



**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, 7 NOVEMBER 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>77</b>
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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

**The committee met at 9.25 am.**

Appearances:

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

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

Smith, Mr Jeremy, Executive Group Manager, City Services

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon. Thank you for coming to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into annual reports. The proceedings this morning will examine the annual report of the Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate, and we are looking at sportsground facilities.

Before we begin, on behalf of the committee, I would like to acknowledge that we are meeting 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.

We are recording the hearings today. They will be transcribed and published in *Hansard*. They are also being broadcast live. If you take a question on notice, please use the words: “I will take that as a question on notice.” That lets our secretariat track down those answers.

In our first session we are hearing from the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Thank you very much, Minister Berry, for joining us, and thank you to our officials. I would like to remind you all of the protections and responsibilities offered by the parliamentary privilege statement and draw your attention to that. Can I get a verbal acknowledgement: has everyone here read that and do you understand and agree to abide by that?

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes.

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**Mr Smith:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Great. We are not taking opening statements, so we will start with the first question. I would like to kick off with a conversation about our sportsground facility maintenance and the cleaning contract. I gather that, throughout the last decade or so, the facilities have been cleaned by an organisation that employs people with disabilities. That is a really great example of social procurement.

But we have a little bit of concern about how that contract is progressing at the moment, and the changeover. I gather the price on that contract has not really changed since 2013. We have a lot of cost of living pressures. I also understand that there was a request for

tender first put out and, on 2 November this year, a notice saying that the tender process had been cancelled. Can you give me an update on where that tender is at, and can you also let me know what the price pressures are likely to do for an organisation that has been doing the same work since 2013—if they are likely to get a better price in 2022?

**Mr Iglesias:** The situation with the cleaning of the pavilions is that there was a procurement process undertaken and completed earlier this year—in fact, around January this year. It only came to me, as the delegate, very recently. So a long period of time transpired between the finalisation of that contract and it coming to me. I have taken the view that the best thing to do is to set aside that process and start again, and that is what we have done. We aim to go back out to market and invite tenders. The rationale is that the existing provider continues to do the job for us, pending the recommencement of that procurement process.

We are in the phase now where we are re-prosecuting the procurement. We have spoken to the current provider and we have said to them, “We understand that it has been a while that you have been providing this service for us. Let’s talk about dollars and pricing.” It has been a process of engagement and consultation as to what that looks like. So the short answer is that we have recommenced the procurement process that will engage that need, and we are retaining the existing provider, having engaged with them on pricing as to what would be a reasonable adjustment, given the fact that there has not been an adjustment for a while.

**THE CHAIR:** That sounds great. Do they have written assurance? Obviously, they are hiring people; they have made a lot of jobs. What is the plan right now, in November, to make sure that they can give people job certainty whilst this is being re-tendered?

**Mr Iglesias:** Our intention is to retain them as the provider until such time as we complete the current procurement process, which, of course, they will be invited to be a part of.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Iglesias:** I estimate that we would be in a position to formalise that sometime in the next three to four months, tops.

**THE CHAIR:** As in finish the procurement in the next three or four months?

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**Ms Berry:** Can I just clarify, Chair, that the procurement of this contract is not my responsibility; it is the responsibility of Minister Chris Steel. My responsibilities, as far as this hearing is concerned, are around sports field maintenance and the practical parts of that but not the procurement or contracting of that work.

For me, it is about cutting the grass, changing the goalposts and the light poles, and the maintenance of the fields. The rest of it is within Chris Steel’s portfolio. Really, I am just here about cutting the grass and making sure that the fields are appropriate for sport

and recreation purposes.

**THE CHAIR:** Certainly. Thank you, Minister. If we have further questions on that in future we will make sure we direct them to Minister Steel.

**Ms Berry:** Yes. It is not my responsibility.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. Thank you.

**MR MILLIGAN:** All sportsgrounds are closed between summer and winter seasons for necessary maintenance. Obviously, this can affect other sporting competitions, particularly if it is in semifinals or finals season. I am just keen to know: how does the government work with sporting clubs and associations during this period? What grounds do you provide for them? If their normal ground is not available, what are the alternatives and so forth?

**Ms Berry:** Thank you for that question, Mr Milligan. That is a question that I can respond to. It might be best to start with: what are the kinds of works that occur during the shutdown which mean that ovals and sports fields cannot be used for various sports while that work is occurring?

