



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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

(Reference: [Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022 - 2023](#))

Members:

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

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2023

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**Secretary to the committee:
Mr J Bunce (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

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate	<u>97</u>
Major Projects Canberra	<u>57</u>
Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate	<u>57</u>

Privilege statement

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.33 am.

Appearances:

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

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

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

Corrigan, Mr Jim, Deputy Director-General, City Services

Hughes, Ms Cherie, Chief Operating Officer

Davidson, Mr Geoffrey, Executive Branch Manager, Development Coordination Branch

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

Rampton, Mr Tim, Executive Branch Manager, Roads ACT

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

Sturman, Ms Judith, Executive Group Manager, Transport Canberra

Fitzgerald, Mr Bruce, Executive Group Manager, Infrastructure Delivery and Waste

Cox, Ms Kirra, Executive Branch Manager, Strategic Policy and Programs

Major Projects Canberra

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Chief Projects Officer

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Project Director, Light Rail

THE CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. The committee this morning will hear from the Minister for Transport and City Services.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

The proceedings are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard, and they will be published. They are also being live-streamed and webstreamed. When you take a question on notice, please use the words, "I will take that on notice." That will help our secretariat to track down the answers.

In our first session we will hear from the Minister for Transport and City Services. Welcome, Mr Chris Steel, and officials from Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate and Major Projects Canberra.

I would like to remind all witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered a contempt of the Assembly. I might ask everybody at the table to confirm verbally that they understand

the privilege statement and that they agree with it. Thank you. When new witnesses come to the table, please state that you have read and understood the privilege statement when you first speak.

We are not inviting opening statements. We will proceed directly to questions. Minister, I will begin with transport and transport emissions. We have a number of accountability indicators in the annual report, but we do not have any that actually relate directly to Canberra's transport emissions. Those, I think, are kept in the greenhouse gas inventory. The last greenhouse gas inventory was in 2021-22, and that said transport made up 63.6 per cent of emissions. We are expecting a new one shortly. Can you tell me: are transport emissions decreasing at the moment or are they increasing?

Mr Steel: What we have seen, generally speaking, is that we have more population, there will be more cars on the road and it will take a long time for those transport emissions to come down. Zero emissions technology is obviously a key part of that, and we have started that with our own transport fleet in Transport Canberra, with the rollout of electric buses. That transition will be occurring by 2040 or earlier, as per our zero emissions transport plan. I am sure Minister Rattenbury can also speak to the broader transition in relation to the zero emissions vehicles plan which has been rolled out and the actions within it.

THE CHAIR: Minister, how are you monitoring the activities you are doing relating to transport and making sure that they are actually reducing our transport emissions?

Mr Steel: At the moment we are updating our zero emissions transport plan for Transport Canberra. We expect to release that next year and we will be looking at that as part of that process.

THE CHAIR: Given that we do not have any accountability indicators on this—we have accountability indicators on road resurfacing, we have some accountability indicators on buses, we have accountability indicators on how many kilometres of bike path and footpath we are building, but we have no accountability indicator on whether our transport emissions are actually decreasing—do you think you need some kind of way to measure it?

Mr Steel: For Transport Canberra specifically or for the whole of the ACT?

THE CHAIR: For ACT's transport; given that the emissions reduction minister reports against the emissions but does not have most of the levers, do you think there is a role for having an accountability indicator or some kind of regular means of reporting transport emissions against our transport portfolio?

Mr Steel: Certainly, with the actions that we are taking, we are held accountable to the various plans that we have put in place under the Transport Strategy, including our zero emissions transport plan for Transport Canberra. They all have actions which we can be held accountable to; absolutely.

THE CHAIR: There is the TCCS strategic plan 2021-24—not the annual report; it is a separate plan. That one had a measure in there to undertake six-monthly reporting

against the ACT Climate Change Strategy and performance data in the TCCS annual report. Has that reporting been occurring?

Mr Steel: We will have to take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Yes, take it on notice. Thank you, Minister. Ms Orr?

