approval comes from the National Capital Authority, but we are preparing a proposal to the NCA that will be consistent with the place requirements for City Hill. It is largely, at the moment, the biggest roundabout in Canberra that is full of rabbits. It is sort of rabbit breeding country at the moment up there.

MS ORR: It has got a quite healthy possum population.

Mr Barr: Yes. You rarely see any people there at all. The broader vision for City Hill is that it become a park that people will utilise. A key part of that, a first step, is safe pedestrian access. Clearly, the changes that are afoot with the raising of London Circuit, the connection that has now been provided with Edinburgh Avenue and this new east-west footpath will provide greater access to the hill. In time there will be greater amenity in the park itself.

MR PARTON: I know I am straying into major projects in transport, but I think the question from Ms Orr certainly lines it up. I just want to know if there was ever any consideration genuinely given to the light rail line just going straight over the top of City Hill to link up with Commonwealth Avenue? If that was not given any serious consideration, why not?

Mr Barr: I think both the National Capital Authority and the federal committee that approved the inter-town public transport route were not exactly wild about straight over the top of City Hill. It would certainly trigger a very healthy debate about the Griffin Legacy. Certainly, Vernon Circle was one of the earlier route considerations. You are talking about just going straight through the middle of City Hill. Is that what

you are talking about, just to clarify?

MR PARTON: Yes.

Mr Barr: I think that would find itself in breach of a number of National Capital Plan requirements. When the federal parliamentary committee examined light rail stage 2 it was very clear that there was, in the National Capital Plan, an inter-town public transport route. That was the one that they recommended light rail stage 2 follow. That was chaired by Ben Morton, I think, when he was a backbencher.

MR BRADDOCK: I want to ask a question about embedded emissions. There has been growing discussion about that across the territory. Does the City Renewal Authority or the SLA consider embedded emissions as part of its process or is it looking to do so in the future?

Mr Barr: If it is more driven by whole-of-government policy work rather than each entity undertaking their own independent work. There will be an ACT government policy in relation to embedded emissions. We have been discussing some of this at cabinet level in relation to scope 3 emissions. There will be some further work undertaken but it will not be led by these organisations.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, has the remainder of the Reid campus proposed site for the University of New South Wales been identified for release or is that already settled?

Mr Barr: The government is retaining a section of land within that precinct and that is being held by government. I do not believe it has been identified for release yet, but I will just double-check that. No, it has not been identified for release in the Indicative Land Release Program.

MR CAIN: Is that government-held portion intended for residential development?

Mr Barr: I do not believe its final land use has been determined, except of course that it is designated land. It is in the parliamentary triangle. Again, it has to be consistent with the National Capital Plan. There is a residential development on the other side of the UNSW site that is being constructed now.

MR CAIN: How long will your inability to deliver the Woden CIT affect the construction, academic and other jobs that will come from the delivery of the UNSW campus?

Mr Barr: I know you set the premise of the question as our inability to deliver the Woden CIT—so cheeky, a nice try, but that is a bit rude. This site is an unencumbered site. It is a dirt car park at the moment. That Woden CIT development does not impact on UNSW's capacity. The issues around UNSW's capacity relate more to COVID than anything else. But they have assured us that it remains their intent to deliver the campus.

MR CAIN: Is light rail stage 2 to Woden going to hold up these two significant constructions for Woden CIT and the city campus for UNSW at all?

MS ORR: Chair, I am not sure this is quite the right forum for these questions. I feel Mr Cain probably should have joined us a bit earlier this afternoon.

THE CHAIR: I was going to—

Mr Barr: Obviously CIT Woden is not a City Renewal Authority project. I do not know that that is particularly relevant. But the short answer is no. I do not know where you are getting these questions from. They are a bit silly. But, anyway, we will move on.

MR PARTON: In your opinion, Chief Minister.

Mr Barr: I am allowed an opinion, like you.

MR PARTON: Yes, you are.

THE CHAIR: Chief Minister, can you tell me how many of the 27 FTEs that we have got at the City Renewal Authority are ongoing and how many are non-ongoing? Can you also give me an indication of whether those positions are project managers or whether they have qualifications in engineering or some other field like that?

Mr Barr: I will ask Mr Gillman to talk about that.

Mr Gillman: Predominantly they are ongoing employees. I can break down the exact numbers and provide that subsequently.

THE CHAIR: That would be great.

Mr Gillman: The senior executive service are typically on three-to-five-year contracts. Malcolm and I, for example, are on contract terms. Sorry, the balance of the question?

THE CHAIR: The balance of the question was whether most of those 27 positions are project managers, primarily by qualification, whether they are engineers or whether they are some other field by qualification?

Mr Gillman: We have a diverse group of people. We have expertise in planning and environment; we have expertise in architecture and landscape architecture; we have expertise in project management. As you point out, we have expertise in construction; we have other expertise in the more corporate and foundational side—a finance director, accounting et cetera. We have a broad range of expertise available and qualifications available within that team. It is not a single-focus team. It is quite broad and diverse in its make-up and skill set.