For some of it, it is about health and safety reasons. When moving the goalposts and things like that there is heavy equipment that is required on the sports fields. That has also been a challenge this year because of the wet weather. Being able to get the heavy equipment onto the fields without being bogged, while they are so wet, is a challenge. Some of that has been a little bit difficult through the year, through the sportsground closures.

We always work with sports clubs on access to different facilities. Some of the pavilions are able to be used, but also the other sportsgrounds that are not grass—

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes, the synthetic.

**Ms Berry:** Synthetic; I am having a Monday loss of words! I might ask Mr Iglesias to go through some of the work that happens during the close down and why it is important. I think most clubs understand that, but lots of people are hearing it for the first time, so I think it is important to tell the story.

**Mr Iglesias:** We call it our summer-winter changeover. Basically, we need some time where we can get unfettered access to the sportsgrounds to do that shift over. Not only do we remove the posts but we re-mark lines on the fields, we apply fertiliser to the sportsgrounds, and there might be some minor maintenance that we do. It is usually a period of about two weeks. What we try and say to the clubs is: “Listen, if we get through your particular oval, you can get access again.”

It is changing every year, depending on how we go. This year, for example, was marred by wet weather. There are some ovals that we still have not removed the goalposts on because we could not get safe access to them; they are that wet, or the approaches are that wet. But, in general, the clubs are aware that there is a two to three-week period where they will not get access, and they acknowledge that.

**MR MILLIGAN:** A follow-up on this: obviously, there are quite a few decommissioned ovals here in the ACT. Has the government considered whether or not you should bring them online during this period, to offset any ovals that have been closed, and other ovals that are already prepared, ready to go for this period?

**Ms Berry:** The dryland ovals are not fit for purpose as far as formal sports use goes. They can be used for throwing a frisbee or walking your dog and having a general run around, but they are not fit for formal sports access or use. Sport and Recreation are doing work right now with Transport Canberra and City Services on the future use of dryland ovals in the ACT and whether they are suitable for a future upgrade and to be turned back on for formal use. Once that work is completed, we will be announcing that to the community and working it in with our sports strategy, which will be announced before the end of the year.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Okay; so you could consider bringing some of those dryland ovals back on, fit for purpose, potentially?

**Ms Berry:** Well, it takes a number of years. A dryland oval generally needs to have all of the soil replaced, which means a whole dig out of around 30 centimetres of dirt and then a replacement of turf, sourcing of the turf, irrigation systems et cetera. Not all of the dryland ovals are suitable for that purpose. We are just going through a process now where sport and rec, and TCCS, are evaluating all of our dryland ovals for what particular purpose they could be used for. It could be future sports use or it could be some other purpose.

**MR MILLIGAN:** And when do you expect that to be done?

**Ms Berry:** We will be announcing our sports strategy before the end of the year. Regarding that sportsground work, along with the asset work and the infrastructure plan, there will be a whole range of announcements in that space over the next three to four months. That work is progressing within each of the directorates at the moment. I do not have an absolute time frame.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Okay. Thank you.

**MS ORR:** I want to go back to the questions that Mr Milligan was asking about the ovals and having to do maintenance and turn them off. It has been a very wet few years and we have seen a lot of impacts on our sports fields, and on access to them. Can you run us through what impacts you have had from the change in climate and how that has impacted the ability to maintain and operate the ovals, and how you still kept the ovals there and running for the community during those times?

**Ms Berry:** Yes. We went through a little bit of that, but it really has been challenging and sports have lost a lot of time playing or training on the sports fields because of the wet weather in particular. We have similar problems when it is dry weather—the opposite—keeping the fields safe for use and using additional water to make sure that they are safe for use and fit for purpose. It is a good question that you have asked. Sometimes you will go onto a sports field, you will be walking your dog, and you will think, “This is pretty dry. You should be able to get a truck on here,” but it is the

drainage around the sides that makes it difficult to get to as well. Maybe we can provide some examples of sports fields where that has been an issue.

**Mr Iglesias:** That is right. There are a number of sports fields on the north side and the south side that are on a clay base. They are the ones that tend to hold the water up in the profile for longer. We have effectively got a situation where that top 30 centimetres is saturated. Obviously, it dries from the top to the bottom, but we need a degree of drying to be able to get on with our heavy machinery to do the work.