MS ORR: Minister, you mentioned the efforts you were making to decarbonise the ACT transport fleet. You have 12 new battery electric buses joining the fleet. Can you let us know how they are going and what work you are doing to continue to decarbonise the rolling stock?

Mr Steel: There are over 450 buses in the Transport Canberra fleet, and that will grow over time. We want to transition all of those to zero emissions. That started with some leased electric buses that have been operating on the Transport Canberra network. We are really pleased to announce that we have four Custom Denning buses that will be arriving before the end of the year, Australia-made electric buses, to add to the fleet. We have purchased a further 90 from Yutong, with the E12 electric buses that will be joining Transport Canberra's fleet over the next three years. They will be housed out at Tuggeranong, and at the new Woden depot, once it is complete, around the end of 2024.

Of course, with the new, updated zero emissions transition plan for Transport Canberra, we will be looking forward beyond that to further purchases that are required to meet our pathway commitment of transitioning the whole fleet by 2040 or earlier. I will hand over to Ben McHugh from Transport Canberra to talk a bit further about that.

Mr McHugh: As the minister said, we have 12 battery electric buses operating in the fleet at the moment. They average around nine hours of usage per day and just under 200 kilometres per vehicle per day. Since they have been in operation, they have clocked up almost 400,000 kilometres of service. That is 12 buses alone. We have four additional buses on their way through the commissioning process and due to be in operation before Christmas. As those numbers grow, obviously, that usage will continue to increase. Those 12 buses are also operating on the weekends now, so we are getting good utilisation out of them across the fleet.

MS ORR: What kind of things do you need to put in place to support the transition to electric buses from diesel? You mentioned they were going to the new Woden interchange and the Tuggeranong one. That suggests that you cannot use the other interchanges. I am just trying to get an idea of what supporting infrastructure you need for this transition.

Mr Steel: It is the depots, not the interchanges, although the interchanges could play a role in the future. At the moment it is the depots that will be playing the major role in terms of the electrification. We have to install high-capacity feeders through to Tuggeranong and Woden. That work is well underway with Evoenergy to make sure that those are in place.

There will be charging equipment that is required within the depots themselves. Some

of that is already available at Tuggeranong. We also have some charging capability at the Belconnen depot, but the grid around Belconnen is constrained. At the moment the bulk of the zero emissions fleet will be based in the south because we will have those high-capacity connections into those depots in the future, and there is feasibility work underway to look at a fourth depot on the north side. The location of that will be informed by what the most ideal place is, from a grid point of view, to be able to connect in and provide that capacity.

Mr McHugh: There are a few key elements that we need to get right in our business as we grow the percentage of electric buses. People are right at the front. Having staff trained and qualified to maintain and operate the electric fleet is really important. We have been working with CIT on training programs and putting a number of our staff, particularly our mechanics, initially, and others, through those programs.

There is the infrastructure, as the minister mentioned, in terms of having the right charging power supply outside the fence and the right technology inside the fence. Bus charging technology, like all electric vehicle technology, is developing quite rapidly. Smart charging technology and other things are coming to market. We are in the process of investigating that side of the infrastructure piece at the moment and procuring that.

Obviously, the buses themselves are the other key piece, and making sure you have physical space. The buses are sometimes of a different size and different capacities.

MS ORR: Is it fair to say that those factors also have an influence on how quickly the fleet can be transitioned?

Mr McHugh: Fleet transition is based on a couple of driving factors. One is, obviously, utilising the existing resources that we have at our disposal. We have buses that have a design life and an operational life that we want to utilise. In some cases they are low emissions buses that we have procured in the last five years, and we were planning to replace those at the point in time when, firstly, we have the infrastructure in place, secondly, we have the people in place and, thirdly, it is the right decision to replace a piece of infrastructure that you have invested in that helps you to achieve your emissions targets and meets the constraints. These are expensive pieces of equipment and replacing them all at once would be very challenging.

THE CHAIR: Can you tell me when the additional chargers will be installed for the 90 buses for Tuggeranong? Do you have a date in mind for that?