Mr Barr: The breakdown is on page 72 of budget statements B. The statement intent for the City Renewal Authority outlines the classification and gender of all 27 staff.

THE CHAIR: The classification probably will not tell us the type of person, the qualification that they have.

Mr Barr: It gives a little bit of an indication.

THE CHAIR: Is it possible for you to take that on notice too, along with the—

Mr Barr: Yes, of course.

THE CHAIR: That would be great.

MR PARTON: This is a question about block 40 section 100, the car park next to the law courts on London Circuit. Can I ask, please, how many expressions of interest were received earlier this year for purchase and development of block 40 section 100 in the city?

Mr Barr: That is a commonwealth-sponsored project. I understand it is still in its procurement phase and is with the commonwealth. So we are not in a position to comment on that at this point.

MR PARTON: I guess to some extent you partly explained it, and it may get down to my understanding of the boundaries around this. Why is block 40 section 100 not in the Indicative Land Release Program to financial year 2025-26?

Mr Barr: Mr Snow will talk to that.

Mr Snow: It is simply because the commonwealth did advertise an expression of interest for the department of DESE. I can never remember the acronym; education, science and training; no, that cannot be right. Anyway, that department made a decision that it wanted to consolidate its staff who were over a number of different locations within the city.

The CRA and, yes, the government's participation in that process was triggered by the announcement by that department that they were looking for new office accommodation, and the authority has chosen, with the support of government, to consider making that site available to a developer who can then respond to the EOI process the commonwealth have launched.

MR PARTON: What are the next steps for the sale of that site?

Mr Snow: The steps are that we await the commonwealth's decision around the outcome of the EOI process. If they do make that decision we imagine it will proceed to what is called an RFT, a request for tender—and it is a two-step process—and the commonwealth would make a judgement about the merits of the respondents to that RFT. If one of those parties had a proposal which relied upon block 40 or the sale of block 40 then of course the renewal authority would be involved in, ultimately, a transaction around the sale of that site to enable that bid to proceed.

MR CAIN: The Canberra Olympic Pool is only funded for this financial year, it would seem. What are the future plans for the pool and the site?

Mr Barr: That is not in this portfolio. That is a sport and recreation question.

MR CAIN: Indeed. As Mr Parton said earlier, do you have an opinion, Chief Minister?

Mr Snow: We will answer it in the next hour.

Mr Barr: You will have the opportunity to talk with the minister about Civic pool.

MR BRADDOCK: In terms of the department of education taking up a potential block in the city, was any consideration given by the government to encourage them to set up in Gungahlin?

Mr Barr: Their brief to market was CBD, only because they were consolidating their staff in a number of buildings currently in the CBD within one building. They were not interested. They could have bought any of the blocks that were on the table for Gungahlin but they were not interested in this instance.

THE CHAIR: I would like to know which declared urban renewal sites the Suburban Land Agency will be prioritising over the next term.

Mr Barr: There are only two that are declared: the Canberra brickworks and the Kingston foreshore arts precinct area.

THE CHAIR: They are both simply proceeding with equal priority? You do not anticipate any problems, any issues? They will just roll out?

Mr Barr: The brickworks one is very well advanced, and I will get Mr Dietz to talk about that.

Mr Dietz: You are correct, Minister; the brickworks one is very well advanced. I will throw to Irena Sharp, who is actually the program director of the brickworks. Essentially, it is now in a position where we have gone through the estate development plan, and second versions will be provided through to the authorities for review. Consultation with the community has consistently occurred since government handed it over to Doma. I will hand over to Irena to give a little more detail of the status it is currently at.

Ms Sharp: I have read and understand the privilege statement. In relation to the Canberra brickworks precinct, the project has advanced substantially over the last year. It just recently has received an agreement from the Heritage Council to its conservation management plan that is now in play for the next five years.

The developers have also made a fulsome submission for its EIS assessment and they are currently reviewing their design and responses to the public commentary that was provided to them in August. They are anticipating providing that additional information, together with the amended draft EDP, the estate development plan, by mid-November this year for review by the agencies, as Mr Dietz has suggested. They are working with the community panel on an ongoing basis, meeting with them monthly, as was agreed from the beginning of the project. They only just met with the community panel a couple of weeks ago. This will continue. In addition, additional

public consultation will be held in early 2022 to reflect on this current work that is producing some of the revisions within the design.

THE CHAIR: I am pleased to say that we now conclude our session. The secretariat will be in touch with the draft transcript, which you can review for accuracy and for questions taken on notice. I believe there were a few taken on notice. Thank you very much for attending today and for answering our questions. Keep up the hard work. We are all aware it is a bit difficult during COVID. Thank you for your service.

