



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL  
TERRITORY**

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

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

**Members:**

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

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**MONDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2022**

**Acting secretary to the committee:  
Ms M Ikeda (Ph: 620 50199)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

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

## **APPEARANCES**

<b>Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Major Projects Canberra .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate .....</b>	<b>31</b>

## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## **The committee met at 2.18 pm.**

### Appearances

Gentleman, Mr Mick, Manager of Government Business, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Industrial Relations and Workplace Safety, Minister for Planning and Land Management and Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

Brady, Dr Erin, Deputy Director-General, Planning and Sustainable Development

Bennett, Mr James, Executive Branch Manager, Building Reform, Housing and Design Services

Cilliers, Mr George, Executive Group Manager, Statutory Planning

Green, Mr Ben, Acting Executive Group Manager, Development and Implementation

Magee, Ms Alexandra, Executive Branch Manager, Communications, Engagement and Media

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon. Welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into annual and financial reports 2021-2022. Today we will be examining the annual reports for the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, Access Canberra, Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, and Major Projects Canberra.

Before we begin, on behalf of the committee, I would like to acknowledge that we meet on the land of the Ngunnawal people. We respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. We are also being broadcast and live streamed. When taking a question on notice, please use the phrase, "I will take that question on notice." That will help our secretary to chase up the questions that have been taken on notice.

In our first session we are hearing from the Minister for Planning and Land Management. Welcome, Mr Mick Gentleman MLA, and officials. Thank you all for coming. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw their attention to the privilege statement that has been distributed. Could everyone in this room please confirm for the record that they understand the privilege implications of the statement in front of them?

**Mr Gentleman:** Indeed. Thank you, Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks for that verbal confirmation. We are not inviting opening statements as we are a bit pressed for time. I will ask the first question. Minister, we are all neck deep in the planning review at the moment, and we are eagerly awaiting the next stage of that. I have had a number of members of the community come to me about some specific DAs that are in process. You will not be able to comment on specific

DAs that are in process, but we are trying to work out where these will fit in, how decisions will be made on these particular ones and how the new Planning Bill will lead to strategic decisions on these kinds of things.

The ones that have been brought to me specifically are the crematorium in Callum Brae, the CSG facility that has popped up recently, and the DA that has been revoked. How will your directorate be making decisions on DAs like that; and, for those major projects, how will the new bill make sure that we are getting strategic decisions, not reactive decisions?

**Mr Gentleman:** That is a very good question. Firstly, I thank the staff for all of the work they have been doing in preparation for the new Planning Bill, the Territory Plan and the district strategies that we are rolling out. We have funding in 2022-23 to finalise those district strategies, develop and implement the Territory Plan, design and deliver community and stakeholder engagement on the district strategies, and go through those education, training and awareness materials to support the changes coming up. We have to develop some design guides, process guidance, planning and certification practice notes and other materials at the same time.

With regard to development applications, they will proceed for approval by the independent planning and land authority. One of the key pieces of work that we have to do is any Territory Plan variations that can occur before the new bill is completely enacted. There are a number of those that we will be working on. We will be having, basically, a cut-off, so that TPVs that are on the way or in train now and ready to go will be provided to the community for comment; then TPVs after the act is complete will be dealt with at that point. In that time line the only criticality is those TPVs, not the DAs. I am quite confident that they will be processed in a reasonable time.

**THE CHAIR:** We have heard a lot about arm's length decision-making from government on the CSG facility and the Callum Brae crematorium, I am wondering how the new bill will lead to strategic decision-making by government, where government decides what Canberra needs and where it goes, rather than simply reacting to a DA.

**Mr Gentleman:** Certainly, priority projects that government is looking at will have some precedence in the new bill. Of course, DAs and TPVs are important to everybody. We have seen the current Territory Plan go through a number of iterations—384 variations, or along that line—since its inception. It is organic. We are trying to make it easier for Canberra citizens and proponents to look at the outcomes focus of the new Territory Plan. We are trying to make it a little bit easier for proponents to go through the rules that are needed to conform, and encourage people to make better changes to the way that we live across the ACT. I will ask directorate officials to give you some more detail on how that will happen.

**Mr Ponton:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. In relation to the specifics of the question, Chair, that you are going to, it is important to note first of all that the bill is a creature, ultimately, of the Assembly; then there is the ACT Planning Strategy, which sets the metropolitan context planning policies. That is set by government. In terms of the new planning system, as it is proposed, we have district strategies, which are the culmination of extensive research and analysis of data, and

they make a series of recommendations that essentially set the framework. Ultimately, the Territory Plan, which relates to the on-ground provisions, is also a creature of the government, and in fact of the Assembly, because ultimately the Assembly has the final say in relation to what is in the Territory Plan. It is important to note that there is that framework for the independent planning authority to make decisions against government policy.

In respect of how the new planning system will consider broader strategic issues, given that the district strategies are a new level of planning to fill what we had identified as a gap in that strategic planning, from the very high level metropolitan context to the Territory Plan, that will have very specific policy outcome statements. That is what we are proposing. If you have a look online, when the government introduced the bill into the Assembly, at that time we produced a draft document that set out what we saw the structure of the new Territory Plan to be, to give people a bit of a sense of what we were working on.

You will see in there what we call policy outcomes. Those policy outcomes directly link back to that strategy of government in the district strategies. That is the link that I think you are looking for. You have the bill that sets the framework; the Planning Strategy has the metropolitan context; that is built on by the district strategies with more detail; that flows through into the Territory Plan. So the decisions that are made by the planning authority have to reflect those strategic directions of government.

**THE CHAIR:** Hypothetically, if there was a new application under the new system—the new DS, the new Territory Plan, the new act; let us assume that it is all commencing next year—if there was a DA for a crematorium or a DA for a waste facility, would those facilities already be marked in the district strategy and the Territory Plan, so that everybody knows where it is and what it is, and we know exactly what a good planning outcome is?

**Mr Ponton:** No. With respect to the role of the district strategies, they will do a couple of things. They will identify where certain uses could go. Ultimately, unless we have actually done that next level of detailed planning and analysis, or getting to the DA stage, it would be difficult to say, “This is the site for a crematorium,” “This is the site for a funeral parlour,” or “This is the site for a multi-unit development of this number of units.” What we do in the planning context is provide for the framework to allow proponents to make decisions within that context.

The other aspect of a district strategy is that it will identify where we think certain uses could go, but where further work is required to be undertaken. We will have an implementation plan that will actually foreshadow future, more detailed work. It is the various scales of analysis that need to be undertaken. Dr Brady, is there anything that you would like to add or do you think I have covered that?

**Dr Brady:** I think that has been covered.

**MS ORR:** The planning system review process came up. I want to get a clearer update because it is quite a large piece of work and there are a lot of moving parts. Where are we up to with the planning system review and reform project?

**Mr Gentleman:** The draft bill has been presented. We are now looking at the new Territory Plan and the district strategies. They will be out for consultation imminently.

**MS ORR:** When you say “imminently”, is there a date for that?

**Mr Gentleman:** Tomorrow.

**MS ORR:** Is there anything that you want to add?

**Mr Gentleman:** It is a really important piece of work. I want to thank our planning team for the effort that they have put in, the Assembly, for their assistance in working through this, and the Canberra community, for calling for change in the first place. We do want to see a system that is easier to use, that has much better outcomes-focused decision-making into the future, and something that is less cumbersome. Proponents have been calling for that, too, so we are at the stage now where we are working through it, and the funding has been delivered in this budget to get it done by around midway through next year. We hope to see it completed in that time line.

**Mr Ponton:** With respect to the additional documents, we have talked before in hearings about the fact that it was a challenge as to whether we did everything and put everything out at once, but the general view, when you see what is coming, imminently, is that there is a lot there.

Once people have had the chance to absorb what is in the bill, in terms of the framework, and they see these next component parts, it will help people to understand what the various component parts are intended to do. We have tried to explain that. Once you actually see the documents, that will certainly further assist. We also have a lot of communications material to help people to understand the actual role of the various pieces of the planning system review and reform project. It is not for the Planning Bill to do all of the heavy lifting. The district strategies have to do some of that, and the Territory Plan will do some of that as well, in terms of achieving the outcomes that government is looking for.

**Mr Gentleman:** The team will be out and about across the ACT community over the forward months, delivering workshops and looking for input from community councils and other stakeholders across the ACT to help us to inform any changes that need to occur for both the plan and the district strategies.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, why did you roll out the Planning Bill way before the district strategies and Territory Plan, when the feedback I get is that the community wanted all of that together, for a comprehensive review?

**Mr Gentleman:** Mr Ponton explained that quite well just now. The detail of so much change would be, I think, difficult for people to absorb. We saw that it was best to go out in tranches of delivery, so the bill was presented to the Assembly—

**MR CAIN:** That is not what I am hearing, Minister—

**Mr Gentleman:** then the Territory Plan, then the district strategies—

**MR CAIN:** particularly from the community councils.

**Mr Gentleman:** That gives—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Cain, if you could wait until the minister has stopped talking before you speak again, that would help Hansard. Thank you.

**Mr Gentleman:** Of course, that gives some clarity about what point in time the community is commenting on the particular components of the changes going forward. I think that will give them the best opportunity to be able to interact with our planning team and advise us of changes that they want to see in those particular tranches.

**MR CAIN:** I think you are underestimating the community.

**MR PARTON:** In concurring with Mr Cain's feedback, Mr Ponton, when you spoke about the combination of the Planning Bill and the district strategies, you made the point that they really do go hand in hand. You almost made the point, without saying it, that it is just about impossible to consider them without considering them both together. You know what is in the soon-to-be released district strategies, but the rest of us do not. I want to follow on from Mr Cain's question and say that there are quite a number who believe that perhaps it is not possible to consider this, as you call it, first tranche, without having the second one in it.

**Mr Ponton:** I will go straight to the point, Mr Parton. In relation to the bill, as I said previously, and as I have said in other hearings, the bill is the framework. We need to have a degree of comfort, as a community, having gone through that process of engaging with the Canberra community for a period of three months, and before, for that matter, as to what the framework might look like. It would have been extremely challenging if we had developed the bill, the district strategies, which are given life through the bill itself, and the new Territory Plan, the structure, which is given life through the bill.

I will refer to the bill as a chassis. If you are building a car, you do not throw everything in at once. You actually need to go through things systematically and understand the road map. What is it that we are actually building here? For my team to have developed district strategies and a new Territory Plan, without actually understanding what the road map is, that would have been incredibly challenging, and I am sure that we would have been criticised for doing that, particularly if I had produced all of these documents and the Assembly, or the government, for that matter, in considering the bill, said, "We're not at all comfortable with this approach, Mr Ponton, and we don't like district strategies." All of that work, all of that analysis, would have been wasted.

We believe that it makes perfect sense to develop the road map. Once you have the road map, we have a degree of comfort that the government is comfortable with the direction in which we are heading. We can then start work on the district strategies and the Territory Plan. We are releasing those two together because they absolutely do talk much more to one another. As I said, their existence comes from the road map that sits over here.

I do not believe that people need to see the district strategies and the Territory Plan to



understand the concepts in the Planning Bill. But I did say that, because I have been receiving feedback, I think people are trying to put a lot more into the bill. I have been trying to explain to people that the legislation has a certain purpose, and the other documents have a different purpose. We can explain that. I have gone to some lengths to try and do that. Some people that I am talking to do understand; with others, we need to do a little bit more work to help them to understand the purpose and the role of the various components.

**MR PARTON:** I have never purchased a car, chassis only. I am not sure that even Mr Gentleman—

**Mr Ponton:** What I am saying, Mr Parton, is that you would build the chassis before you put the other parts on it.

**Mr Gentleman:** I love Mr Ponton's analogy with cars, Mr Parton. It sits within my realm of understanding. He is quite correct that quite often chassis are developed, and the major components in the construction of a vehicle are certainly developed, before they look at the shape of the vehicle, the engine drive, the capacity for passengers and those sorts of things, which are often added on after the main chassis construction.

**THE CHAIR:** As enjoyable as this is, we are looking at transport later. I will move on to Ms Orr's question, as we have limited time.