Mr McHugh: Not all of the 90 will be housed in Tuggeranong. A percentage of them will be housed in the Woden depot. We are in the process of procuring work to complete the inside-the-fence piece at the moment. We are looking to progress that work in the first half of next year, to align with the timing of Evoenergy completing their work outside the fence of bringing the cable to the site, which at the moment will occur around the middle of next year as well.

THE CHAIR: So installation in the first half of 2024?

Mr McHugh: Yes. We will determine exactly how many chargers over the coming

months, as we determine how many live in Woden and how many live in Tuggeranong.

MR CAIN: Regarding the Custom Denning element 2 electric buses, will these be leased or owned outright by the ACT government?

Mr Steel: They are leased, but I think there is an option in the contract in the future to be able to purchase those.

MR CAIN: What will the cost of those be compared to the cost of the existing Yutong E12s?

Mr Steel: I think the contract has been released in the contract register for that.

Mr McHugh: Yes, both of those contracts are publicly available, but I can provide that detail of bus comparison on notice, if needed.

MR CAIN: Thank you. On page 309 of the annual report, it states that the 20 per cent increase in the total network operating cost per network kilometre is due in part to the additional cost incurred as part of the introduction of the zero emissions bus fleet. What exactly do these costs relate to?

Mr McHugh: Exactly, I probably could not answer right now, without taking that on notice. Generally, it is the costs associated with the preparation for having them onsite, so the additional costs with getting infrastructure ready in the depots.

MR CAIN: Will these costs continue into 2023-24 or are they all within 2022-23?

Mr McHugh: I would imagine some of those costs will transfer across into the new financial year.

MS ORR: Minister, how has the ACT government been progressing with the light rail stage 2A project?

Mr Steel: There has been a lot of work underway already with the enabling project for raising London Circuit. Of course, we obtained works approval earlier in the year from the National Capital Authority for stage 2A, and we are in the final stages of procurement with Canberra Metro for stage 2A. I will invite the Major Projects team to come up and talk a little bit about what has occurred this year in terms of the project and the progress that has been made.

Ms Geraghty: I have read and acknowledge the privileges statement.

Mr Cahif: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

Ms Geraghty: There are a number of contracts that we are progressing in preparation for stage 2A. I will let Ash go through each of them, where we are up to and the status of them.

Mr Cahif: We commenced the stage 2A project with a series of contracts, the first

one being the early utility works for raising London Circuit. That work is now completed, and we have moved to the raising London Circuit main works contract, which I think everyone can see is in construction at the moment, and we are in the final stages of negotiation for the 2A main works.

In addition, we have already procured the LRV and depot modifications required to run stage 2A. That contract is live. Depot work is currently underway and expected to be completed by the end of the year. The LRVs are procured and being constructed in Spain. When those vehicles come across, which is expected mid next year, there will be a series of switch-outs so that the stage 1 service is not impacted while we do the retrofit of the existing fleet for wire-free running.

MS ORR: This is probably one for the minister: what next steps will the ACT government be taking to progress light rail to Woden, past stage 2A?

Mr Steel: As the final stages are met, with the stage 2A contract, the project team will switch its focus to stage 2B of light rail. The ACT government funded \$50 million in the budget to progress the planning and design for stage 2B of light rail. We know this is a complex stage of the project, and that a high level of design will need to be undertaken in order to satisfy the planning requirements.

That work is well underway. We are looking forward to engaging with the community next year, as we work towards the development of an environmental impact statement that will further outline to the community what is being planned, and how we are going to manage the sensitive issues in the parliamentary triangle, particularly around heritage and the environment.

We will be engaging with the communities along the light rail alignment to make sure that they are engaged at that early stage of design, and that we are hearing their feedback as the project progresses. I will hand over to MPC to say something further on that as well.

Mr Cahif: Stage 2A was designed with an eye on stage 2B. Certainly, some of the work that has been done along Commonwealth Avenue, where stage 2A terminates, has involved design down Commonwealth Avenue and working very closely with the NCA to ensure the integration of those works.

MS ORR: Why is it important that we continue to make this long-term investment in mass transit to support our city?