Mr Barr: Thank you very much.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

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

Transport Canberra and City Services

Alegria, Mr Stephen, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to the 2021-22 ACT budget inquiry of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. The committee would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We would like to acknowledge their continuing culture and their contributions to our city. We also note that sovereignty was never ceded. We acknowledge and welcome the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander who are joining or watching from anywhere across Australia.

Our proceedings this afternoon will examine the expenditure proposals and revenue estimates for Transport Canberra and City Services in relation to budget statements H. We are transcribing these proceedings, and if you can state when you are taking a question on notice, that will also help our secretariat. I welcome the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Could you state your name and the capacity in which you appear, and that you have received and understand the privilege statement.

Ms Berry: Yes; Yvette Berry, Minister for Sport and Recreation in the ACT and, yes, I have read the statement.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. I might kick off with the first question. We have a lot of neighbourhood ovals, and some of those ovals are categorised as dryland ovals. We are not really doing a lot of active watering and maintenance on those. I am in Ginninderra, Belconnen, as are you, and we have got quite a few there. I am thinking, in particular, of Florey and Macquarie. I understand that the mowing schedule is around six times a year, and they are not really looking in great shape. The Macquarie oval, in particular, is not looking great. But I also understand that there have been some consultations recently, in Florey in particular, about how to reshape those and get a better long-term outcome that does not require all of the watering and the maintenance and that is going to be a bit more climate friendly. Can you tell me how that is going and when we might be able to roll that same kind of process out to Macquarie and to all of the other dryland ovals around our town?

Ms Berry: Thanks, Chair. I will just go back and give a little bit of history behind those dry ovals. They are not used for sport and recreation anymore because a long time ago there was a big drought and a number of those ovals were decommissioned. They are just dryland grass areas, which are mowed and maintained by TCCS for community use. They are fine for flying a kite or walking the dog but not for formal sport use.

One of those sports fields, which was a dryland grass field in more recent years, was Higgins oval, which has been turned back now to a double sports field with a family

and female-friendly pavilion and other facilities there at Higgins because of the growth in sport within the Belconnen precinct. Also, as part of the upgrades when the old Higgins Primary School was demolished, an aged-care facility was built in that suburb. So that is a bit of a history behind how those sports fields were decommissioned at that period of time.

Florey has a story of its own as well. Florey Primary School has limited space for children to play around. Once the fence was put up at that school, there were not as many opportunities for young people to do sporting and recreation activities. So the first part for Florey is about working with Education ACT to see what we can do to make sure that there is more space within that school community for those young people to use.

The priority work within that area has been talking with the school community about their needs, going forward, and what could be developed on that space to meet the needs of the school community, initially. Then we could go beyond that and talk with the broader Florey community about what the other, additional parts of that space might be used for. We have started that conversation with the school. We have had conversations with the young people there, who have provided us with many incredible and amazing ideas about their aspirations for that site. We have also talked with the Parents and Citizens Association and with the schoolteachers and school principal.

At the moment, that has all been put on pause because of COVID, but we hope to get straight back into that with the school community initially to start putting some time frames around when a sports field green space can start being developed on part of that oval. There are no conversations happening with any other school communities on any of those other sports spaces or those dryland sports fields at the moment, but I know that you will have seen, across the ACT, the micropark movement. That is not my area, but it is a movement that could move into those spaces in the future as well. At the moment it is within local parks.

THE CHAIR: How can the community start those conversations? For instance, at Macquarie and at the other dryland ovals, how do we engage and get that conversation started?

Ms Berry: In the first instance, as I said, in Florey they had a particular need in the Florey school community. When that school was initially built it was designed, once that suburb aged and changed, to become an aged-care facility. It was never built to be a school for the longer term. However, it is now a primary school for the longer term and so it does need those outdoor recreation spaces. Most other schools already have outdoor recreation spaces and sports areas to play in, so they do not really need to use the dryland fields for sport and recreation.

If we are turning sports fields back on, it is also based on the need and the growth of sports within that area. For example, in Florey the reason we have changed the way that we are using that space and upgrading it for the school community is because, when Sport and Recreation spoke with the sports community in the ACT, it was found that Florey was not the ideal area for a sports field. That is why Higgins was recommissioned and put on. It worked better within that Kippax and Holt precinct,

with a number of other sports facilities already there. The Florey area is kind of in the middle of Florey, so it does not really connect up with any other sports facilities around the space.

Making sure that we meet the needs of sports—and the growth within those different sports—within areas of the ACT has been the way that Sport and Recreation and the ACT government have prioritised that work into the future.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister.

MR PARTON: The total cost of grounds maintenance has decreased by almost \$7 million. Why?

Ms Berry: Good question. I will ask Mr Alegria to respond to that.

Mr Alegria: I have read and understood the privilege statement. I need to defer my response to that. It may be simply an accounting treatment. Often depreciation, for example, is included in these figures, but I certainly know from my oversight of the area that the budget on the ground has not changed. We still have the same number of staff and, broadly speaking, the same budget that we have had in the past.