**MS ORR:** I will ask about something other than cars. I am interested to know a little more about the policy work that is going on to support more affordable and accessible housing, particularly with regard to the Indicative Land Release Program. Could you give us a little bit more detail on the process that you are working to and the outcomes that you are expecting from that?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes. The ILRP, of course, is integral to the way we deliver housing across the ACT, and affordable housing is a component of the Indicative Land Release Program. We want to make sure that a good percentage of the Indicative Land Release Program is for affordable housing. I think it sits at 15 per cent at this point.

We look forward over the five-year program, from 2022-23, right through to 2027. We look at the release of land for 16,147 homes, to cater for demand for new housing. In 2022-23, we are programmed to support 3,918 homes. Of course, with that percentage, as I mentioned before, the annual residential program for public, community and affordable homes provides for the housing needs of all Canberrans.

The 2022-23 housing target consists of 208 homes dedicated to affordable home purchases, for eligible low income households, 30 new community housing dwellings and 76 new public housing dwellings. That is 314 dwelling releases or 15.4 per cent of the eligible residential releases in the program.

**MR PARTON:** Mr Gentleman, you are referring to a figure of 15 per cent for affordable dwellings. I understand that this is about land release. Once it gets to the delivery, it drifts into another portfolio space. Your 15 per cent is a target figure. What is the actual delivery of affordable dwellings? It is a long way shy of 15 per cent, isn't it?

**Mr Gentleman:** That sits within the SLA. I am happy to take that on notice and get that figure for you.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, while I note that in section 10(2)(b) of the bill, housing is part of activation and liveability principles—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Cain, is this a supplementary on the affordable housing figures that we just heard about?

**MR CAIN:** Correct; on affordable housing. Why are housing affordability and housing in general not more prominently featured in the bill, particularly in the objects—

**MS ORR:** No, I asked about—

**THE CHAIR:** No, Mr Cain; you can take that as your substantive. That is not on this matter. We will go to Mr Parton.

**MR PARTON:** To liven things up a bit, I might throw my substantive to my colleague Mr Cain.

**THE CHAIR:** Go ahead.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, given that activation and liveability principles in section 10(2)(b) include housing, why aren't housing affordability and housing in general not more prominently featured in the bill, perhaps as an explicit object of the bill, given we are in the midst of a housing crisis?

**Mr Gentleman:** It is a planning bill, not a housing bill. There are differences in how we plan for the future and then how we build construction for the future. I will see whether Mr Ponton has anything to add to that.

**Mr Ponton:** I am bringing up the bill, so that we can talk specifically to that. As I recall, the bill does have a specific reference to affordability. Again, as I said, it is important to understand the role of the bill. We have those important concepts at the front of the bill, in terms of the objects and the planning principles. Without running through those in detail, which I could do, I will refer to those. There is a specific reference to affordability; then, in developing policy, it is important that we make reference back to those objects of the legislation and the principles. My colleague Mr Bennett may wish to add further to that.

**Mr Bennett:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Touching on housing through the bill, there are several points where we are picking up the concept of housing, under the broader term of liveability, prosperity and wellbeing. These terms are looking at how we provide for the residents of the ACT—starting from the object of the bill, working through the principles of good planning and, as you noted, particular principles that refer to housing.

The other important element here, as we have set out in the key elements of the act, is looking at the act as a whole, and different opportunities for planning for the different

needs of residents of the ACT. That is where we have mentioned the Planning Strategy and district strategies. We look to pick up particular references to housing and housing policy in things like the Planning Strategy and in the district strategies as well. That is where we talk about the desired future planning outcomes and, as Mr Ponton mentioned, the metropolitan-wide planning strategy. Also, in each district strategy, the ability to write particular planning outcomes relating to housing would be done through those strategic documents, under the guidance of the principles that are set out in the bill.

**MR CAIN:** It does appear that both Mr Ponton and Mr Bennett contradicted the minister, saying it is a planning bill, not a housing bill, when planning is so intrinsic to housing. Most of the land is going to houses. Minister, again, why aren't housing affordability and housing choice a stronger priority in this bill?

**Mr Gentleman:** I think the directorate officials have indicated where it does sit within our strategy for the future. Of course, it is important that we provide these services for the Canberra community.

**Mr Ponton:** I do not think that we are contradicting. It is a planning bill. Planning, by its very nature, needs to consider a range of matters, which we have sought to address in the objects and the principles of good planning, where they appropriately sit. The other aspects of the bill go to the specific planning aspects, in relation to the Territory Plan and those sorts of things. In terms of policy setting, planning does consider all of those things, and that is why they are appropriately and equally referenced in the legislation, in that first part of the bill.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, one of the recurring concerns I have heard during community consultation regarding the bill is that the refreshed territory planning authority will be granted an excessive amount of power. Why has the authoritative oversight of the Legislative Assembly been so readily diminished?

**Mr Gentleman:** I do not agree with you. I do not think that is the case at all. I think the power that you talk about already sits with the Chief Planner and the authority to make those independent decisions. There is probably less authority for the minister now than there was before, and that comes from the consultation with the Canberra public. They see that an independent planning and land authority is important, and that it is at arms-length from government decision-making, but not at arms-length from parliamentary decision-making. It is important for us, as members of the parliament, to make sure that we get our views, and therefore those of the community, involved in the decision-making as we go forward with these pieces of legislation.

**Mr Ponton:** I have reflected on this, Mr Cain, because you have raised it in previous hearings, as have others. The only additional power that the bill provides to the planning and land authority, the new territory planning authority, over and above what exists now, is for the planning authority to promote high-quality design and good planning outcomes. That is the only additional thing. We can reference section 18, functions of the territory planning authority, in the bill. When you go through it and make a comparison, in terms of a range of other less significant items that are referenced in there, in terms of transparency, the only additional function would be to promote high-quality design and good planning outcomes.

As I said during estimates, Mr Cain, if you could point me to the provisions of the bill that provide these excessive powers to the Chief Planner, I would be more than happy to respond specifically to those questions. But, for the life of me, I am completely puzzled as to why you think that is the case. I am happy to answer the question if you could point me to these additional excessive powers that do not already exist.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, how is a notifiable instrument sufficient consultation with the community prior to the minister making decisions when a disallowable instrument does expose it to Legislative Assembly scrutiny?

**Mr Gentleman:** It is important that we give some certainty to planning decisions into the future, too. Of course, we have seen the challenges from different courts in the ACT regarding planning decisions, with some being held up for quite some time. The way we are looking at it now will provide some certainty to proponents and to government in making their planning decisions for the future.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, the quality of our planning decisions is very heavily reliant on the people making those decisions. It sounds like that might be more so in the future than it is now. I am interested in knowing how many staff you have working on DA decisions. How many FTEs are involved in the DA decision-making process?

**Mr Gentleman:** I will ask Mr Ponton to provide that detail.

**Mr Ponton:** Certainly. I will ask my colleague Mr Cilliers to talk about the exact numbers in the statutory planning division, which includes the development assessment team and the leasing team. It also includes the Surveyor-General. We have a significant number of people who assess development applications. They come from a range of backgrounds, both professionally and culturally. We have people from all over the world who have worked in planning systems throughout Australia and the world, as I said, in fields such as planning, landscape architecture, architecture, and a range of other professions.

Of course, those assessment officers, as happens across the country and across the world, for that matter, work with other parts of government in terms of the expertise that those particular areas would bring. In terms of the exact numbers, I will hand over to Mr Cilliers.

**Mr Cilliers:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. The answer to that question is that the statutory planning division consists of 84 full-time equivalent positions, or 94 actual people within the positions. They are split up into the development teams, consisting of 39 staff, or full-time equivalents, which is actually fulfilled by 43 staff members. The impact assessment team has six. Our leasing team, dealing with the leasing side of matters, including unit styles, consists of 21 full-time equivalents, as well as 21 staff members. The Office of the Surveyor-General consists of 18 FTEs and 22 persons.

**THE CHAIR:** Of those 94 people, how many of them have relevant qualifications, which I assume would mean architecture or planning, but there might be other specific qualifications?

**Mr Cilliers:** I am assuming you are interested in the 39 DA assessment officers; is that the question?

**THE CHAIR:** I was actually talking about the 94 in statutory planning.

**Mr Cilliers:** Within the development assessment team, which is 39 FTEs, they are recruited on the basis of their qualifications as well as their experience. We have a range of people. All of them have some level of either qualification or experience in development assessment or—

**THE CHAIR:** Are you able to take on notice, for those 39, a redacted breakdown of APS levels and qualifications? Is that possible or not?

**Mr Cilliers:** Yes, we can.

**Mr Ponton:** It would be useful to add that we bring on younger people who are studying but who are working and being trained in our organisation. It might be useful to also include those who are studying towards qualification, if you are able to do that, Mr Cilliers.

**Mr Cilliers:** Sure.

**MR CAIN:** Of the 39 DA assessment officers, how many are qualified town planners?

**Mr Cilliers:** I think that is the question that Ms Clay asked about this.

**THE CHAIR:** I believe that has been taken on notice, Mr Cain.

**Mr Cilliers:** Yes.

**MR CAIN:** So you will break it down to qualified town planners in your list?

**Mr Cilliers:** Yes.

**Mr Ponton:** Yes, and other qualifications. Of course, planning does rely on others, so having a mix of qualifications in the organisation, particularly in that area, is very important. There are town planners, architects, landscape architects, engineers and urban designers. As I said, they are from a range of professional backgrounds and bring experience from other parts of the world.

**MR CAIN:** As long as the breakdown includes their registered qualifications and academic credentials.

**Mr Ponton:** Could I clarify: with town planning, if you are talking about registered town planners, it is not a requirement for town planners to be registered, as you might expect for accountants and the like. If you are talking about being qualified, it is voluntary to be registered through the Planning Institute. I am not quite sure whether that is what you are asking about, Mr Cain.

**MS ORR:** Mr Ponton, could you run through how the registration works, so that

Mr Cain is on top of understanding how you have a registered degree that makes you qualified.

**Mr Ponton:** Yes. A qualification could be from a university, but there are certificates that would be considered appropriate for people to be working in the field. The Planning Institute of Australia does have a program where it seeks to have planners voluntarily register. If they voluntarily register, there are certain additional professional development requirements.

In fact, Mr Cain, you would be aware, I am sure, having read the bill, that one of the changes we have made is to require the Chief Planner to have the appropriate qualifications and experience to meet registration requirements from an appropriate professional body. We thought that was an important addition because that is not currently a requirement. The current requirement is skills and experience or qualifications. We have added that additional requirement for eligibility to be registered. It is a voluntary process run through the Planning Institute of Australia. It is not a mandatory requirement as is the case with other professions.

**MR PARTON:** Have senior staff been taken off development application assessments to work on the planning review, even if that was sporadic, and not a full-time shift into this? Has that occurred at any point?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes, Mr Parton, it has. I allow the planning authority, the Chief Planner, his deputy and other officials to act in an operational way to see that they get through the work that we need to get through in the time line that we have allowed. Of course, we provided for extra people to do DA applications and approvals a couple of budgets ago; there were extra staff put on there. But there is freedom within the planning directorate for Mr Ponton to be able to manage those operations. Indeed he has used some staff from the approval team. Of course, they are used in a way that should not interrupt development application approvals. We need their expertise in this work to ensure that we get the right outcomes through the bill and through the Territory Plan and district strategies.

**MR PARTON:** Mr Gentleman, given that the DA team is flat out like a lizard drinking and struggling, based on most recent reports, in terms of fulfilling time frames, how is it possible for those human resources to be moved from the assessment of development applications onto another project and for it not to affect time frames on assessing complex developments? How is that possible?

**Mr Gentleman:** Mr Parton, of course, you are right; the development assessment team are absolutely flat out. In fact I think 1,063 merit track DAs were received; they processed 970 DAs and determined 203 amendment applications, and determined 628 applications to satisfy conditions for approval in the reporting period. But that is their job and they do it quite well.

If you are talking about reporting on the time lines, that has usually occurred because proponents have been asked for extra information to determine the development applications. It is not because the team cannot provide the necessary weight behind making the decisions and the research behind making those decisions; it is because of the extra volume of DAs that have been lodged and the technical challenges within

those development applications that need to be addressed.

**MR PARTON:** So it is never your fault; it is always the proponent?

**Mr Gentleman:** Most often it is because more information is needed by the DA assessment team to provide that application approval.