Mr Steel: I think the recent household travel survey which was just released, which reflected on travel behaviours in 2022, showed that, compared to the previous survey which was five years prior, in 2017, it has made a difference to people's behaviour along the alignment—up to a 50 per cent increase in patronage in Gungahlin on public transport compared to the previous bus system.

That is stage 1 of light rail. We hope that benefit will continue for the south side, as we extend the line. It is also a look forward and vision of the future about where Canberra is heading. With a larger population and with more congestion on the roads, buses will be caught up in that congestion, and they are not a mass transit solution.

They do not move as many people as a light rail vehicle does, which can move over 200 people, and has the potential to be expanded as well over time, in a frequent, reliable and comfortable service.

The vision is to make sure that we have that connection down to Woden in a central spine to enable us to integrate with other transport modes—buses running into the suburbs and other rapid buses running into the town centres—until we build out the light rail line. As we design light rail, with the extension particularly down to Woden, we have a view to the future around the broader light rail master plan, and what future connections might be made into that central spine. That also needs to be taken into account so that we can maximise the potential benefit. In 50 years time, if there is a light rail stage 5 that needs to be built, we need to make sure that there will be good connections in there, to suit a city that is heading to over 750,000 people in the decades ahead, not just where we are right now.

The planning has to have that foresight, and that is one of the reasons why we are saying it is a future-focused investment. Stage 1 of light rail has delivered the benefits today, but it will continue to extend those benefits in the future, as we see more people working and living along that corridor. We have already seen substantial new housing being put in. More people want to live there. We see the opportunity, certainly with the stage 2B line, of also having that broader and wider benefit in terms of land use uplift. Buses do not deliver those extended benefits. One of the reasons why light rail was chosen was because it provides transport benefits in a way that buses do not. It provides those broader benefits for the economy and for the city in a way that buses have never delivered.

THE CHAIR: Minister, Arup had a contract called “Transport Canberra Future Light Rail—Network Plan Refresh and City Future Proofing”. Can you tell me what the outcome of that contract was?

Mr Steel: We have seen the benefit of that work through the current district planning process, in making sure that the district plans, particularly in relation to the city, took into account those future corridors for the future stages of light rail, to make sure that any future planning and development that occurs in the city are not constraining the future development of lines through the city, particularly the express line from Belconnen potentially through to the airport in the future. That will have to run through the city. While the absolute route has not been determined through that process, it is about looking at what potential routes it could take, and making sure that, in our planning system going forward, that is taken into account so that we do not block future stages of mass transit from occurring.

THE CHAIR: That makes sense. It was planning work done in the context of the planning review, which makes absolute, perfect sense. The output, the publication of that, is that what is in the district strategy?

Mr Steel: That is right.

THE CHAIR: Feel free to add more, but that actually answers my question.

Mr McHugh: That is exactly correct.

MR CAIN: Minister, do you actually have a business case for light rail stage 2B?

Mr Steel: That is going to be developed. We have released the stage 2A business case, as you are aware, and we will develop a stage 2B business case. That has been debated in the Assembly maybe half a dozen times, including Assembly resolutions which have formally noted the exact process and timing of a stage 2B business case, so I would refer you to those resolutions of the Assembly.

MR CAIN: Will you release the 2B business case once it is completed?

Mr Steel: Yes, as we have for the previous two stages of light rail, stage 1 and stage 2A. It is an unprecedented level of transparency that no other government has shown, in relation to the project and releasing the business case. The difference with this process is that the stage 2B business case will be developed following the planning approvals. That is because the planning approvals for stage 2B are uncertain in terms of the scope, which is obviously out of the ACT government's hands. We will need to first determine what the outcome of that planning process is and then we will use that final scope to develop the stage 2B business case.

MR CAIN: When do you expect that? Have you got an estimate of when it might happen?

Mr Steel: It is out of our hands, Mr Cain, in terms of the third-party approval. That has been made clear.

MR CAIN: This term of government or after the election?