MR PARTON: Mr Alegria, \$7 million is not an insubstantial amount of money. How could it be that the total cost of grounds maintenance has decreased by almost \$7 million? Are there grounds that have been removed from the government's assets register?

Mr Alegria: No. As I said, I would be happy to take that on notice and come back to you with a response to that, Mr Parton.

MR PARTON: All right.

THE CHAIR: Ms Orr, do you have a substantive question?

MS ORR: I sure do. Can I get an update on the female-friendly change room program? What works have happened and what you are anticipating happening in the coming years?

Ms Berry: I will start and then I might get Mr Alegria to go through some of the detail on the program and how we are rolling it out here in the ACT. In the ACT we have made sure that we have some really good guidelines for the people that we use to develop our pavilions. We make sure that the pavilions meet the female-friendly guidelines, which makes them more inclusive facilities for everybody to use. For example, we make sure that there are toilet doors on toilets; we remove urinals; we make sure there are power points, lighting and those kinds of things. There have been a number of upgrades to existing pavilions. Of course, pavilions had been built in the ACT and across the country, for 40 or 50 years, by men, for men, and there was never any consideration that women would be playing those kinds of field sports.

But of course that is not the case, and we are riding a momentum now of more and higher women's participation in sport than we ever have before, particularly in sports

that were more traditionally played and dominated by men. We also did some upgrades. I might get Mr Alegria to talk through all the different upgrades that we have been doing, but, for example, the Cavalry ballpark had upgrades to remove urinals and make sure that their pavilions and change room areas were more female friendly and more inclusive.

We did the upgrades at the GIO Stadium as well. We removed the showers without doors and put in doors, and removed the urinals so that they are more inclusive for women who uses those change rooms at GIO Stadium. There have been a number of other upgrades to older facilities. New ones of course have to meet those guidelines that we have put in place.

Mr Alegria: Just to follow on from the minister, in terms of the female-friendly pavilion upgrades, a number of pavilions were upgraded in the last financial year, including Narrabundah 1 district playing field, O'Connor 3, Kambah 3 and Kaleen district playing fields. That was the latest instalment, I guess, of a rolling program that has been going on for some years. And, sorry, we also completed Stirling 1 and Kambah 2 pavilion upgrades. That was all within the last 12 months. It was a significant achievement.

Going forward, we are looking to do an upgrade at Curtin district playing fields. That is concurrent with an irrigation upgrade that is underway there. While some of that facility is unavailable for sporting use, we took the opportunity to do a small upgrade on that pavilion as well. They are probably the highlights of the last 12 months. As the minister said, there is an ageing asset base out there, which we will be rolling through and doing those upgrades over the coming years. Of course, we have many other upgrade projects which perhaps are not as visible to the community, particularly in the irrigation space. As I said, we are doing the irrigation upgrade at Curtin and we are upgrading water-meter pits, which are not very exciting, but they are really important parts of the infrastructure.

MS ORR: What is a water-meter pit?

Mr Alegria: That is the area below the ground that contains the pumps and valves and things like that that actually operate the irrigation system. Much like the pavilions themselves, they become aged and they no longer meet standards. They present a safety risk in some cases and they need to be upgraded. Also, it is an opportunity to provide more efficient irrigation. Often we put in larger, more efficient pumps that actually change the way the water droplets hit the ground. It creates a more efficient irrigation system. It improves the coverage of each sprinkler. If you can imagine, the sprinklers actually overlap in a modern system, whereas in an old system they just touch on the boundaries. Those kinds of things are, I guess, less obvious and less visible to the community but make a big difference to the quality of the grass and the turf, which is obviously a major issue for the sporting users. We want to make sure that the grounds are safe and fit for purpose.

And, finally, lighting is another issue. For example, we did new lighting at Amaroo 2 recently. Lighting is an ongoing priority for the government in terms of making the best use of the sportsgrounds that we have already so that we can maximise the benefit to the community by providing opportunities for after-hours training and,

potentially, match play as well. And, obviously, we are using the latest technology LEDs to replace the old-school, quite inefficient lighting that was a legacy of the past.

MS ORR: Great. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Davis, do you have a substantive question?

MR DAVIS: I do, thank you, Chair. And thank you, Minister and everybody. I just wanted to ask a question relating to a motion in the Assembly earlier in the year on a whole bunch of community sports stuff but in particular the facilities management plan. I am not getting ahead of myself. I know it is not due until December, so I am not asking for an inside scoop. I am just curious if ovals are considered a facility for the purposes of such a facility management plan?

Mr Alegria: Mr Davis, yes, they would be considered a facility. I mean, they are ultimately the bedrock of the sport facilities. The lighting and the pavilions are all supporting infrastructure, so I would expect that they would be considered part of it. Particularly what keeps them fit for purpose, which is obviously the irrigation systems, are part of it. So those kinds of assets that we can regularly upgrade and bring into a modern standard would be things that we would definitely look at in a facilities plan.