**Mr Ponton:** On this line of questioning, in terms of the matrix model that we work within, to give people the chance to broaden their skills and experience, in terms of having people in the DA team engage on the planning system review and reform work, that actually builds their skills. They are getting the chance to do something different. But that works in the reverse as well. We get some of the policy people to come across and see what it is like to work in the DA team, so that, when they are writing policy, they understand what it is like to operationalise. In reverse, the DA people see some of the challenges in writing policy. It works both ways. In fact it is not just within those two teams. I have also given opportunities to people in other parts of the organisation to rotate, even if it is only for a week or two, to work on a project, and to give them that chance to build their skills. It goes to the earlier point about qualifications. It is not just about qualifications; it is also about the skills and experience that people bring to roles.

**MR PARTON:** That is actually a pretty solid answer; thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Before we hand over to Ms Orr, I will restate what we have taken on notice: the FTE numbers, the APS breakdown for the people involved in DA assessment and the executives involved in that, and the qualifications. Ms Orr, do you have a substantive?

**MS ORR:** I do. Can I get an update on the unit titles reform project and how that is progressing?

**Mr Gentleman:** I will hand over to directorate officials.

**Dr Brady:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. With the unit title reforms, we have been doing those in two big packages. The first package came into effect in November 2020. That introduced some reforms around allowing some sustainability measures so that certain considerations around, for example, EV charging, solar panels, clotheslines and those sorts of things, could be allowed within unit title developments, and that they can be passed through management plans and the body corporates. That is the first part.

The second part that we are working on will come through in legislation in 2023. We have continued to work in the same way we did with that first batch, where we had a consultative group that had a range of legal people, people that work on strata and unit titling and have good experience in that. We have had a really good group that has been consulted on that. They have continued with this next batch.

Some of the things that we will be looking at in the next round relate to metering. We have looked at that previously. We will be looking at the introduction of individual water metering in buildings. At the moment it is not necessarily the case. It will have some benefits in terms of people being charged for what they use rather than what is

the case in some developments, where it is a shared cost, even across commercial and residential uses. That is some of the work we are doing now that will be in legislation that will hopefully come forward in the next six months or so, in the next batch of work.

**MS ORR:** That is one consideration. Are there any other considerations that you are looking at within the next batch that you could run through?

**Dr Brady:** In the second batch?

**MS ORR:** Yes.

**Dr Brady:** They are the ones that I can remember. I will ask my colleague Mr Bennett if he can recall anything else in the second batch that we are doing.

**Mr Bennett:** I am having a look for some notes on that one. I do not have that in front of me at the moment. I can come back to you.

**Dr Brady:** We can come back on notice, if you like, Ms Orr.

**MS ORR:** When you have got it, let us know. You do not necessarily need to take it on notice.

**MR CAIN:** Who are your key stakeholders for this unit title review?

**Dr Brady:** I would need to look at the list of people now on the consultative group—

**MR CAIN:** You can take it on notice.

**Dr Brady:** that we have. We can give you the list of people on the consultative group.

**MR CAIN:** Thank you.

**Mr Bennett:** I can answer that. The Unit Titles Reform Consultative Group has been working on the project since about 2016, when the unit titles reform project commenced. On that consultative group there is a range of stakeholders, as Dr Brady mentioned. This includes representatives of the Owners Corporation Network, Strata Community Australia, the ACT Law Society, the Housing Industry Association, the Planning Institute, the Surveying and Spatial Sciences Institute, the Real Estate Institute, the Property Council, Legal Aid ACT, and the Master Builders Association.

We have tried to get a range of professionals who operate in the planning and development industry, unit title representatives and representatives of owners corporations, some of the major property developers and representatives of the property industry, and some of that legal expertise, through Legal Aid and the Law Society—a range of skills and expertise providing advice through that group.

**MR CAIN:** Obviously, there are a lot of owners corporations. How are you pulling their views together?

**Mr Bennett:** I mentioned the Owners Corporation Network, which is a peak



representative body of owners corporations, and Strata Community Australia, which brings together some of that strata management experience as well.

**Dr Brady:** Ms Orr, I have the list with the details. I could go through it now.

**MS ORR:** Yes, that would be good.

**Dr Brady:** The unit title package, the second tranche, also includes to clarify the provision of information on the corporate register, clarify processes to request a unit title certificate and a unit title update certificate, clarify the payment of an insurance excess, require the registration of consolidated rules, establish a process for existing unit plans to opt into a building management statement, clarify audit requirements, amend the transfer period of a managing agent, outline the process to exempt class B units from building insurance for the whole complex if individual units are insured, allow subleasing of common property for minor uses, clarify that the building damage scheme does not apply to two-unit unit plans, prohibit the registration of rules after the 90-day period set out in the legislation, clarify the requirements for lodging unit plans in electronic format, clarify when consent can be withheld for sustainability infrastructure installation, and make a minor amendment to the unit titles application and approval process.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, I refer to reports—there was one in the *Canberra Times* yesterday—that the average waiting time for a decision on multi-use projects was over 100 days to September this year, when it was just over 62 days to September last year. Why does EPSDD encounter difficulty meeting the mandatory prescribed time frames to process development applications on time?

**Mr Gentleman:** It goes back to that answer I provided a little while ago in regard to the detail and complexity of some of these applications, and the number of applications coming forward. As we see changes in density across the ACT, we see much more integral and complicated applications for developments across the ACT. Quite often our assessors will have to go back to the proponent a number of times to get more information in order to process that development application. For the detail of that, I will ask our directorate officials to talk to you directly.

**Mr Ponton:** I will kick off and then I will throw to Mr Cilliers to add further to this item. As the minister has said in relation to the time frames, there are a couple of important things to keep in mind. First of all, with reference to the mandatory time frames, I need to clarify that language. In terms of the time frames set out in legislation, if the planning authority does not make a decision within that time frame—that is, the statutory time frame, not the mandatory one—it essentially becomes a deemed refusal. If the proponent is confident that they had everything that they needed to secure an approval, they could lodge an appeal to the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

As the minister indicated, in most cases, we find the reason that it has taken that time is that proponents have not completed their application or they have not appropriately responded to issues and questions that the planning authority has raised. Those matters that we will question might relate to matters that the planning authority has identified itself, in terms of matters relating specifically to the Territory Plan. It can relate to comments that we have received during the public consultation period that we think

require further exploration, or it can relate to matters that have been raised by entities during the referral process.

In addition to that, we often see proponents, as they are seeking to respond to some of those issues, also seeking amendments to applications. When we receive an amendment, some amendments do not require public notification. Some amendments, to respond to the earlier issues raised, might trigger further public notification.

It is important to understand that, in most cases, as I said, the reason for the delays does sit with proponents either not providing an adequate application in the first instance—and I have had conversations with the industry groups about this—or not responding within a reasonable time frame. Sometimes we wait for six or 12 months for proponents to respond to us. We do follow up, but we do not always get a timely response.

As I said, if proponents felt confident that they had everything they needed and it was a quality application, after that 45 days they can certainly go to the tribunal and, if the tribunal felt that we were asking for too much, they would likely approve it; otherwise they would likely ask for the same information that we have asked for. That was a reasonably comprehensive answer. I will see whether Mr Cilliers wants to add anything.

**MR CAIN:** I have a supplementary. To what extent, Minister, are delays in the planning process leading to a delay in bringing affordable accommodation onto the market?

**Mr Gentleman:** I am not sure that they relate. Certainly, Mr Ponton has gone into great detail in advising of the challenges we see in a modern and complex planning system, in a city where we are seeing the growth in construction exceed what expectations were, but we are dealing with it. It is appropriate to go back to proponents where necessary to seek further information, and I think that is the best way forward. I will ask Mr Cilliers whether he has any further detail.

**MR CAIN:** I cannot believe you said they do not relate.

**Mr Ponton:** The specific question was about delays in the planning system. We are saying that it may not be the planning system that is delaying that; it is more the proponents' response to the issues raised.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Cain, if you could restrict your questions to questions, it would be very helpful. We do not need interjections.

**MR CAIN:** On a point of order, Chair, I do have trouble hearing Mr Ponton, particularly when there is a bit of rain on the roof.

**MR PARTON:** Minister, I want to get this straight. You indicated one of the reasons that DA assessment time frames have blown out is because there is a lot more urban infill. You are the architect of that, with the rollout of the 70-30 planning division. How could you possibly embark on such a planning push without anticipating an increase in the complexity of applications and ramping up the resources appropriately to deal with that?

**Mr Gentleman:** We did, Mr Parton. We ramped up resources in the last couple of

budgets. You voted against it. We continue to support new applications, Mr Parton. Indeed, as you have heard from our team, these applications are far more complex than what we expected, but we are working through that. I read out earlier the amount of decisions made—

**MR PARTON:** How could you not have expected—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Parton, could you let the minister finish.

**Mr Gentleman:** 163 merit track DAs and 970 which have generated quite a bit of construction work across the ACT community. They continue. We continue to resource the directorate with more staff to ensure that we can make those decisions. Of course, as Mr Ponton said, if proponents have all of the necessary information and are quite confident, they will get a decision quite quickly and within the time lines. It becomes more complex when the applications themselves are more complex; and, when we ask for more information, that means a longer time line for the proponents to respond. Sometimes they do not do so in a timely manner.

We certainly do our part of the decision-making in a timely manner and it is always done in a professional way. Mr Parton, we would certainly like to ensure that these decisions are made in the time lines expected, and provide the resourcing to the directorate to do that. We can do our side of the equation, but we need proponents to do their side as well.

**Mr Ponton:** My advice is that the median time frame for a decision in the last financial year was 41 days, which was a 34 per cent improvement over the previous four years. I think it is important to note that. There has been one matter—and we do not like to talk about individual DAs, and I will not mention it—of a DA that took well over a year, 370-something days, to determine. It is important to know that there were six amendments to that particular proposal. Those amendments were instigated by the proponent, which meant that the statutory due date was 16 January 2023. That was determined earlier this month. Technically, it was within the statutory due date.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, how many development applications have had extension of time requests for deciding DAs under section 166 of the act? Obviously, section 166 relates to extensions of time for deciding development applications.

**Mr Gentleman:** I will ask directorate officials to give you that detail.

**Mr Ponton:** I will ask Mr Cilliers to answer that question.

**Mr Cilliers:** I am looking up section 166; section 165 deals with endorsement of plans.

**MR CAIN:** Take it on notice. What percentage of development applications in 2021-22 have extension of time requests under section 166? Again, just for clarity, section 166 deals with extensions of time for deciding development applications.

**Mr Cilliers:** This is extension of time to make a decision?

**MR CAIN:** Yes.

**Mr Cilliers:** Section 166 actually deems the extension; it is not a request for extension. We do not generally get those sorts of requests. We do get extension of time requests in terms of providing that information prior to making a decision.

**MR CAIN:** That is 165, isn't it?

**Mr Cilliers:** No, 165 deals with endorsement of plans.

**MR CAIN:** What is the extension of time request—for further information?

**Mr Gentleman:** 166 is extension of time for further information, where the information from the proponent is insufficient.

**MR CAIN:** That is what I am talking about, I think.

**Mr Gentleman:** 167 is—

**Mr Ponton:** So the answer is there is no request because it is deemed.

**MR CAIN:** What is the section where you ask for further information—

**Mr Cilliers:** The section where we ask for further information is section 141, and 144, during an application. 166 deals with deemed—

**MR CAIN:** Still take it on notice, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** What do you want on notice? Do you want extensions of time under sections 143 and 144? Is that what you are after?

**MR CAIN:** Extensions of time where the department asks for further information.

**Mr Cilliers:** Prior to a decision?

**MR CAIN:** Correct.

**Mr Gentleman:** 141.

**Mr Cilliers:** Prior to a decision is 141, and 144.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you know what you have taken on notice, Mr Cilliers?

**Mr Cilliers:** Yes, I do.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, the Greens have asked a lot of questions about the western edge and various places like Bluetts Block—a spectacular area. There are actually a lot of special and high-value areas in there. Last time I asked, we understood from the update that land use capability assessments were underway and that those were gathering all the information together. I want to get an update on where that process is up to, where that data collection process and those land use assessments are up to.