What we have invested in of late is moisture sensors that will enable us to more specifically get a feel for what that saturation is so that we can make decisions about what ovals can take damage and what ovals cannot. What we are finding also is that the damage is exacerbated by the fact that we have come out of a winter period and instead of getting that warming happening over September-October it is not happening. So it is like a double whammy, even though we have kept it going as much as we can. We even make decisions around copping some damage if we feel that we can repair the damage quickly enough.

There are some ovals that are notorious. Weetangera, for example, drains really poorly. So does Higgins. There are a couple on the south side as well. There are others that drain really, really well and you would be surprised how quickly they go. Southwell Park still had water on it a couple of days after it stopped raining. So there is that variability. We must remember that some of those ovals act as retention basins, so they have been designed to back up water and to hold water. So, yes, it has been difficult, but hopefully we can get another couple of weeks of drying and we will be out of the worst of it.

**MS ORR:** Can I get an update on the female-friendly upgrades to pavilions and sports facilities: how that program is rolling through and what you expect to do over the next 12 months?

**Ms Berry:** Thanks. We have around 65 pavilions across the ACT that are managed and maintained by TCCS, Transport Canberra and City Services, and Sport and Rec. About 40 per cent of those have been upgraded and are now more inclusive and female friendly. We have just announced a further four pavilions, at Higgins, Nicholls, Rivett and Kambah, which will also undergo those female-friendly upgrades to make sure that they are more inclusive.

We know that sports fields in the past were built by men for men, without any understanding or thought that there would be women and girls participating in sport, particularly those more male-dominated sports. Of course, that has changed and it is continuing to shift, with really high numbers of women and girls playing sport in the ACT.

Making sure that their facilities meet their needs is really important, not just as far as putting toilets on doors and removing urinals goes but also making sure that the lighting is in place that makes people feel safe when they are attending a sports field. It makes them more inclusive and meets the needs of all sportspeople but particularly makes them more safe and accessible for anybody who wants to use them. We still have quite a number to upgrade and refit so that they meet that purpose, but we are getting through

them. Another four were announced in this year's budget.

**MS ORR:** Great. Thank you. Just on Nicholls, what sorts of upgrades are you looking at doing there?

**Ms Berry:** I might ask Mr Iglesias.

**Mr Iglesias:** I might have to take that question on notice. In fact, if you give me a couple of seconds, I can check.

**MS ORR:** We can jump to another question. We can always come back to that, if you get the answer, Mr Iglesias.

**MR MILLIGAN:** I would like to get an update on the topsoil program that you offer to clubs. What is the uptake of that program and how is it running?

**Ms Berry:** I am not sure about the individual number of clubs that take up that opportunity, but I have seen the piles of dirt or enclosed piles of that topsoil for clubs to use. I cannot remember if it was pre-COVID or post-COVID when we made sure that clubs knew that that was available to them to patch up those areas which are high use, usually around the goal areas in football, during the winter season. Daniel, do you have that information?

**Mr Iglesias:** Almost all of them, in some way, shape or form, take advantage of it. I would have to take it on notice to get you the exact details as to which clubs and over what period of time.

**MR MILLIGAN:** That would be great. That would be perfect. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** On that note, we have come to the end of our very brief time, so we will draw to a close. Thank you, Minister, and thank you, officials, for coming along this morning. I think you have taken a couple of questions on notice.

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** If we could get those answers back to our committee secretary within five working days, that would assist us in our reports. Members, if you would like to lodge any questions on notice, please lodge those within five working days. We will now suspend for a break until 3.30 pm.

**Hearing suspended from 9.45 am to 3.33 pm.**

Appearances:

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

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Snow, Mr Malcolm, Chief Executive Officer, City Renewal Authority

Gillman, Mr Craig, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, City Renewal Authority

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services inquiry into annual reports. This afternoon we will be looking at the annual reports for the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, the City Renewal Authority and the Suburban Land Agency, and we will hear from the Chief Minister and his officials.

I might just check in and get a verbal yes: has everyone had a chance to read the privilege statement and are you happy to abide by that?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**Mr Snow:** Yes.

**Mr Gillman:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Great. Thank you. If you take a question on notice, please state clearly that you are taking the question on notice. That helps our secretariat to track those answers down. With that, we might begin. We do not have a lot of time today. I will start with the first question. I am interested in how the City Renewal Authority is engaging with the district strategies and the Territory Plan. Is there any crossover, given that major planning review at the moment?