MR DAVIS: Are there any assets that you manage that you would not consider to be part of such a facilities management plan—that we could expect to be excluded?

Ms Berry: While Mr Alegria is thinking about that I can tell you that there are 127 separate oval sites across the ACT. That is 444 hectares of public land, which includes 284 hectares of irrigated grass and 160 hectares of dryland grass. Those are the dryland ovals that you referred to earlier, Chair. And there are 890 individual hireable sports fields. So we have a significant amount of infrastructure, whether that is in sports fields or within pavilions—lights, water pits, sprinkler irrigation systems, fencing. I suppose anything within a sports field site would be included in that. But how it is accounted for would be different. Its depreciation or appreciation compared to a car, for example, might be a bit different.

Mr Alegria: I cannot think of any particular asset class that would not be included, as the minister said.

MR DAVIS: How is the plan coming along? How much would you feel comfortable sharing with the committee today? Is it certainly on track to be publicly available by December?

Ms Berry: I would have to say that that is definitely our aspiration. Obviously, COVID has put a bit of a spanner in all of the work on any sort of thing outside of just managing COVID, but I understand it is on track.

MR DAVIS: That is great, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Milligan, do you have a substantive question?

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, I do, thank you, Chair. I am just wondering if the minister can

indicate to me what is the percentage that the government receives in terms of ground-hire fees in relation to total ground hire maintenance costs?

Ms Berry: I can ask Mr Alegria to give a little bit more detail on that, but ground-hire fees do not make the government any money. In fact, ground-hire fees are subsidised to the tune of 86 per cent of the ground-hire cost, as far as maintenance and irrigation is concerned. The contribution that the fees of sports clubs make is around 14 per cent to the entire actual cost of maintaining and improving sports fields and their facilities across the ACT.

MR MILLIGAN: Has the government considered what it would cost them if they were to waive ground hire fees, let us say, for the summer period that is coming up, simply due to the cost that this would have on clubs and sporting groups? Given that the government's current restrictions have impacted on clubs financially, any waiving of ground-hire fees would obviously help the clubs with those costs. Has the government considered waiving those fees and what the costs might add up to? What would it cost the budget?

Ms Berry: We made a range of decisions during last year, around ground-hire fees and costs for sports fields, given the interruptions that COVID has caused within sports communities. A lot of clubs have also been able access some of the business grants that were provided as part of providing some support to businesses in the ACT. So there were a number of sports clubs that were able to access that funding as well.

We have not, at this stage, considered waiving fees, because we are not really at a place where we know where COVID is heading. We are engaged very closely and carefully with all of the sports clubs in the ACT to understand what their registrations are looking like. We are also engaged with them about our decisions as far as sports participation and our pathway out of COVID, for example. We are still not at a point where we could make a decision on that. I do not know if you have got some of the detail from last year's decisions. We will see if we can get some of the detail about last year's waiving, although that is probably available on *Hansard*, because we did provide that detail at previous committee hearings.

MR MILLIGAN: Is there any possibility that the government might be able to extend any grants available—even small grants—for local clubs which may be struggling to kickstart off again due to this? Is there any possibility that that might be extended?

Ms Berry: As I said, Mr Milligan, at this point some of the clubs were able to. I just do not have the detail of that for this particular session. It is probably for a future session of estimates. A number of clubs were able to access those business grants, in particular, but we just do not have a decision on what our pathway out for community sport looks like at the moment. Once we know that and the impact on sports clubs, we will talk with the sports clubs about what that might look like. But at this stage we are just waiting for the health advice of what our pathway forward will look like. And we are continuing to engage regularly with sports clubs on their viability.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I am interested in the relationship between our sports grounds and our waterways, and pollution in our waterways. I am just wondering

what sort of research you have done on fertiliser runoff and pesticide runoff—if you are using pesticides—into our waterways? Have you been working with EPSDD on that?

Ms Berry: There has been a little bit of work done. Mr Alegria has some information for you.

Mr Alegria: Sports grounds are not very different, in some ways, from irrigated parks and even from people's general use of their own backyards and so forth. So there has been a whole range of initiatives, as you well know, in terms of improving water quality across the catchment feeding into the Murrumbidgee. And all of those will have a benefit in terms of mitigating the sports grounds and/or other types of facilities across the city.

In terms of, specifically, sports grounds, we did have a small initiative planned for this year at Kambah to improve and reduce runoff from the Kambah District Playing Fields, through the use of drainage swales, potentially with water plants or water adapted plants in there to help with vegetation. Likewise, in many of our urban lakes and ponds we have that buffer zone along the edge of the water that helps filter sediment and nutrients from entering the area. So there are just a couple of examples.