**Mr Gentleman:** The western edge, as I have mentioned, comprises 9,800 hectares, and that includes the land that you have talked about. It is bordered by the Murrumbidgee River, Belconnen, Molonglo, Weston Creek and Kambah. We are doing that due diligence work to see what the land would be capable of and any environmental aspects of the land that need to be preserved. I will ask directorate officials to talk about what work has occurred so far and what we need to do to complete that.

**Dr Brady:** Ms Clay, I do not know whether you want me to go back over the list that we have done so far, but I think your question is focused on where we are now.

**THE CHAIR:** Just the update from the last time that we asked.

**Dr Brady:** Currently, we are still doing that assessment, so we are still taking the preliminary studies, and we have embarked on a further ecological assessment and a bushfire assessment. We are still working on that and we are still in the process of combining all of that information. It will be an ongoing thing over the next couple of years, as we get more and more information and we can layer that together to start seeing what are the areas where there might be critical environmental values or other constraints to what might be potential uses.

We are still in the process of continuing to do studies and continuing to overlay all of that together, to help us move towards identifying what might be possible uses. We still have to understand what the constraints and opportunities are for that.

**THE CHAIR:** How many private leaseholders do we have in those areas?

**Dr Brady:** We have at least two big areas that I am aware of. I think we have answered a question on notice previously that broke down the landholdings. I might have to take that as a question on notice, just to clarify where it is government land and other holdings.

**THE CHAIR:** I will let you know where we are going; then you might be able to tell me what the useful information is. We are trying to work out, whilst we are doing all of these investigations, whether there will be any decisions taken on areas in the western edge before those investigations have been completed, either by private landholders, by sales or by development. What activity is going to take place before we finish this investigatory work?

**Mr Gentleman:** We have had this conversation before. There are leaseholders within the area of the western edge that will continue to operate within their lease conditions. They may seek to do different things that are within their lease conditions into the future. We will have to work with them to see what is available for them to do on their leases, whilst we work through this important work for the western edge as well.

Of course, as we have said, if there is any environmental value, we will certainly protect that into the future. We have done that. If you look at the history of planning across the territory, large swathes of land have been set aside for either offsets or environmental values into the future, to ensure that we do not use construction or other methods to interrupt that. We will continue to do that well into the future.

**THE CHAIR:** How will we take into account the cumulative environmental impact of all of these individual decisions if government is not taking any role in stopping those decisions, and if the investigations and the strategic environmental assessments have not been done? How does that fit together?

**Mr Gentleman:** The environmental assessments, as I said, will continue to be done. If they want to make changes to their particular lease or add to that, that would have to be studied in order for there to be approval—or not approval, for that matter.

**THE CHAIR:** When they seek approval, will cumulative environmental impact be taken into account, given that these environmental assessments are still underway; they are not complete?

**Dr Brady:** I think there are some sites within the whole area that is classified as the western investigation area where, as the minister said, they have certain uses that they can continue with. When I refer to the broader investigations, which we are doing tenure-blind, so we are looking at all of the land collectively, and what it would mean in the future, decisions about what happens on that land in those areas should take account of where we are with the studies.

Within our own directorate we have environment, parks and cons, statutory planning and planning policy, and we do share that information to make sure that if something comes up as a proposal on a piece of land, we are all aware, “Okay, that falls in that area.” We are looking at any sites that are in that western investigation area, as part of that team—what proposals might come in, what people are doing with their leases, to keep track of that.

**THE CHAIR:** Do your environmental assessments include the private leaseholder land?

**Dr Brady:** Yes. That was a requirement from a previous audit, and it is flagged in the Planning Strategy that that was the approach we were to take.

**MR PARTON:** Can I get some clarification regarding the western edge investigations? My understanding is that the initial allocation of funding in the 2019-20 ACT budget was \$1.15 million. But in the 2022-23 ACT budget, \$389,000 allocated for western edge was rolled out from last year, with no further funding allocated after 2022-23. Have I read that correctly? How much have you spent on the western edge investigation studies in total?

**Mr Gentleman:** Budget allocations are normally for projects, for example. We would present to budget cabinet an argument for a certain amount of funding to complete a certain project in a time line. If we need to do more work and ascertain another project, we would seek more funding for that. That would occur, too, if we need to do more work—and we probably will—for the western edge into the future.

**MR PARTON:** That answers why there is no funding at this stage after 2022-23. Are you able to, even if it is on notice, provide a figure for how much has been spent to date on western edge investigation studies?

**Dr Brady:** We can, Mr Parton; yes. Part of the rollover of that money was that, during COVID, we could not do a lot of the site investigations, because we could not get people for the technical studies, and some of the studies are seasonal studies as well. That is why we rolled some of that over. That will be a basis for understanding what future budget needs may be. We can give a spend, yes.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, why has further work to conduct these studies and identify greenfield development sites not been funded with certainty during this housing crisis?

**Mr Gentleman:** As I said in response to Mr Parton's question, when we go to budget cabinet, we are allocated funds for the particular project that we put to budget cabinet, and we use those funds to deliver that project, wherever we can, in a timely manner. If there are items that cause us to delay those, we will certainly deliver them in the rollover period. That is why funding is allocated in those periods, because that is how budget cabinet works.

**Mr Ponton:** A lot of this work is sequential, and it is the earlier studies that will help us to understand the detail of the next phase of work. We actually need those studies to be completed to allow us to then seek further funding from government. It is fairly standard.

**MR CAIN:** Yet when it is allocated, it is not spent, as Mr Parton pointed out.

**Mr Ponton:** As Dr Brady indicated—and I will go over that again, Mr Cain—that was because of COVID. For example, experts who would come in from places like Sydney were in lockdown and could not travel. We could not do that work. If that work is seasonal, you cannot just get the people when those restrictions are lifted. It is not through any fault of ours. It was the circumstances that we found ourselves in, in terms of the particular expertise that we needed to procure. But that is well in hand now.

**MS ORR:** With respect to the Gungahlin community centre feasibility study, it says in the annual report that it began in May 2022. Can I get an update as to how that work is progressing?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes. Thanks for the question. I will ask directorate officials to provide that for you.

**Mr Ponton:** We will go straight to Mr Green on that one.

**Mr Green:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thanks for the question, Ms Orr. We have done a fair amount of work over the last few months, particularly with the community, to focus our attention on community needs. As you would be aware, we had done some earlier work with the community. We completed the Gungahlin community and recreational needs assessment earlier this year. That was released to the public. That really set the tone for our phase of engagement with the community more directly with respect to the community centre in Gungahlin.

Over the last few months we have had more than 30 group and one-on-one meetings with the community, including Gungahlin Community Council, Belco arts and

Barnardos. We have also sought to learn from visiting other community centres across the territory and seeing how they operate.

At this stage we are preparing a paper for government consideration, taking into consideration a variety of community needs for Gungahlin—things like youth centres, spaces for community support, exhibition spaces and outdoor activity elements. We have certainly done a lot of work there. We have some preliminary concept plans that we would want to put to government for their consideration before we embark on the next step. That also includes potential site selection. There has been a lot of work with the community to identify not only needs but an appropriate site, and maintaining that connectivity to the group centre.

**MS ORR:** The consultation with the community has been completed and the decision is now with government, for the next stage?

**Mr Green:** Certainly, that phase of consultation is completed, and it is now for government consideration as to the next steps.

**MS ORR:** With the next steps, they will be looking at what is included in and out of scope—what the concept design is. We would then move to site selection. Is that the intention?

**Mr Green:** That is part of what we would be putting to government. It would be a proposed site and some concept designs specifically around that site to meet the community needs that we have heard about. It was a really good co-design process that we took, on the back of the work that the SLA had been doing with the Gungahlin community more broadly, in terms of the sites within the group centre. It will be up to a government decision, in terms of what those next steps look like. Certainly, there will be further engagement with the community in any case.

**MS ORR:** So a decision could be imminent, but maybe not tomorrow.

**Mr Green:** I do not think we will take the limelight off tomorrow.

**Mr Gentleman:** There are other important matters tomorrow!

**MR CAIN:** Minister, on 25 November 2019, you were advised in a ministerial brief that greenfield land supply in Gungahlin and Molonglo was likely to be exhausted by around 2022 and 2031 respectively. Considering that 2022 is close to being over, and 2031 is less than a decade away, can you explain why you have not expedited the western edge investigation studies and allocated sufficient funding to ensure their completion as soon as possible?

**Mr Gentleman:** As I have explained, we have gone to budget cabinet with strong arguments and received funding for the projects for the western edge that we have put forward. Indeed we are spending that funding on making sure those components of the research are identified and completed. The next phase of that work will continue after that research is done.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, given Mr Ponton stated in recent estimates that these



investigations may take up to 17 years, in the event that the ACT exhausts its significant greenfield development sites by 2032, how will housing supply in the ACT be affected?

**Mr Gentleman:** Mr Cain, I will take note of your comment. I do not think we have said 17 years at any time. There is ongoing work for the western edge. Indeed, until that work comes to fruition, there are other planning and delivery targets that the government has. You see those in the ILRP for each forward four to five years. We identify land that will be available for housing construction well into the future. It is in the pipeline. I think that it is appropriate to do that particular work, the due diligence work for the western edge, prior to making any announcement about what housing could take place there.

**Mr Ponton:** Chair, Mr Cain referenced a quote from me there. I have consistently, over several years, referred to it taking between seven and 10 years, not 17 years, just for clarity.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, on page 26 of the annual report for 2021-22, you have listed “Molonglo 3 east” as one of the directorate’s key priorities for the coming year. What progress has been made on the planning and due diligence work associated with this delivery?

**Mr Gentleman:** I will hand over to Dr Brady.

**Dr Brady:** Mr Cain, Molonglo 3 is the area that is north of the Molonglo group centre, so it does include Whitlam. With Molonglo 3 east, we are referring to the eastern side of John Gorton Drive. We have been doing preliminary investigations around engineering, transport and environmental assessments. We have actually progressed to a stage where, for Molonglo 3 east, we have started to identify what potential areas might be appropriate for development and potential possible yield. We have been progressing that work according to program, and being mindful as well of the Indicative Land Release Program and where that sits. As the annual report indicates, it is a priority piece of work for us because Molonglo 3 is one of the next big tranches of greenfield release for the territory.

**Mr Gentleman:** It was Neville Stuart’s old block. He would be very pleased with the progress so far, I think.

**MR CAIN:** When will Molonglo 3 east be ready for residential land release?

**Dr Brady:** I would need to check where we have it on the ILRP. We are still doing work on it. Mr Green might be more familiar with where we have it on the ILRP at the moment, or whether it is outside our five-year program.

**Mr Green:** I would like to take that on notice. We do have several sites listed on the ILRP for Molonglo. The majority of those are within the group centre and surrounds, which was a concept plan that was published a couple of weeks ago. I am happy to take on notice whether that is part of the latter years in the current program.

**MR PARTON:** What differences have been discovered between Molonglo 3 east and the other Molonglo suburbs? What differences have been identified or do you see

arising, and how will the previous delivery experience inform the new one for this new section of Molonglo?

**Mr Gentleman:** There would be geographical and soil differences between the two sites. Neville Stuart's block used to be a dairy farm. He had a shearing shed there, which would have some contaminants that we need to be aware of. Of course, as you are aware, it is quite undulating and hilly in that area compared to the other parts of Whitlam. I will hand over to Dr Brady.

**Dr Brady:** As the minister suggests, we do the same sorts of assessments in all of the different areas around biodiversity. For Molonglo east, there are certain areas near the river corridor that are quite sensitive, so that is a big part of what we are looking at, at the moment, and infrastructure connections—how we will provide electricity, sewer, and those sorts of things.

There might be a standard suite of studies that we do, but, as the minister said, the areas are geographically different and their access might be different. The species we might find on them could be different. Sometimes we can get through work and then discover that there is a threatened species there; that will completely change how we might have to plan for that area and connections to other corridors for biodiversity reasons. That is why it is important for us to do all of the studies carefully, because we cannot just take a potential layout and apply it in different areas.

**Mr Green:** In response to Mr Cain's question which I took on notice, with respect to the Indicative Land Release Program, with the new suburb in Molonglo—the future suburb of Molonglo 3 east—that first release is indicatively indicated on the 2025-26 program.