**Mr Barr:** I will ask Mr Snow to respond to that.

**Mr Snow:** Thank you. Thank you for the question, Ms Clay. Throughout the preparation of the district strategies in particular, the authority has been given a number of opportunities to provide input at a technical level. Our primary interest is in the relationship between the revised city plan and the urban design framework, which is a critical element of that. The two are being developed in combination, but at the very high level of the district plan, the Inner North District Plan, and certainly the key policy moves related to, in particular, Dickson, Braddon and also the city centre, we have been given a chance to provide input.

**THE CHAIR:** Should the community just feed all their input into the district strategies and Territory Plan or is there some separate consultation going on? Should it go into the DS and the Territory Plan?

**Mr Snow:** There will be opportunities for consultation and engagement on the district plan, but also, ultimately, I understand from EPSDD, on the city plan as well.

**THE CHAIR:** When will the consultation on the city plan be?

**Mr Snow:** I am not a hundred per cent sure, but certainly after government has considered it; possibly early in the new year.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**Mr Snow:** Or later this year. I cannot be clear about those dates because we are not preparing the plan; we are simply providing input to them.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Thank you.

**MS ORR:** Thank you. The Haig Park community centre, I believe, is progressing. Can you provide an update on the project?

**Mr Snow:** Yes, certainly. I might ask Mr Gillman, in a moment, to comment on the practical side of things vis-a-vis the contract management and how that is proceeding, but we are really pleased with the progress so far. This is the realisation of a long-held ambition, through the Haig Park Experiments project that goes back nearly three years now, where the community said to us, “We really need to have a community facility to support what is a growing population in this part of Canberra.” So we are pleased that it is now taking shape. We are particularly pleased that it has been through a process that sought to recycle building materials and to engage the community on what they would like to see there.

We have now appointed an operator. We are just waiting to sign the final agreement for that, but we will have an operator in place. We look forward to them coming up with a program in the centre which will allow a whole range of different activities to be conducted—everything from meetings through to opportunities for people to learn new hobbies and crafts and all sorts of things. The open-plan arrangement really supports that. Mr Gillman might give you an update on the actual contract side of things.

**Mr Gillman:** In terms of the program, we are on track to open the new facility in the new year. Hopefully, construction will be completed just before Christmas, or maybe just after. I am sure everyone is aware that there have been some supply chain challenges. Our contractor has really struggled to get its glazing. One of the requirements of the DA was for soundproof glazing. So that has been a delay that the contractor has had to absorb over the last couple of months. Combined with the wet weather, that has been quite a challenge for them, but we are on track to open in the new year.

**MS ORR:** Mr Snow, I think you started talking a little bit about what the community can expect from the centre, once complete. Can you run me through in a bit more detail what sorts of things we will be looking at the centre providing?

**Mr Snow:** The program design, if you like, will be very much up to the operator, who will be a not-for-profit operator. Certainly, when we went to market and asked for expressions of interest, tenders from providers, for those services, we were looking for that creativity, if you like: how they would approach a program that provided maximum opportunity for different members of the community to use the facility.

I think that is our ambition, that we really do want to make sure it is well used and it is not just something that sits in the park and is locked up. We really want it to be used extensively. That is why we, as an authority, will hold onto the asset for a number of years to make sure that our objectives are met, and the objectives we clearly heard from the community when we went out for nearly a year of consultation around the future of Haig Park. As I said a moment ago, through that consultation we heard the need from the community for this facility.

I think the great thing about it is that it will really address the fact that we have such a diverse catchment around that part of Canberra. We have got everyone from people living in apartments to that traditional part of Braddon to business owners, but we hope that people from all over Canberra, quite frankly, use it. The setting within the park itself and the fact that we are having success with the way that people are re-engaging with that park—which previously it did not have—will not only make it safer but also service that growing population and make the park work a lot harder, if you like, while at the same time protecting those heritage values which are so important.

**MS ORR:** Great. Thank you.

**MR PARTON:** I want to ask a question regarding Haig Park. There has been a fair bit of discussion in public places about the lack of accessibility of those gravel paths. I just wanted to ask: what is the intention? Is there an intention to rectify those paths, to make them more accessible to all? What is happening there?

**Mr Barr:** Sure. There is both a north-south and an east-west path network, a fully accessible, 220-metre concrete path designed for all use types. That is the most direct transport point to point, from point A to point B. That is the primary movement network. You are familiar with the park; there are literally dozens of other—I guess you could call them desire lines—sort of muddy tracks, some of which have had the gravel treatment in order to protect some of the tree roots, but they are not designed as the major thoroughfares. They are secondary paths.