We are certainly very aware of the need to adapt to a whole range of environmental issues, including climate change. And we are always looking for ways to innovate with the type of turf we use and the type of irrigation, and how we encourage people to use the sports grounds. For example, in the future it may be that night match play becomes more common because it is going to be too hot during the day. Those are the kinds of things that we are looking at in the holistic perspective, including, very much, the sports grounds.

THE CHAIR: And are you integrating that work with the healthy waterways program and the research that EPSDD is doing?

Mr Alegria: Most certainly, yes. We are well across that. We are a key partner, as TCCS. We are a key partner in that in terms of being diligent asset owners and managing the stormwater network. And, yes, we have a key role in contributing to the development of those initiatives and even managing and actually maintaining those facilities across the city.

THE CHAIR: Great. And that is also looking at glyphosate use around those facilities?

Mr Alegria: Not specifically, no. The glyphosate use is probably another topic. Our objective is to abide by the commonwealth agencies' rules and regulations around all types of herbicide use, including glyphosate. Our objective is to minimise use as much as possible. And where we cannot minimise or avoid use, we obviously always act in accordance with the product label and make sure our staff are suitably qualified and trained, and so forth. That is really where we stand on glyphosate, at this stage.

MR PARTON: I appreciate that this question may be knocked back a second time, but let's try it. It was asked in the last session, and it is regarding Canberra Olympic

Pool. Is that in this session, or not? The question, specifically, is: Canberra Olympic Pool is only funded for this financial year; what are the future plans for the pool and that site?

Ms Berry: Sorry, Mr Parton. This is not the session. This is just for sports fields, really.

MR PARTON: Right. Minister, at page 26 of the TCCS budget paper, it says the customer satisfaction with management of sports grounds was at around 85 per cent. I just wonder if I can delve deeper into that figure. What particular aspects of sports ground management give rise to the 85 per cent? Is it possible to get detail on whether that rate is dragged down by particular areas of sport? Are you happy with the 85 per cent? How do we arrive at that figure?

Mr Alegria: I can talk to that, Mr Parton. That figure was gleaned from a large TCCS-wide community survey undertaken by a third party. That survey is undertaken to inform our accountability indicators across the TCCS directorate, including the sports grounds. The survey was, from memory, of 1,000 people. So it is statistically valid. This year, rather than just collecting a number for satisfaction or dissatisfaction, we actually had a narrative around some of the reasons people were particularly satisfied or dissatisfied—not a quantitative set of data, but an indication, at least, which was helpful.

Overall, the target was met in terms of satisfaction. It is broadly consistent with the level of satisfaction that we have experienced over the past number of years. This year, with that extra information that we gleaned, people were most satisfied with the condition of the sports fields and the quality of sports fields. And they were most dissatisfied with the condition of sports fields and the maintenance of sports fields. So there was a real sense that, I guess, the same issue was a source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. And unpicking it a little bit more, while we do not have really accurate data, we think that there is an element of the dryland ovals in that dissatisfaction response. People perhaps do not appreciate the nature of the dryland ovals that we talked about at the beginning, and they consider them to be neglected sports grounds rather than urban open spaces that are only suitable for informal use.

So that is one of the insights that we gleaned from that—that we could do better in informing the community about what those dryland ovals are, what they are intended for, and why they look brown in the dry period. They obviously look green and lush, and the grass might be longer than desired at a really wet period, like we have now. If people understand that, I think, yes, that might help us going forward with increasing the satisfaction.

MR PARTON: Mr Alegria, do you know specifically that that is one of the indicators that has taken this number to 85, or is that just an anecdotal assessment? Do you know that it is those—what do we call them again?—drylands?

Mr Alegria: It is an educated guess, I would say, Mr Parton. It is one of those things where having long grass and large bumps and things does not really equate with our sports ground asset base; that does equate with our dryland and our environmental—

MR PARTON: Minister, do you consider that 85 per cent is a pass mark? Are you satisfied with that as a satisfaction score, or does more work need to be done?

Ms Berry: I think that the question that has been discussed now with Mr Alegria, is the question of the community's understanding of the sports fields and the dryland fields and what their actual purpose is, and that sounds as if that could be the reason why that percentage rate at 85 per cent is not higher. But I would have to say, of course we are always striving to ensure that our sports fields are at the highest possible level for use for sports in the ACT, and, generally speaking, the feedback from sports is that our fields are in really good quality condition. I know that the people at TCCS spend a lot of time there and know those sports fields intimately, to almost every blade of grass, and know where their weaknesses are and where they might need a bit more support. They are very dedicated to making sure that they are all managed, maintained, fertilised and changed over from season to season. You will have seen, during the hotter summers, that we have had a struggle to keep those fields in good conditions. There is really actually quite a strong connection between the people who maintain and upgrade our fields to making sure that they do meet the needs of our community.

Mr Alegria: And if I might add, Mr Parton, an example of what the minister was just describing is going to be happening down in the Tuggeranong area in the coming year. An internal team we have elected will prioritise a few ovals down in the Tuggeranong area for renovations. I am not talking about huge renovations but just things like our sand-spitting machine that you might have seen on social media. We are going to be using that down at Kambah and Wanniasa, just to try and—

MR PARTON: Fair enough.