**MR COCKS:** I am looking at table 6 on page 285 of the CMTEDD annual report, under the ACT Construction Occupations Registrar. It shows inspection and audit numbers. Can I confirm that the construction inspection audits listed in this table, and the information table, table 3, inspections audits conducted in 2019-20 and 2020-21 from last year's report, are the same as the building inspections audits listed in table 2 conducted in 2019-20, listed as building inspections?

**Mr Gentleman:** Mr Cocks, we might ask you to put that to Minister Vassarotti in her position as constructions minister.

**MR COCKS:** It was dealt with in this section last year, wasn't it?

**Mr Gentleman:** No, I do not think so.

**Mr Ponton:** The Construction Occupations Registrar? That would be odd.

**MR COCKS:** I am happy to do so, if that is the more appropriate place to ask it.

**Mr Green:** Just to clarify, if it relates to the regulatory functions of the Construction Occupations Registrar, it is the responsibility of Minister Cheyne.

**Mr Gentleman:** Sorry; my apologies.

**THE CHAIR:** I have read with interest the summary of progress on the planning review and the submissions—the written comments. Can you tell me how many comments the directorate got on the Planning Bill in talks, in text, in short form and in full submissions? We have a few figures there.

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes, we should have that detail for you.

**Mr Ponton:** We do. It was over 300. With the exact number, I will look to my colleagues to see whether we have that. If you give us a few minutes, we can get that for you.

**THE CHAIR:** That would be great. I think some are published and some are not. I am wondering what process the directorate is going through to publish and consider all of those comments.

**Mr Ponton:** In terms of considering the comments on the bill, all of those comments were considered, whether they were submitted through Your Say, email or other forms. The challenge—and Ms Magee might talk to this—as I understand it, is that, depending on the way the comments were received, if they were just an email and not formally through Your Say, the Your Say process had the provisions about, “Do you agree to us publishing?” Nevertheless we went back to those people who had emailed us and asked whether they would agree to us publishing, and not everybody responded or agreed. That is why the numbers that we would give you in terms of the total submissions received would not necessarily equate to what you see published online, because not everybody agreed to those submissions being published. Has that given Ms Magee sufficient time to get those numbers?

**Ms Magee:** I think so. I have read and understood the privilege statement. Through the Your Say feedback form, we received 211 quick comments. We received over 77 submissions on the register, a number of which, Ms Clay, as you have referenced, were published. As Mr Ponton noted, we had a number of submissions; I think that, with three, we did not have permission to publish online, so they are being considered as part of the consultation but are not published on the Your Say website.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, on page 59 of the annual report it says that community engagement has improved during this reporting period. It then talks about some community engagement principles in the Planning Bill, which is not really telling us how community engagement has improved during the reporting period. Can you tell me how community engagement has improved in practice during the reporting period?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes, certainly. I will ask Mr Ponton and Ms Magee to go through that engagement process and talk about the refinements we have made in community engagement.

**Mr Ponton:** I will start, and then hand over to Ms Magee to talk about the detail, given that she is involved across the directorate in so many of our projects. From a planning perspective, already we are looking at what is in the bill, given that we have heard from the community that having those principles of good planning was important to them. Even though the bill is before the Assembly, we think there is value in us starting to

contemplate how we can actually achieve compliance with those provisions.

Having said that, as a matter of course, we always look at how a particular engagement activity has gone. We reflect on that; then, through Ms Magee and her team, we receive feedback on how we can do things differently or better next time. I will hand over to Ms Magee to talk about some of the improvements we have made over the last 12 months.

**Ms Magee:** Ms Clay, over the last 12 months—and I will try to use examples in this specific part of the portfolio—with regard to the Planning Bill, we had consultation over a 12-week period. Usually, consultations are for six to eight weeks. With the Planning Bill, we extended it out to 12 weeks, to take into account that it was a complex piece of work on which we were asking the community for feedback. That is a good example of how we have continued to improve the length of time we have given people to comment on some of our policies and programs.

We also ran a series of information workshops throughout that Planning Bill process. Those were both general in nature and topic specific. Some of the topics on which we held information sessions were the environment and development applications, from memory. That is an example of our Planning Bill consultation from earlier this year.

We also engage quite regularly with the Environment and Planning Forum. That is a meeting that is chaired by Mr Ponton that we run every eight weeks. The members of the Environment and Planning Forum, the secretary of which sits within my team, include our community councils, members of key advocacy groups and some of our industry representatives. Over the last 12 months we have increased that representation. Some of the new members, off the top of my head, include the ACT branch of the National Trust; they are now part of our Environment and Planning Forum. We have also extended an invitation to the Environmental Defenders Office, who have been on our EPF for close to 12 months. Both are contributing well in our Environment and Planning Forum. Those are some examples. Is there anything specific that you would like us to talk about?

**THE CHAIR:** No, that was an excellent answer, and much better than what was in the annual report; thank you very much. Will you be applying that different, better consultation strategy for the Territory Plan and the district strategies?

**Ms Magee:** That is right, Ms Clay. We have an extensive engagement plan for the engagement period for the district strategies and the Territory Plan. We have also made some improvements through our Your Say website. That is where I am concentrating on making sure that we hear from a variety of audiences. We now have some mandatory data that we are including in some of our surveys, such as gender, district that people live in and age bracket. That helps us to make sure that we are hearing from a wide variety of audiences and that we can tailor our communications if it looks like we are not reaching certain demographics, be that geographically or through age or gender.

**MR CAIN:** I may not have heard you correctly. Are you saying that the advisory council were the ones who had said that the consultation had improved?

**Ms Magee:** No. I do not understand the question.

**MR CAIN:** The improved consultation feedback: was that the advisory council?

**THE CHAIR:** My original question was that the annual report said there were improvements to the consultation process.

**MR CAIN:** Who said that? Was it the advisory council?

**THE CHAIR:** It is on page 59 of the annual report.

**MR CAIN:** No, who said it was improved?

**Mr Ponton:** I might be able to assist Mr Cain there. It is a combination of both our own reflection and that of the Environment and Planning Forum. We have worked with them over the last 12 months, and the feedback we have received through that forum is that it is a more effective and useful forum for them, in terms of a mechanism for engagement.

**MR PARTON:** But it was your own reflection; you decided that it had improved?

**Mr Ponton:** I said it was a combination, so there was our own reflection and also the feedback from the Environment and Planning Forum.

**MR CAIN:** So the forum said it had improved?

**THE CHAIR:** We have 14 minutes left. Can we move on to questions? If this concerns you, Mr Cain, you can return to it.

**MS ORR:** The new DA finder app: would you be able to talk me through what the improvements are, as they are noted in the annual report?

**Mr Gentleman:** Yes. The DA finder app has gone through a number of changes since we originally launched it. It gives more flexibility for people now to be geolocated with the area in which they are interested in seeing development applications come forward. There is better communication with those people looking at DAs, either in their area or in their area of interest. I will ask directorate officials to give you the detail.

**Mr Ponton:** I might hand over to Mr Cilliers on that one.

**Mr Cilliers:** The revised DA Finder + App was released during the last financial year. We consulted widely and released a new, improved version of that. That allows us to address previous data sorting that we could not do. That includes what the minister pointed out, to enable people to view drawings better, and to respond to DAs, including placing your submission as well.

It also entails post-decision abilities, to have your NoD on the system available post-DA, so that you can view those. It is a much improved system, well received by both industry and community. It allows a tracking device, from a mobile point of view, so that you can list an area of interest or demarcate an area of interest, and it will highlight DAs in your area, notify you and enable you to make comment on those. It is a greatly

improved system.

**Mr Ponton:** Ms Magee might be able to add something further on this one.

**Ms Magee:** We utilised the Environment and Planning Forum over the reporting period as a pilot group to test out the new DA finder app. They were provided with it pre-launch, to use it as a test group. It is also their feedback, particularly into what is referred to as the lasso tool that Mr Cilliers just mentioned. That was some feedback that came prior to the development of this version of the DA app from members of the Environment and Planning Forum as something they thought would be a great new tool, as part of the DA finder app. They were able to then pilot the program before launch.

**Mr Cilliers:** The four features that are distinctive with this one include a new watched applications tool, which enables you to follow and notify the progress on particular DAs. You can access historical DA information; I referred to having the NoD there. It also provides access to pre-DA consultation information—applications that go out for pre-lodgement consultation. The other thing that is really valuable is that it will provide information around draft Territory Plan variations in your area of interest.

**MS ORR:** How does the information that you can access through the app, which sounds like it has much more improved functionality, compare to, say, the information you can get on the website? I understand there has also been a bit of work done on the website.

**Mr Cilliers:** The website is slightly more complex to navigate. The app provides you with just a mobile function. It is also more responsive to more contemporary understanding. You can find the same information through the web, but the app provides quicker functionality. What can be found is more contemporary.

**Dr Brady:** You get better notifications, because it is on an app, rather than constantly going to a website. You get notified a lot better because it is an app.

**Mr Cilliers:** Yes. On the web you might need to click two or three times, whereas on the app it will take you directly to the plan that you would like to view, for example.

**MS ORR:** With the updates to the website, what things did you update? It sounds like the two are working quite well in unison, but can you give us an idea of what the website update improvements are?

**Mr Cilliers:** The website updates are continuous. We try and keep the website up to date as much as possible, and as the system allows us, to align it with our DA finder app.

**MS ORR:** I was asking more broadly about the updates and improvements to the website, not just focusing on the DA aspects of the website. It might be a question for Ms Magee.

**Ms Magee:** With updates to the website, as Mr Cilliers noted, we have done a lot of work on the DA side of things, and that correlates with the DA finder app launch. To answer your first question, Ms Orr, the DA app pulls its data from our website, pulls the documents from the website. The biggest advantage of the app is the push

notifications that users get, particularly for the areas they are interested in and which they have identified on the app. They do not have to continuously check the app in order to find out what is happening in their area or in their area of interest, whereas the website is the more traditional means where they can go and find information.

The website updates are a continual update from my team, and from working with my colleagues. Particularly through the planning review and reform project, there will be a lot of work required in the coming 12 months to make sure that our planning website reflects the changes in planning review and reform, as well as ease of use. In short, it is a work in progress for our website. Certainly, it is something that we are working towards. We also have the build, buy or renovate portal, which houses some of our planning information.

**MR CAIN:** Minister, I make reference to the ACT critical skills list. It is part of the budget statement. I note that on that skills list we have a qualification listed for snow sport instructors, but on that extensive skills list there is no entry for town planner. Have you sought to add such a critical skill to the ACT critical skills list?

**Mr Gentleman:** No, but I will certainly take it on board, Mr Cain.

**MR CAIN:** Thank you. Is this the first time that you are aware of this skills list and the absence of town planners on it?

**Mr Gentleman:** Is that a statement or a question?

**MR CAIN:** No, it was a question.

**Mr Gentleman:** Okay. I am aware of the skills list, yes.

**MR CAIN:** Is this the first time that you are aware that town planners were not listed on the ACT skills list? That is the question.

**MS ORR:** Maybe this is a question for the section where the skills list sits.

**THE CHAIR:** Does the skills list sit with you, Mr Gentleman?

**MS ORR:** I am pretty sure it sits with economic development; that is my understanding.

**MR PARTON:** Yes, but town planners are critical to the work—

**MS ORR:** Yes, but they do not make the decisions on what goes on and off the skills list.

**MR CAIN:** Yes, but he is a minister in this cabinet.

**THE CHAIR:** Ask the question, Mr Cain, and we will see what—

**MR CAIN:** The question was: is this the first time you were aware that planners were not on the ACT critical skills list?

**Mr Gentleman:** I can say, Mr Cain, that the town planners that we engage are expert in the work that they do. They provide some fantastic advice to ACT planning, the planning and land authority, and to me.

**MR CAIN:** That is not the question.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Cain.

**Mr Gentleman:** You asked the question; I am providing the answer, Mr Cain.

**MR CAIN:** No; is this the first time that you were aware of this?

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Cain, can you please wait for the minister to finish answering the question and then ask a supplementary. We cannot hear what the minister is saying; it is very hard to hear in here. Proceed.

**Mr Gentleman:** They do, I think, a very expert job in providing information and advice to me, and to the independent planning and land authority. If there is a way that we can recognise that—we certainly do in our structure—by putting them on the list, I will certainly do that.

**MR CAIN:** So you were not aware of that before; thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Cain, do you have another substantive?