Putting in the gravel has the principal purpose of protecting the trees, but it does also provide some angled travel. But the park is linear. It is not that deep, but it is quite wide. We are not going to concrete the whole park, so some of those crushed rock paths will remain in that form because they are principally there to ensure that the muddy, water-filled, desire line cross-directional travel is somewhat more sensitive to the needs of the trees. If we were to concrete every single existing desire line or gravel path, all the park would be is a series of concrete paths with a tiny bit of grass in between them, so—

**MR PARTON:** So the answer is: no, you are not going to address them?

**Mr Barr:** Well, the answer is that there is an established, very wide, direct concreted path both north-south and east-west.

**MR PARTON:** And you do not see a safety issue with those paths as they are now?

**Mr Barr:** With those ones? The concrete ones?

**MR PARTON:** No, no, no. With the gravel paths.

**Mr Barr:** I think they are safer than what was there before, which was just dirt and tree roots, but if we were to concrete those paths then you would have to dig up some of the trees and some of the tree roots. It is not designed to be a whole other network of duplicative concrete paths.

**MR PARTON:** All right. Thank you.

**Mr Barr:** It is just making a better treatment of some of the existing, well-grooved walkways.

**MR PARTON:** All right.

**Mr Barr:** The more important thing was to get the direct and wide connectivity, and that has been the major difference, because they are also the ones that are lit and they are the ones that form the bones of the Haig Park markets on a weekend.

**MS ORR:** Can I just ask: with the gravel treatment, my understanding of gravel—and correct me if I am wrong—is that it will sink into the ground a little bit and settle over time. Is that what you are expecting to see with some of these footpaths?

**Mr Snow:** Probably. We have to operate within some very strict controls set down by the conservation management plan, which is very much about, as the Chief Minister said a moment ago, protecting the tree roots. That kind of informal surface gravel treatment is preferred, certainly from an arboricultural point of view. Over time, people walking on those paths—as opposed to people trying to ride electric scooters; they should be on the concrete paths—will consolidate the paths over time.

**MR CAIN:** Chief Minister, have you explored with the community whether some of these secondary paths ought to be concreted, given the concerns that have been clearly expressed?

**Mr Barr:** Yes; sure. The cost and the impact on the trees are too great to be able to do that and, in the end, we cannot concrete the entire park.

**MR CAIN:** I am suggesting some of them that are more used than others.

**Mr Barr:** The most used are the north-south and the east-west, and they are the ones that have been concreted.

**MR CAIN:** You are not considering any of the others, despite the community calls?

**Mr Barr:** No. At this stage, no, we are not, for the obvious reasons that we are not going to damage the trees and we are not going to turn the park entirely into a crisscross of concrete.

**MR CAIN:** That is not what I am suggesting, Chief Minister. Will the path to the community centre be gravel or concrete?

**Mr Snow:** Thank you. The two east-west, north-south paths effectively have the community centre on their intersection, so the answer is: yes, it will be serviced by all-weather paths.

**MR PARTON:** I spent some time in Dickson on the weekend. I note that the Woolley streetscape upgrade appears to be dragging on indefinitely, which is having a significant impact on local businesses. I certainly spoke to a few of them. These are the same businesses that are struggling to emerge from the impacts of COVID lockdowns. What was the original completion date of this project and why has it been delayed?

**Mr Snow:** I might ask Mr Gillman to respond to that. Thank you.

**Mr Gillman:** Yes. We had hoped that the works would be completed by now. However, a combination of the wet weather and, again, supply chain constraints has caused an impact on the program. Last weekend, on Saturday, the area in front of the Taphouse was opened to the public, and the Taphouse is using that now for outdoor dining and trading. The other end of the street has also been opened up and the fencing removed. Progressively—and conscious of the impact on business—we are moving the construction footprint back as quickly as can reasonably be done. However, there are still supply chain constraints, and the wet weather, because that is a very open job, has impacted the program as well.

**MR PARTON:** Mr Gillman, you said that you would have expected the project to be finished by now, but my specific question was: what was the original completion date for the project?