Mr Alegria: Again, we just keep building that approach where we are continually trying to improve the asset base in a sustainable way. So you will see some activity down south in the coming year to try and get an ageing asset base up to the next level of quality.

Ms Berry: Sorry. Mr Parton, I just wanted to add to that. Of course our sports clubs want to make sure that the fields that they use are in the best condition as well. So they have even asked TCCS to deliver dirt so that they can fill in rough spots or divots that might occur during ordinary play, because they will be out there every weekend. So they use the dirt that is delivered by TCCS just to fill in some of the holes or bare patches that might occur during play. Of course, everybody is committed to making sure that those sports fields are great; not just TCCS and the government, but the users as well.

MR PARTON: I am happy with that as an answer.

THE CHAIR: Excellent.

MS ORR: Mr Alegria, you mentioned that a couple of places were getting irrigation and other works done to them, and I think you mentioned Higgins. I believe Nicholls has had some works done too. Can you just run me through what has been done and what you are anticipating doing around those sorts of works over the next 12 months?

Mr Alegria: Okay. In terms of irrigation-type things, we have some work planned at Nicholls enclosed oval and at Higgins on some drainage works. That will enable us to better withstand a wet season. I talked about the meter pit. Boomanulla has a meter pit on the program. Likewise, Amaroo has a booster pump. I mentioned booster pumps earlier. A booster pump is going to be added to the Amaroo playing fields as well, and that will really complement the extra lighting that we put in there and give the fields a little bit more capacity to cope with what is a growing area. Sorry, was your question specifically about irrigation?

MS ORR: It is not specifically irrigation, but also looking at those new technologies you were trialling. I think you have a few synthetic fields that you were looking at doing, and it was about how you were going about getting that mix so we are getting more of our sporting ovals out to people to use.

Mr Alegria: Certainly the synthetic pitches that we have are well used. The most recent one is in Pearce and that is very well used, particularly by football. Synthetic pitches still require maintenance. Nicholls was refurbished a couple of years ago, from memory, where we replaced all the rubber soft-fall and the base of that synthetic pitch. So, yes, they have an important place in the sporting portfolio, I guess.

Obviously, our main focus is on the natural turf irrigated sports fields, and they are the dominant type of facility that we have at the moment. And certainly going forward we would try and look at the equity across the city when we are making decisions, and, obviously, the government commitments and so forth. So, yes, going forward we have some extra resources there for cricket, knowing that there is a large demand for cricket, and obviously we have lighting projects. Several lighting projects are in the budget papers.

MS ORR: Yes. What were the cricket projects you were looking at doing?

Mr Alegria: The cricket projects are at Melba and Taylor district playing fields—installing cricket nets and the like. So again, not major projects; just adding the value to the facilities that are already there.

MS ORR: You mentioned you had put lighting up at Amaroo, which I know has been well received for getting more evening play on those fields. What are you looking at for the coming lighting programs and what are some of the considerations you are working through at the moment?

Mr Alegria: Certainly there has been a commitment to installing lighting at Hawker, at the softball facility, and also at Mawson district playing fields and Kambah district playing fields. Both of those already have some lighting, so this will add lighting to those very well-used district playing fields.

MS ORR: Okay, great. Thank you.

MR DAVIS: Can I ask a supplementary question on that, Chair?

THE CHAIR: Sure. You can have a supplementary or a substantive question,

Mr Davis. We may not have time for both.

MR DAVIS: A supplementary question will be fine. I just wanted to ask what the process is for identifying and then deciding on where these investments will be made to upgrade these ovals? I have had it put to me that from the outside looking in, it can look a bit “squeaky wheel gets the grease”, but I just wanted to know if there was an internal process or policy that says, “This is the checklist we will go through to determine when a sports ground will be upgraded and how it will be upgraded.”

Mr Alegria: As you suggest, Mr Davis, there are many factors that go into the prioritisation process. Obviously, at the core we are trying to meet the needs of sporting groups and the sporting participants, so that is obviously the base level—is there a need? We engage regularly with the sporting peak bodies to determine what their needs and aspirations are.

I mentioned equity before. We try and have an equitable approach across the city so that we are not putting more resources into one particular area rather than another. So we try to spread the resource base as much as we can across the city, and also make it equitable between the different sports. Obviously, some sports have huge participation rates and many facilities that they use; others are smaller, but we still need to make sure that there is equity there.

I also mentioned making the best use of the existing resource we have. In the lighting example, that is a way of maximising the valuable assets that we have by adding value to them. And then there are a whole range of safety and modern standards issues, where we have the ageing bins, irrigation that might be out of date and inefficient, and we might have some new varieties of turf that we could use. All of those opportunities to update and modernise ageing infrastructure are another consideration. So collectively, all of that comes into play as we juggle the competing demands and try to deliver the best service we can with the resources that we have.