**MR CAIN:** I certainly do. Minister, I am very surprised—and perhaps you can explain this—why DV369, which is currently in action, and the Urban Forest Bill were not included in the rollout of the planning system review and reform, given their significant impact.

**Mr Gentleman:** I will ask directorate officials to provide that answer for you, Mr Cain.

**Mr Ponton:** Variation 369 was an amendment to the current Territory Plan. As foreshadowed at the time, we had continued to do further work in relation to the principles of what was trying to be achieved through variation 369, and thinking about that in the context of the new structure of the Territory Plan. That is certainly being considered.

In relation to the Urban Forest Bill, I do not know that that is something I would be able to comment on. It is for TCCS. Certainly, we have worked very closely with our colleagues in TCCS in developing the Planning Bill, and they in turn have consulted and engaged with us in developing the Urban Forest Bill. Certainly, to the extent necessary and possible, the two integrate and relate.

**MR CAIN:** I am not sure whether I heard the answer to my question. Why weren't these significant and impacting planning changes part of the rollout of the planning review?

**Mr Ponton:** Again, in terms of what I am responsible for, and Minister Gentleman is responsible for, variation 369 was the first step. The minister made it very clear at the



time with respect to what was being included in the current Territory Plan. Whilst we could have waited to introduce those particular requirements in a different form in the new Territory Plan, it was important to act at the time. That was certainly done. The minister at the time also said that there was further work to be done, and that it would be incorporated into the new planning system, which it is. When you see the new Territory Plan, you will see provisions that relate to living infrastructure in there.

**MR CAIN:** So it is part of the planning review—

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

**MR CAIN:** Yes, I do. DV369, for example, was part of the planning review, yet you did not wait to implement it until the rollout of the planning review was completed?

**THE CHAIR:** I believe that question has already been answered. Have I missed something?

**Mr Ponton:** Correct; I thought I had answered that question.

**THE CHAIR:** I think that question is already answered. That brings us to the end of this part of the hearing. Minister and officials, thank you very much for joining us today. The committee will return at 4.15 to hear from transport.

**Hearing suspended from 3.59 to 4.15 pm.**

## Appearances

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

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Playford, Ms Alison, Director-General

McHugh, Mr Ben, Deputy Director-General, Transport Canberra and Business Services

Clement, Ms Sophie, Acting Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery

Hughes, Ms Cherie, Chief Operating Officer

Major Projects Canberra

Edghill, Mr Duncan, Chief Projects Officer

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Project Director, Light Rail

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into annual reports. We will hear from the Minister for Transport and City Services, Mr Chris Steel, and officials. Thank you very much for joining us.

Please be aware that the proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and they will be published. We are also being broadcast and live streamed. If you are taking a question on notice, it would be great if you could use the words, “I will take that on notice.” That helps our staff to track down those questions. I would like to remind everybody of the benefits, protections and responsibilities afforded by the parliamentary privilege statement. I think that has been distributed. Can I get everybody who might speak to give a verbal confirmation that they have read and accept that?

**Mr Steel:** Yes.

**Ms Playford:** Yes, we have read and accepted it.

**THE CHAIR:** As we are not inviting opening statements, we will get started.

**Ms Playford:** Chair, with the indulgence of the committee, can I table a corrigendum to our annual report? Unfortunately, we discovered that on page 28 the headings for figures 5 and 6 were transposed. I table that for the committee.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much. We will get that copied and distributed, in case somebody has a question on that diagram. We will make sure we are not asking you the wrong things.

**Ms Playford:** That is fine. I think we can explain, if there are questions related to that page.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Ms Playford. Minister, I will ask the first question. In the TCCS strategic plan 2021-24, one of the identified measures for TCCS was six-monthly reporting against the ACT Climate Change Strategy and performance data in the TCCS annual report ecological and sustainable development section. Have those six-monthly

reports happened?

**Mr Steel:** I will hand over to the team at TCCS to provide some information on how we report against the plan and the work that we are doing with EPSDD as well on the climate strategy.

**Ms Playford:** We will in the future include some of that information in our annual report. I do not think it is included in this one because we are moving to our new reporting system. We already provide input into whole-of-government collection of reporting against the Climate Change Strategy, which is publicly available.

**THE CHAIR:** That is great. We will see TCCS reporting in the next annual report?

**Ms Playford:** Yes, that is the intention. It will complement the whole-of-government reporting; that will continue.

**THE CHAIR:** On page 97 we have reference to a TCCS emissions reduction plan 2019-20 to 2024-25. Is that a public document?

**Ms Playford:** That is a document that is still under development and finalisation.

**THE CHAIR:** Will that be published when it is finished?

**Ms Playford:** That will be something we will need to consider when we finish it. We will certainly be looking to provide information around that document in our annual report going forward.

**THE CHAIR:** When do you think that might be finished?

**Ms Playford:** Going into the next financial year, I would hope that we can finish it.

**MS ORR:** With the gender-sensitive urban design guidelines that are under development and noted in the annual report, are you able to give a little bit of information about this project? As we start to see it rolled out, what can we expect to come out of that project?

**Ms Playford:** Sophie Clement, who is heading up our infrastructure delivery branch at the moment, will respond.

**Ms Clement:** I have read and accept the privilege statement. With the gender-sensitive urban design project, we have been developing guidelines for gender-sensitive urban design. Over the past year we have done a number of workshops, working with community and targeted stakeholders in the development of those guidelines. A consultant has been working with us and we have a report that is in its final stages. At the moment we are working through what the implementation of those guidelines might look like for government.

**MS ORR:** The guidelines are still to be put to government?

**Ms Clement:** That is correct, yes.

**MS ORR:** You will be looking to do that in the not-too—

**Ms Clement:** Over the next year, yes.

**MR PARTON:** The annual report, Minister, gives plenty of examples describing when projects are due for completion. On the Canberra Hospital expansion, for argument's sake, the report, on pages 12 and 120, states that the construction of the new critical services building is due for completion in June 2024. On the CIT project, the report, on pages 14 and 120, states that a temporary bus interchange is scheduled for completion in early 2023, and the whole project in December 2024. With respect to cladding rectification, it is similar. In two places it suggests it will be completed by December 2022. But there is no month and year for when 2A would be completed, and no year given for when the tram would arrive in Woden, even though you had given your program dates to the federal government before the annual report went to the printers.

Has the government lost confidence in itself to provide a rough timing of when stage 2A would be completed, and when the tram would arrive in Woden, in the annual report? Why is that stuff missing?

**Mr Steel:** The projects that you have described are projects that have gone through the procurement process and a contract has been signed, which is the time when we can announce a date for the expected completion. We will be looking forward very much to making a similar announcement on stage 2A next year, once we complete procurement with Canberra Metro in relation to stage 2A of the project.

We have signed contracts on raising London Circuit. That will take around two years of construction. We have expected time frames for that. We are looking forward to being able to announce next year and provide some more information about the time line for the 2A project, once we have gone through the procurement. We have said that all the way along, including our discussions in estimates as well. We will not be providing an exact date until we have gone through that procurement process and determined the date that it will be delivered, and that is put in a contract.

**MR PARTON:** That being the case, I am assuming this question is not going anywhere. When the government put out the tender, in what year did the government request that the tram arrive in Commonwealth Park, and in what year should it arrive in Woden?

**Mr Steel:** I can hand over to Duncan Edghill to provide some detail about what was in the tender, the request for tender, and the work that we are doing with the single select with Canberra Metro.

**Mr Edghill:** For the raising of London Circuit contract, we did not put a date in the contract; rather, that was something for our tenderers to give back to the territory as part of the procurement process.

In terms of the work that we are undertaking at the moment for stage 2A, the timing will ultimately depend upon the procurement process. What I may add to the minister's comments is that there is also the works approval process that we will be working through with the NCA. The ACT government is looking to submit a works approval

application with the NCA in this calendar year. We will not be finalising negotiations with Canberra Metro until some point after the works approval has been obtained and we have worked through any issues associated with that. Depending upon the works approval process, the timing of that is in the hands of the commonwealth. If there are any conditions associated with the works approval process then we would look to take that into account in design before signing contracts with Canberra Metro, rather than afterwards.

**Mr Steel:** This is one of the most complex infrastructure projects in Canberra's history. There are significant planning risks involved. The government has taken the view that we wanted to deal with those planning risks ahead of going out for procurement. That is why we are getting that works approval before we go and contract. A similar process will apply for 2B as well, which has much more complexity in terms of the planning requirements associated with it; hence the reason we have split the project into two, 2A and 2B.

We have also taken the view that we need to go through some of the planning requirements and the environment impact statement process ahead of developing a business case for 2B. There is a little bit of a way to go on that before we can go into the procurement process for 2B. 2A is the priority at the moment. We have provided as much certainty as we can around what the next milestones are for the project. The next milestone is the works approval, and next year we are looking forward to finalising the procurement.

**MS ORR:** On the works approval for the raising of London Circuit project, that sits within Major Projects. What other key milestones are there? I think you started to touch on them, Minister. Can you run through, in more detail, what other key milestones the government has achieved since the raising of London Circuit works approval was given?

**Mr Steel:** I will hand over to the team to talk a little bit about how things are going. Certainly, the rain is having a little bit of an impact on construction. Construction has started on the Vernon Circle traffic lights. Construction compounds have been set up for the raising London Circuit project and we are moving ahead.

**Mr Edghill:** If the question was a broader question around achievements through the period of this report, at the beginning of the last financial year, in the first part of the financial year, the Mitchell light rail stop at Sandford Street was delivered. Works approval was granted by the NCA for the raising of London Circuit. There were early works undertaken and which are now largely complete for the raising of London Circuit project. A number of utilities needed to be moved out of the footprint of that southern portion of London Circuit, so that we could enter into the contract to raise London Circuit and move ahead with the works.

We have entered into the contract, as was previously announced, to raise London Circuit and we have moved into the physical element of that project. A lot of design work has been done both pre-procurement and then post-contract signing. To this point physical works are now apparent, with construction compounds having been established. There are preparatory works on the northern side of Vernon Circle and at the Coranderrk roundabout, which are separately procured but underway as well.

More broadly, the contract for the purchase of five additional light rail vehicles, the retrofitting of the existing fleet and the Mitchell works depot has also been undertaken since 1 July 2020. There has been a significant amount of work undertaken, and milestones for each date. In parallel to that there is ongoing design work, which, as I mentioned previously, will culminate in the submission of the works approval application at the end of this year.

Also, in terms of the raising London Circuit project in particular, once the Vernon Circle north works are undertaken, we will certainly be into very visible construction works on the southern portion of London Circuit.

**MS ORR:** What things have you put in place, when we start getting into those construction works, and in the bits we have covered, that will help with the impacts to existing light rail services and the area around where the construction will be going on?

**Mr Edghill:** In terms of the raising of London Circuit and existing light rail services, there should be no impacts there, given that there is a little physical distance between the two of them. In terms of managing disruption through the construction of the raising of London Circuit, there are quite a number of different activities which are underway, and which will progress as we move into those more disruptive physical works. There is a cross-government effort to that end in coordinating those activities—everything from what is happening from a traffic management perspective, which my colleagues in TCCS may be able to talk to, through to work which is underway right now with local businesses and the local community to make them aware of what is happening.

**MS ORR:** I can come back and ask those in the transport section. With the raising of London Circuit, can you run through how active travel has been incorporated into the raising of London Circuit?

**Mr Steel:** One of the key benefits of the project is around active travel connectivity, in its completed state. As part of the works, we have undertaken to provide better pedestrian connections, particularly while the work is going on to build the project. Work is underway on constructing a new pedestrian path around City Hill, which will provide an east-west connection. That will be combined with new pedestrian signals at the intersection of Edinburgh Avenue and Vernon Circle, which will provide safe, controlled connectivity to city west. That work will be complete, ready for people to use, while the major construction work goes on.

Of course, post-completion, we will have much better connections through to the lake foreshore. There will not be a six-metre-high wall blocking people from walking through to the lake. There will be far better connections there. We are working with the NCA at the moment, talking to them about making sure that the design that we put forward, when it comes to works approval by the end of the year, also includes protected on-road cycle lanes, so that we both meet what we are proposing to put forward in standards for the whole of the city, for best practice active travel design, and make sure that there is good separation between cyclists and pedestrians in the area.