**Mr Gillman:** I can look back and come back with an exact date for you, Mr Parton.

**MR PARTON:** If you could take that on notice, that would be good. Additionally, is it possible for me to ask, on notice: what was the completion date in the original contract that was signed with the entity responsible for delivering this project? Given that, whatever that date comes back as, on notice, I am sure it is a date that has passed by, how do these contracts work? Are there any penalties that are faced by the contractor for not delivering the project on time? How does that work?

**Mr Gillman:** There are penalties within the contract. Liquidated damages are available. However, contract management and safety first; we do not want anyone expediting works in an unsafe way, so the prudent deploying of those rights is important. To be honest, in this market, with the supply chain so challenged across every aspect, it might be seen as onerous to strictly deploy the letter of the law contract, but that is a tool that is in the contract.

**MR PARTON:** All right. Excellent.

**MR CAIN:** So are there penalties for late delivery of this project?

**Mr Barr:** I think that has just been answered.

**MR CAIN:** Sorry. How will you measure the success of the upgrades, specifically

whether the proposed benefits exceed the cost to the local businesses caused by the excessive delays?

**Mr Snow:** Thank you for that question, Mr Cain. As we do with a number of our capital improvement projects or public space projects, we go back and actually measure, in a valuation sense, exactly what has happened. The key driver for this project is not just about creating a better public environment but also the economic benefits that flow from public realm investment. We have seen that already with our City Walk project.

We will go back to Dickson. We will go back to those same traders who we have worked with from the very beginning of this project, for a number of years, to get their support for this streetscape. We were totally up-front with those traders about the impact on their businesses. That is why the construction method has been designed specifically to minimise that impact. Undoubtedly, some traders might be unhappy, but we have always focused on the final outcome, and that they will be the direct beneficiaries of this public investment.

**MR CAIN:** How do you measure the economic benefits and based on what data?

**Mr Snow:** We have access to a very good analytical tool called the Place Intelligence Dashboard, which applies throughout our precinct, where we can measure footfall. Footfall generally equals customers. We can also gain access to the times within which people are spending time in the area—dwell time, as we like to call it. So we have good information already about how that part of Dickson is performing. As I said, post project completion we will be able to look and report back to government on the success, we hope—in fact, we are pretty confident—we will have around those metrics, around place success.

**MR CAIN:** And are you happy to table for this committee that analysis and the data that you are relying upon?

**Mr Snow:** Well, certainly the board would be expecting to see that, but I would be very happy to put that in the public domain, yes.

**MR CAIN:** Thank you.

**MS ORR:** I had a question on just what residents and visitors can expect from the completed project. I do not know if you have sort of already covered that or if you want to go into more detail.

**Mr Snow:** From the very beginning we realised that Woolley Street was already a pretty successful place. It is that Asian eat-street. It is well loved. It is very popular. But what the community said to us was that it was a bit car dominated. Certainly, there is a lot of asphalt in that street. So the motivation was really, as we have done with a number of our renewal projects, to rebalance it very much back to supporting public life in the street.

Woolley Street already had very wide verges, but we did not see much outdoor cafe use; we did not see people perhaps being encouraged to spend time. It was very much a case of: jump in and get the takeaway or jump into the restaurant and do all those

things. Successful public places, in our view, are very much about providing not only the additional amenity but also the opportunity for people to be attracted to the space and to spend more time in it.

Already we are seeing outside the Taphouse, where the project is nearly completed, that their patrons are responding to that opportunity. There are not only the economic benefits that I just spoke about but also the social, as well as environmental benefits, because there are many more trees. The shade cover, over time, will be a lot greater. There is a lot more soft landscaping in the street. We have taken a WSUD approach to stormwater design. I could go on and talk about the benefits of this design.

**Mr Barr:** Water-sensitive urban design, for those who did not follow the acronym. I just observe also that there is a lot happening in the broader Dickson precinct, closer to Northbourne Avenue, with a development, the first stage of which is open, that includes an ACT government office block right next door to the light rail stop. The second stage of that project involves an additional supermarket and more residential. The block across the road, the former ACT Planning and Land Authority buildings, also is slated for renewal. The Coles development to the north of the Woolworths supermarket is well underway now.

I think part of the next phase of challenge in Dickson is that there are going to be a number of areas that have had significant investment and a much-improved public realm, and there will be other bits that still have the same infrastructure as they did in 1974. So there will be a need, over time, to further invest in the precinct. Obviously, that will be a combination of public investment and private investment. Dickson group centre is home to thousands of people now. Ten years ago it was home to almost no-one. So that change needs an accompanying public infrastructure investment. We are seeing it progressively roll out.