MR DAVIS: I am happy for you to take this on notice, but is it possible to collate and make that whole formula publicly available, just to satisfy some of that community concern that the investments are always being made based on need and not any other competing priorities?

Mr Alegria: Without having it in front of me, I am pretty sure we have some sort of generic information on our website, but I would be more than happy to check that and come back with it. I do not see any issue with that; it is certainly not a state secret. There is in fact a very similar way of prioritising for many other initiatives and meeting community requests.

MR DAVIS: I would appreciate that, thank you.

MR MILLIGAN: Yes, thank you. Looking around at all our ovals, typically you would think that the government’s response to storage issues and basic facilities is the use of shipping containers. I would like to know from the minister what is the actual cost to the government to install one shipping container, and has the government looked at alternative buildings or demountables that could be used for storage or basic facilities? As we all know, shipping containers are not necessarily the most secure,

nor weatherproof, so does the government have a plan for replacing these shipping containers with proper facilities? What is the cost of these shipping containers compared to other alternatives that the government may have looked at?

Ms Berry: I might just start and then Mr Alegria might have some of the actual detail, or we might have to take the costings on notice. Of course, that will depend on a whole range of things like size and placement and what is required at the sports ground for the shipping container to be delivered. With our new facilities, of course, we have made sure that there is storage in place for all of the new facilities. If we are doing upgrades, we can include upgrades to storage facilities, but I might see if Mr Alegria has some more detail on the cost.

Mr Alegria: Sure. The last time I looked, a shipping container was \$2,000 to \$3,000 to buy, but that was before COVID. So they are inexpensive. Going to Minister Berry's point, often they are retrofitted into facilities that were built at a different time and do not have enough storage infrastructure. So then I guess the question becomes: do we want to invest in a storage building or do we want to invest in things that may more directly benefit sporting users?

In many cases the clubs provide these shipping containers and obviously use them for their sporting activity. We act in a facilitating role of enabling them and assisting them—for example, by assisting with mural painting to beautify them, as much as you can beautify a shipping container. They certainly do have a place in our sporting landscape. And we have not done any specific work on quantifying alternatives, because at this stage in the mix of priorities, the female-friendly pavilions and the irrigation and all those kinds of things are higher priorities, whereas the shipping containers do function and they do serve that basic purpose.

MR MILLIGAN: You mentioned that it was, let us say, a couple of grand for the shipping container, but obviously there is a bit of preparation work that needs to be done to place a shipping container—ground preparation, making sure it is level, installing electricity if it is needed, or even plumbing and whatnot. Typically, that would be a cost that the government would wear. So if you are coming back to us with additional information, could you include the total of what it costs the government to install a shipping container, including electricity, plumbing and anything else. That would be really great.

Additionally on this question, does the government have a list of sporting facilities across the ACT where it is looking at either building new facilities or upgrading the existing facilities? Is there a database? How can we—and our sporting clubs—be aware of what the plan is?

Ms Berry: I do not know that we will be able to provide the detailed information that you are requesting in the many questions you have just asked, Mr Milligan, but we can say that we have an ageing asset within our pavilions across the ACT—as I said, built by men for men, a long time ago—and they all need to be upgraded, but it will take some time. Those upgrades cost a minimum of \$150,000, upwards to \$600,000 for a brand-new pavilion. As a government we need to prioritise those across the city, making sure that we are meeting the needs of our sports communities and increasing inclusion and participation in sport as well. We cannot do them all at the same time. It

would be a fairly significant infrastructure spend, if you were to attempt to do all of that at one period of time, and that is why we talk with our sports communities and understand very clearly from the CEOs of organisations what the needs are of their communities so that we can meet them.

It is based on the age and the quality of the facility, as well. Some of the upgrades that have been done to facilities in the ACT have been quite significant. Waramanga, I think, had significant upgrades to their ageing pavilion, which included a whole range of things like a new roof, but also some really interesting off-site access to facilities so that you could, via your phone—rather than having to get the ranger, the TCCS person or whomever to come out—unlock everything and then lock it up again. It is all done automatically.

We can do those sorts of upgrades with lights as well. You do not need somebody to turn up and turn the lights on from 6 till 9; they can be turned off and on via wi-fi access and via your phone. Those are the kinds of things. Of course, we want to make sure everybody has absolutely everything that they need, but we are also dealing with some ageing assets out there that need some significant work.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Mr Milligan, I am afraid we are out of time for the hearing.

MR MILLIGAN: All right, no worries.

THE CHAIR: I invite you to lodge anything on notice if you have further questions. That concludes our hearing. Minister and officials, thank you very much for attending. Thank you for giving us your evidence. The secretary will provide you with a proof transcript that you can check for accuracy, and they will also liaise with you about the questions taken on notice. That concludes our day for the hearings.

The committee adjourned at 6.17 pm.