It is about linking in really closely with what the NCA is trying to achieve with their bridge augmentation project, in terms of safe active travel connectivity across the lake.

We want that to continue, as much as it can, towards the city. Certainly, part of the thinking with the design has always been around active travel.

**MS LEE:** Minister, noting your response to Mr Parton's initial question, that you will make an announcement next year about the time frame for the completion of 2A, in Senate estimates last Friday, federal government officials confirmed that it would be January 2026. Were they wrong?

**Mr Steel:** They are speculating or forecasting what they think. The reality is that it will be determined through the procurement process. We have always said that. We have been very consistent in saying that. That is probably around the same time, but it is probably not exact. We want to provide the community with certainty. That is why we will be making an announcement about that with more certainty next year, once we have gone through the procurement process.

**MS LEE:** If they are speculating, and that is what you have called it, the Australian government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts website lists programs and infrastructure projects. It specifically says, on Canberra light rail stage 2A, that they expect the start and finish to be early 2024 to early 2026. Is that wrong?

**Mr Steel:** The only date that we can be certain about is when it is actually complete. But ahead of then, the next best date—

**MS LEE:** What is that, if you are certain about it?

**Mr Steel:** is the date in the contract, and that is the contract that we will be signing once we have gone through the procurement process that will determine the construction time frame, when operations start for 2A. That process will be next year. We are looking forward to updating the commonwealth on that so that they can update the community on their website, once that becomes available.

**MS LEE:** I have a follow-up in relation to a question that Ms Orr asked, and that Mr Edghill responded to. Can you confirm, in terms of the tender and the contract for the raising of London Circuit, the cost of the tender, or the price that was placed on the tender, and what was the contract amount? In other words, is it the same, or is there a variation, and what is the reason for that variation, if there was one?

**Mr Steel:** The contract is on the contracts register. I refer you to that information. Duncan Edghill might be able to provide some further information.

**Mr Edghill:** The ACT government previously noted that the total value of the works was approximately \$100 million, which was reflected in the budget papers. I cannot recall the exact number in the contract, which is on the contracts register, but it is approximately \$60 million. I will refer to my colleague Ashley Cahif, the project director of light rail. There are no significant variations to that contract that I am aware of, but I will check with my colleague.

**Mr Cahif:** I acknowledge the privilege statement. It is important to remember that the raising London Circuit project encompassed more than just the contract itself. It

included the early utility works and design work that were undertaken as well. There have been no major variations to the raising London Circuit main works contract at this stage.

**MR PARTON:** Regarding the payment schedule, Minister, in that federal funding, in the original question from Ms Lee, the federal government revealed a payment schedule that goes out to 2030, with the construction schedule being completed—speculatively, I am assuming—in January 2026. That seems like an extraordinarily, unusually long payment schedule. Why are the payments planned to occur five years after the work has been completed?

**Mr Steel:** I think there has been a little bit of what I would describe as misrepresentation of the commonwealth's payment schedule for their contribution to the stage 2A light rail project. Australian government payments, up to and including the 2021-22 financial year, have been \$20 million. Over the forward estimates there are payments that are provided per year for the project. The Australian government has also provided \$55.89 million in a fifth year, which is under the designation 2026-27 onwards forecast.

No doubt next year, when the 2026-27 falls within the forward estimates for the federal budget, we will find out and have it confirmed that the \$55.89 million is in the 2026-27 financial year. Some people have probably wrongly described this as being funding that goes out to 2030, when in fact the designation of the column where that funding sits is actually the 2026-27 year, and the onwards forecast.

We will have that confirmed in the federal budget next year. We think that that reflects the financial completion of the project—not the actual completion date of light rail stage 2A, or the date that it becomes operational. It is probably slightly later than that. Of course, we will confirm that next year, once the procurement process is finalised.

**MR PARTON:** With the federal government's speculation on the finish date, what do you think that was based on, Minister? Do you think they just sat around and brainstormed when they thought it would finish or would they have received advice from you?

**Mr Steel:** I am sure they will be receiving advice from us next year about the actual contract delivery time.

**MR PARTON:** But you must have advised them on this.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Parton.

**Mr Steel:** We will be updating them at that time—

**MR PARTON:** Did they just make it up?

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Parton.

**Mr Steel:** about the actual date and—

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Parton, we have had a number of supplementaries on this line.



Would you like to hold it for another substantive, so that we can pass to Ms Lee for her substantive?

**MR PARTON:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I am conscious of time, and we have been on this one for 20 minutes.

**MR PARTON:** I am happy to do that, if that is where we are at.

**THE CHAIR:** We will go to Ms Lee, with a substantive.

**MS LEE:** I will stay with stage 2A light rail. Minister, with the cuts to the road upgrades to Tuggeranong Parkway, the Kings Highway and the Boboyan Road, who made that decision?

**Mr Steel:** The commonwealth government made that decision.

**MS LEE:** Was Senator Katy Gallagher wrong in saying that it was the ACT government, as has been reported in media?

**Mr Steel:** The commonwealth government engaged with all of the states and territories about the realistic and sustainable delivery of projects, and also with a focus on reviewing projects that may have been considered to be pork-barrelling. They have done that through the budget process. They engaged with the ACT government. Of course, the south-west corridor was one project that came up in discussions because it has been very clear from the beginning that that project was ill-defined and did not have any particular deliverables. It seemed to be a thought bubble and possibly could be described as pork-barrelling from the former coalition government.

**MS LEE:** You welcomed the funding, did you not?

**Mr Steel:** I welcome all commonwealth funding. We tried to have that funding redirected into what is actually Canberra's major bottleneck, which is Parkes Way. We are doing some work on Parkes Way at the moment, in terms of both physical work on the traffic lights at Coranderrk and a scoping study to work out what further improvements could be made.

The former coalition government refused to have that money redirected, despite not having any conception whatsoever about what the south-west corridor project would deliver. We have been engaging with the commonwealth about trying to advocate for more money going into transport projects which are a priority. Stage 2A funding has been provided, which has been very welcome—\$85.9 million from the commonwealth. We continue to look at what possible improvements could be made to the south-west corridor, but we are doing that more holistically, looking at Parkes Way as well.

They have made a decision on that, but we have retained transport infrastructure spending in the territory. In fact the federal government has grown it, with further extensions to the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program—typically, for road maintenance projects—as well as continuing to invest, as they have announced, in the Athllon Drive duplication project, which is very welcome.

With the new federal government coming in following the election, and with the budget in March under the former federal coalition government, that money had never been appropriated. The budget was not worth the paper that it was written on. We have been very strongly advocating to the federal government that they retain commonwealth investment in projects like the Athllon Drive corridor, which they did, which is fantastic, and they have also provided extra funding for light rail.

We certainly never suggested that Boboyan Road should be removed altogether. That probably reflects that we have not yet reached agreement in relation to the reclassification of the ACT's rural roads, which, under the former coalition government, were treated like urban roads and funded accordingly. The commonwealth did not provide the same level of funding that states and territories received for rural roads, which is up to 80 per cent commonwealth funding and 20 per cent ACT. We, of course, made a contribution in the ACT budget towards Boboyan Road, on the basis of 80-20 funding. We are continuing those discussions with the commonwealth. There will be future budgets where we can continue to make the case for more infrastructure spending in the ACT from the commonwealth.

**MS LEE:** What other road projects were considered in terms of this, and what other projects are on the chopping block to divert funds to light rail?

**Mr Steel:** The commonwealth looked at all projects, as I understand it, as part of their review. They were particularly looking around the deliverability of projects in the current infrastructure market, noting that it has been a challenge, particularly in some other states, with workforce and supply chain issues. They were also looking at the pork-barrel projects. For us, it was particularly the south-west corridor where that issue was raised. It had literally no substance; it was all pork. Let us be honest about that.

The other projects that came up in discussions with the commonwealth were in relation to the Kings Highway funding, which we have never agreed to match. That is actually Pialligo Avenue, not the Kings Highway, in the ACT. It obviously connects with the Kings Highway eventually.

With that project, we realised, following further examination, that there are some future planning uncertainties associated with the possible future extension of the Canberra Airport runway. We are of the view that we do not want to undertake expensive, abortive works on road duplication, for example, if that road has to be torn up and moved south. It may be something that we look at in the future. We are undertaking some design work in two sections of Pialligo Avenue at the moment, for the intersection of Oaks Estate Road and Sutton Road, and a short section next to Brindabella Park. That work is continuing. But we will not undertake expensive, abortive works projects, so it made sense for the commonwealth to make a decision about changing that project and moving funding elsewhere, to other infrastructure projects.

**MR PARTON:** Regarding the schedule of payments from the feds, as discussed in Senate estimates, you suggested a little earlier, Minister, that the funding does not actually go out to 2029-30, and that it is actually 2026-27. But I have in front of me a series of numbers that were read out by federal government department officials. They were read out at the hearing and went into *Hansard*, and they suggest that the

\$85.9 million goes \$15 million in 2024-25, \$15 million in 2025-26, \$30 million in 2026-27, \$12 million in 2027-28, \$8 million in 2028-29 and \$5.9 million in 2029-30. Minister, either the federal government officials have misled Senate estimates, or you have misled this inquiry in regard to your previous answer.

**Mr Steel:** No, I am simply reading directly from a letter that Catherine King has written to me, with that \$55.89 million sitting in a category of 2026-27 onwards forecast. As I said we will have that confirmed next year because that year, the year's worth of funding, 2026-27, will be in the forward estimates for the federal budget, so we will find out next year how much is going into that year. We will also be able to update the commonwealth around the exact construction delivery time frame for stage 2A, once we have gone through the procurement process. We will be updating them. No doubt they will take that into consideration around their future funding arrangements for 2A as well, around financial completion.

**MR PARTON:** There will be no pork-barrelling in there, you don't think?

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Parton, questions please, not comments. I might move on to the next question. Minister, I would like to return to the TCCS emissions reduction plan that we talked about earlier. That is actually a reduction strategy that is meant to go from 2019-20 to 2025-26.

**Ms Playford:** Was that the transport zero emissions strategy—

**THE CHAIR:** This is TCCS emissions. It is on page 97 of the annual report. It is the TCCS emissions reduction plan, 2019-20 to 2024-25. That is the plan that I was talking about, and that is the plan that I think you said, in answer to the last question, had not yet been completed. Are we talking at cross-purposes?

**Ms Playford:** I might need to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Can anyone tell me about that plan?

**Ms Playford:** Cherie Hughes, our Chief Operating Officer, might be able to provide some clarity around that.

**MS ORR:** It is something that would be better asked in the transport section.

**THE CHAIR:** I was hoping to talk about this.

**Ms Hughes:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The document you are referring to is finalised. It is an internal document, so it has not been published, but we can certainly release it through open access.

**THE CHAIR:** That might be published? That would be great; excellent. Part of the annual report reference in that area talks about an emissions reduction working group. We are getting nods; we are in the right area now. I am trying to work out what that emissions reduction working group would be doing that is different and separate from what the EPSDD Climate Change Strategy team are doing. How do those things fit together?

**Ms Hughes:** They actually work together. EPSDD have members who are involved in the working group with TCCS.

**THE CHAIR:** We have 24 clear actions for TCCS to undertake. I am wondering how many of those have gone through. Will that be clear when you publish the report?

**Ms Hughes:** I would have to look. I do not have an update on that.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. We might wait until we see the published report and then return to it.

**MS ORR:** Could we talk about how the tree planting program is going, particularly against the Urban Forest Strategy?

**Mr Steel:** We are planning to have city services come back in the next session. I think this is transport focused.

**Ms Playford:** Yes, this is transport.

**MS ORR:** In the TCCS annual report, Transport Canberra delivered 99 per cent of on-schedule bus services and 99 per cent of light rail services in the last financial year. Can you tell us how the ACT government was able to maintain this level of service reliability during COVID?

**Mr Steel:** Reliability has been a big focus for us during COVID-19. We knew that there were workforce issues associated with Transport Canberra operational staff taking leave, and this had to be factored in to our operations. We updated the timetable to an interim timetable to ensure that we could deliver reliable services throughout the pandemic, and we have been stepping up recruitment. We are on track to recruit 60 extra drivers by the end of the year, which will help us to deliver those reliable services, particularly as we step up the timetable next year, in term 1. I will hand over to Ben McHugh and Transport Canberra to talk a little bit about the reliability.