I understand and acknowledge that one of the challenges is that it cannot all happen at once, and there is a lot of disruption at the moment, but the alternative is that no work ever occurs anywhere. It is impossible to undertake public realm improvement without there being any disruption. The easy path, if you never want anyone to complain about anything other than why is something not being done, is to not do anything. But when you do do things, there will be disruption, and trying to minimise that disruption and staging the level of redevelopment is certainly important. Having been a resident of that suburb for 15 years, I can say that the Dickson group centre of 2022 and 2023 is going to be a hell of a lot better than what was there in 2007.

**MR CAIN:** Chief Minister, regarding the Auditor-General's report on the Acton waterfront project, do you agree with this statement made by the Auditor-General:

... the City Renewal Authority Board did not sufficiently challenge the presumption of continuation with the incumbent although it had the best opportunity to do so.

Obviously, this is at the point of handover from the LDA.

**Mr Barr:** I am not going to offer commentary in advance of the government response to the auditor's recommendations. The report was presented to the Speaker on

16 September. The government will respond within the time frame. We appreciate the role that performance audits provide. There will be a government response, and that will be provided within the time frame.

**MR CAIN:** I am assuming that your response will include addressing the Auditor-General's belief that the CRA board's engagement with the procurement has been ineffective?

**Mr Barr:** The government will consider the report's seven recommendations and respond.

**MR CAIN:** The Auditor-General is no small player in our governance. Do you think this governance highlights good management of taxpayers' money?

**Mr Barr:** I am comfortable that the project is a good project and that, in the shift from one agency to another, the City Renewal Authority has undertaken the procurement work in good faith and with best endeavours.

**MR CAIN:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, last estimates we had an update on Lonsdale Street. It was going to the Government Procurement Board in the coming weeks, with a proposal to get a project management agreement with the subcontracted tenders. Where is that one up to?

**Mr Barr:** Mr Gillman, I think, can assist.

**Mr Gillman:** Yes. We have been to the Government Procurement Board and received their advice on the proposed contracting arrangements. A brief for delegate approval of those contracting arrangements and the appointment of a contractor via the Major Projects Canberra project management agreement panel is underway. Once that is completed, the contractor will be appointed and commence their work.

Their first stage of work is really understanding the job and doing the programming and ordering of long lead time items, and they will commence shortly thereafter. One of the challenges for commencement on Lonsdale Street is certainly trying not to disrupt the pre-Christmas trade of the entertainment precinct. So anything that does happen in that time, should anything happen, will be very low impact.

**THE CHAIR:** So you are expecting major works to start next year?

**Mr Gillman:** Major works to start next year; next calendar year.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. All right.

**MS ORR:** Just very quickly: are there any sites identified for new hotel development in the CRA precinct?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. There are a number.

**MS ORR:** In one minute or less.

**Mr Barr:** Indeed. Yes. There are a number, including associated with the theatre precinct renewal but that is not the only site. Mr Snow is very enthusiastic to answer the question, so I will let him give some further information.

**Mr Snow:** Ms Orr, a fair chunk of our precinct, as you would appreciate, is designated land. When you look at the permissible uses under the precinct codes in the National Capital Plan, hotels are certainly a primary and permissible use within much of our central Canberra area. The sites that we are currently doing due diligence on in relation to the opportunities within the cultural district certainly have that provision. We know that there is a real need for additional hotel beds. Certainly, the work we do around supporting our colleagues in VisitCanberra to boost the visitor economy is a really important part of our renewal work. So more beds in the city centre to support tourism is certainly very important.

I am aware of at least one, if not two, DAs that have recently been approved for hotels. We are also seeing a trend for an adaptive re-use of existing buildings, which is a continuing trend in the city centre. Again, a number of those are being converted into hotels. So the outlook is positive. Through our investment attraction work, we are certainly highlighting hotels as being one of the possibly preferred uses that we are offering for those sites when they come to market.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Mr Snow. That bring us to the end of our time today, so our committee hearing is now adjourned. Thank you very much, Chief Minister and officials, for coming. I think a few questions were taken on notice. If we could have those responses within five working days that would help us with our reports. Any members who wish to lodge questions should do so within five days. Thank you very much.

**Mr Barr:** Thank you.

**The committee adjourned at 4.00 pm.**