**Mr McHugh:** To follow on from the minister's input there, we introduced an interim timetable to build some contingency into our driver workforce, noting that at times throughout the pandemic we had up to 90 drivers out of the workforce on any one day. The contingency that we built in through the interim network allowed us to maintain reliability of service and make sure that we could deliver what we said we would deliver on that day. I think that is reflected in the statistics.

We acknowledge now, as we are moving out of that environment, and the impact on our driver workforce is obviously reducing, that we want to bring those drivers back into the workforce and into the timetable, so we are planning some improvements to the timetable moving forward. That was the key element.

Also, we split our shifts in our workshops into two parts, so that interaction between the mechanics was limited; therefore, if there was a breakout in a workplace, it did not prevent us from keeping the buses on the road. They were the two key elements in the workplace, in terms of managing the reliability and keeping the buses on the road.

**MS ORR:** On reliability, how will you make sure that is maintained during the delivery of all of the transport projects that you have coming up?

**Mr Steel:** That has been factored into the term 1 bus network and timetable. We know that when construction is happening, it may take longer for a bus to drive through the transport network, so that extra time has been built in. If necessary, next year, once we actually start to experience the disruption that will be occurring as a result of major public transport projects and other infrastructure projects around the territory, we will have to consider whether any adjustments are made. We built in a level of redundancy. Ben McHugh can talk further about what has been planned.

**Mr McHugh:** As the minister said, in our network planning process we predict the travel times of each route and each service. That is what then informs the timetable and the times when the customer can expect the buses to turn up. We have forecast travel time impacts along the corridor, particularly through the construction phase of raising London Circuit, and also forecasting what might happen down the track. Obviously, we then feed that back into our planning system, which determines how many buses, drivers and others we need to deliver that network on any particular day.

**MR PARTON:** Is it possible for the minister to table that letter from Catherine King?

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

**MR PARTON:** With regard to the cost and completion date for light rail stage 2 in its entirety, I am pretty keen to fill the information void right here, right now. Our best estimates for cost and completion date for stage 2 to Woden are somewhere between \$3 billion and \$4 billion, probably much closer to \$3 billion. That figure is based on the limited information that the government has provided and by making a series of assumptions, with the assistance of some transport engineers.

Those experts have suggested to us that the likely completion date is not before 2034. I put it to you, Minister, in the context of these hearings, that light rail stage 2 in its entirety will be completed some time after 2034, at a cost of well over \$3 billion. Just saying that those assumptions are wrong will not really be sufficient, because, unless you are prepared to correct those assumptions, Canberrans should accept that the tram will not be going to Woden until 2034, and stage 2 will cost over \$3 billion. Are you in a position to address those assumptions?

**Mr Steel:** It does not sound like you support the project. It does not sound like the Canberra Liberals support the project at all.

**MR PARTON:** It has nothing to do with Canberra Liberals policy—nothing to do with it.

**Mr Steel:** We have been very clear that we will consider the costs, the benefits of the project, and a range of other detail in the business case for stage 2B. That is where we will consider all of those issues. Until that point, and until that detail work has been done, particularly on some of the early design of stage 2B, to get an understanding of the cost and timing—the costs of delivering the project at the time that we actually

assess the business case—it would be entirely speculative to come up with an assumption around costs right now. We have been—

**MR PARTON:** Minister, you must have dates and costs that you are working on. Are those assumptions correct?

**Mr Steel:** We are working on those as part of the development of a future business case—

**MR PARTON:** You have no idea?

**Mr Steel:** and the work that we need to do to get to a business case means we have to undertake early design. It means we have to go through some environmental work that is required for stage 2B. This is a very significant, complex project—the largest in our city’s history. It requires a significant amount of work to be able to get to a point where we can consider a business case, and that work is underway.

The public knows that we are committed to the project and are getting on with that work diligently. We have always said that 2A has to come first. We have to get it down to Commonwealth Park before we get it down to Woden. That work is already underway and we are looking forward to it continuing. Once we have signed contracts with Canberra Metro, we will obviously be focusing our attention then on stage 2B and the work that is required to get to a point where we can make a decision. We can, as we have with the previous stages of light rail, make that business case available to the community to have a look at, including the costs of the project.

**MS LEE:** Minister, am I to take it from that answer that you will be looking at the business case, and there is a possibility that, if it does not stack up, you are not going to go ahead with 2B?

**Mr Steel:** I think the community knows that we are committed to bringing light rail down to Woden. That is why we are building stage 2A of light rail. It is why we are—

**MS LEE:** What is the point of doing a business case and doing a cost-benefit analysis?

**Mr Steel:** raising London Circuit. Yes, we do want to assess what the benefits of the project are and understand what the costs are when we consider the business case. That is the whole purpose of it. We will be developing that business case to inform government decision-making about the project.

**MS LEE:** But it does not matter what the result is; you will go ahead with it?

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Lee.

**Mr Steel:** It goes to what the scope of the project is—

**THE CHAIR:** I am going to interject here. Please, everybody stop talking. We have the rain. Hansard has no idea what anyone is saying right now. Ms Lee, if you can wait for the minister to finish talking and then ask your further question, that would really assist us. Minister, continue. I do not know if you know where we are up to or if you

need the question repeated.

**Mr Steel:** I am happy to do so. There is a huge range of detail that we will flesh out in the business case about the project and various options that will be available to government about how the project is delivered. We will obviously consider those, and that is the purpose of the business case project. The community knows that on our side we are committed to delivering light rail. We have a vision for a city that is connected by mass transit, and that is what we are getting on with delivering.

**MS LEE:** What is the point of doing a business case if you are saying in the same breath that you are committed to doing 2B? What is the point of doing a cost-benefit analysis and a business case?

**Mr Steel:** To flesh out the benefits of the project, to look at the various options—

**MS LEE:** A pre-determined outcome.

**Mr Steel:** that are required, to understand the costs of the project and to inform government decision-making as we progress with the project.

**MS LEE:** A pre-determined—

**MR PARTON:** What if it costs \$10 billion? How does that—

**Mr Steel:** It sounds a lot like you guys are not committed to the project.

**MR PARTON:** It has nothing to do with where we sit.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Parton! One at a time.

**Mr Steel:** We are.

**MS LEE:** A pre-determined outcome. Can I go to my substantive?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MS LEE:** For my next substantive, can I go back to the raising of London Circuit project? Mostly, I just want to confirm what Mr Cahif said in a previous answer. What I specifically want to know is: what was the price of the successful tender compared to the final contract price? Do you have those figures? I know that you talked about the contracts register, but that tells one side of the story, which is the contract, so I am asking what was the price of the successful tender compared to the final contract price.

**Mr Edghill:** I apologise if I have misunderstood the question, but the signing of the contract is the end point of the procurement process. Unless I have misunderstood the question, the value of the contract on the contracts register reflects the final pricing agreed by the successful tenderer. As I noted before, there are costs associated with the project which form part of that broader \$100 million bucket that obviously fall outside the \$60 million contract with the successful tenderer.

**MS LEE:** Mr Cahif also talked earlier about utilities works being part of this.

**Mr Edghill:** Yes.

**MS LEE:** Can you provide a specific figure for the value of those works?

**Mr Edghill:** I would be happy to do so. There are separate contracts for the utility works that do not fall within the main works contract; they are contracts which are separate to that, and they also should be on the contracts register. I am happy to take the value of those on notice and provide an exact response.

**MS LEE:** So you are taking that on notice?

**Mr Edghill:** Yes.

**MS LEE:** Are there any other associated works that are outside the utilities that you described?

**Mr Edghill:** Yes, indeed there are. Within the broader \$100 million or thereabouts bucket, as well as the construction works for the main works contract, there were the early utility works, which we have touched on previously. The design works have been progressed by the ACT government under the contract that is also on the contracts register and which was announced some time ago with AECOM. There would be territory-held contingency within the broader \$100 million bucket, and other associated costs. The investment which is being made in the raising of London Circuit is that \$100 million, or thereabouts, amount which was previously discussed.

**MS LEE:** Can you provide, on notice, that breakdown of the amounts, so that the committee has a clear idea of what makes up that \$100 million bucket?

**Mr Edghill:** I am happy to take that on notice. There will be some elements, though, particularly when it comes to territory-held contingency, which would be imprudent for us to reveal publicly, while we are in the middle of the construction contract. I am happy to take the question—

**MS LEE:** What you can.

**Mr Edghill:** on notice, but we would need to present it in a way so that we are not revealing that. It is better for the taxpayer if we keep it to ourselves.

**THE CHAIR:** We might have time for one more question each; we will see how we go. Minister, I would like to have a chat about electric buses. TCCS gave an update on the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment's recommendation. The commissioner recommended that we hasten the electrification of the bus fleet. The TCCS update in the last annual report hearings was that the replacement of 34 Renault buses with lower emissions leased buses was underway, with contract arrangements finalised, and with the first of these expected to be delivered in July 2022. I want to get an update on how many of those lower emissions leased buses we have on the road today and how many of the older orange Renault buses we still have on the road.



**Mr Steel:** I think the commitment we have provided is that, before the end of the year, we are expecting the first 12 leased electric buses, and that is on track. We are looking forward to those being delivered and being on the road before the end of the year. TCCS is finalising the procurement at the moment for the 90 electric buses which we are buying, which we expect to be delivered over a number of years, with the preferred supplier. That work is underway.

Obviously, we have a Transport Canberra zero emissions plan that was developed with an expert steering committee, involving government representatives and experts from non-government sectors, including universities. That has informed the development of that plan. As part of that we set a date for the transition by 2040 or earlier. Certainly, that is consistent with the commissioner's view. We will look at what we can do to try and make the transition as soon as possible.

I note what is happening in New South Wales, where they said that the whole 8,000 fleet would transition by 2030. I think 2047 is the current expected date for their transition, so it has not been as easy for some other jurisdictions who are also making this transition. But we are confident about reaching the date that we have set in the plan, which I think is one that is achievable and certainly meets our commitments to net zero by 2045 as well. I note that this is a small part of our transport emissions profile overall in the ACT, but one that is significant for the government's emissions profile.

**THE CHAIR:** We noticed the New South Wales government time slipped, too, which was a shame. Specifically, are we still leasing the 34 diesel buses?

**Mr Steel:** No. The government went out to tender to lease buses. I do not think we are leasing 34 diesel buses. It is far fewer than that.

**Mr McHugh:** The minister is correct; the 12 leased electric vehicles are due to be delivered and on the road by the end of 2022. That was linked to a commitment that the government made around removing the 34 non-DDA-compliant buses in that time frame. That is still on track. The remainder of the 34 Renaults that we need to replace was through a lease for low emissions diesel vehicles. There are 26 of those coming from a provider, which will contribute to removing the remainder of the Renaults. So we were able to increase the number of zero emissions vehicles we could get in this first tranche, which also allows us to remove some of our older gas buses in that tranche.

**THE CHAIR:** It looks like our times have slipped a little. We said earlier July 2022. It looks like we are moving in the right direction, but the times have slipped. Is that, broadly speaking, what is happening?

**Mr McHugh:** I would have to confirm the information you are looking at. The commitment was to have the non DVA-compliant buses off the road by the end of 2022.

**THE CHAIR:** I will tell you where we are headed: when are we going to get the last Renault bus off the road? Feel free to take that on notice, if you would like to.

**Mr McHugh:** Our intention is to have them all off the road by the end of the calendar year, but we are obviously still reliant on other buses turning up to replace in order to meet that exact date.

**MS ORR:** Can I get an indication as to what infrastructure is required to support Transport Canberra to charge all of these new electric buses and to support the running of the buses, given it is different technology?

**Mr Steel:** There is quite a significant amount of infrastructure, which I think forms part of the challenges other jurisdictions are facing. It is not a simple task; it is not just about buying the electric buses. You do need the charging infrastructure and the skills to support them as well.

**THE CHAIR:** I am so sorry; I am going to do what I tell everyone else not to do, and that is interrupt. We have lost power, which means that Hansard are no longer able to record. This means our hearing is over. I will have a quick chat to my committee colleagues about how to proceed. I suspect the best we can do is to do a recall, if we need to. I am not sure that there is anything else that we can do.

**The committee adjourned at 5.10 pm.**