Mr Steel: We expect it will be in the next term of government. It will take some time to move through the planning approvals processes of the National Capital Authority and the federal environment department's EPBC process, as well as working through the parliament's approval process for any work within the parliamentary precinct, and indeed our own ACT planning and land authority planning process. That will take some time. We have always been up-front about that. We split stage 2 into two parts in the first place because we knew that it was going to take a period of time before we could get approval for stage 2B and we wanted to commence work earlier on stage 2A, and that is exactly what has happened.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a series of questions on school active travel programs, if we have the relevant officials for that one. Firstly, in the government response to the Auditor-General's report on childhood healthy eating and active living programs, there was mention of an evaluation of the school active travel programs. I wanted an update on that evaluation. Has it been published? Where is that?

Mr Davidson: That evaluation is now in its final stages. I expect that, once that has been endorsed by government, it will be published in the coming months.

MR BRADDOCK: The response also mentioned school crossing supervisors. Is that the same evaluation? Is it exactly the same or is it a separate evaluation and what is its status?

Mr Davidson: It is a single evaluation of all of the school safety programs, so it includes the School Crossing Supervisors program, the Active Streets for schools program, and the Ride or Walk to School and It's Your move programs as well. It is all part of the single evaluation, which is really seeking to understand exactly what difference those programs have made in encouraging active travel in schools but also in promoting behaviour change more broadly.

MR BRADDOCK: Will that evaluation be made publicly available in due course?

Mr Davidson: That is the intention, yes.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you. I want to come to the more specific: Maribyrnong Primary School area and surrounds.

MS ORR: That is what I was going to ask.

MR BRADDOCK: As local members, we are both interested to know the intent of the directorate to do active travel improvements in and around that school.

Ms Clement: I accept the privilege statement. We do not actually currently have any plans for active travel improvements around Maribyrnong Primary School.

MS ORR: Ms Clement, is it because you are going through the evaluations at the moment that you are not putting new schools into the program? Is it something that Maribyrnong could still make a case for in the future?

Mr Davidson: Yes, they can make a case. We continue to work closely with all of the schools. Sorry, Chair; I should have said that I have read and understood the privilege statement. We have approximately 84 schools participating in the School Safety Program. The level of engagement varies from time to time; it depends on the things that are happening at those schools.

We have had previous engagement with Maribyrnong. There are a number of different approaches. It is not always just infrastructure improvements which are delivered; sometimes it is a case of working with the schools to provide education and other support measures. There is scope within the program so that, as infrastructure improvements are identified, they can be delivered.

MS ORR: Would I be right, Mr Davidson, in taking from that that for Maribyrnong there are currently not infrastructure improvements identified, which is why there is not additional work there, but should a process be undertaken and it requires some additional infrastructure it could be considered to go into the program?

Mr Davidson: That is right. It is not currently programmed, but there is scope within the program itself that, as improvements are identified, they can be delivered.

MS ORR: Okay. The minister might be getting a few letters from a couple of local members.

MR BRADDOCK: Yes.

MR CAIN: Potholes, Minister. Since around September 2022 there have been a large number of pothole-related damages claimed. Could you tell me how many compensation claims are outstanding at the moment and how many have actually been resolved?

Mr Steel: Thanks. I will hand over to Tim Rampton from Roads ACT.

Mr Rampton: Good morning, everybody. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Yes, we have had quite a significant number of pothole claims come through over the last 18 months. Since January 2022 we have received upwards of 1,200 claims through my claims team at Roads ACT. A large proportion of those came through in November and December 2022 and January 2023. Around 700 of them came through then, and that is on the back of the wet spring that we had last year. In total we have had about 1,200 claims assessed by the team. At the moment we have under 300 still pending. Not only have we made some really good progress on the repair of the potholes themselves but we have also provided additional resources within that claims team to make sure that we are able to process them in a timely manner.

MR CAIN: What is the average length of time to resolve one and the average dollar figure that has been paid out?

Mr Rampton: We had a published rate of 60 days; that was a 60-day working period. However, it has taken longer than that. I do not have the average time and the average dollars on hand, so I will need to take that on notice.

MR CAIN: Thank you. How many claims have been rejected?

Mr Rampton: There are a number of rejected claims. There are also a number that are referred through to our insurance authority, ACTIA. Again, I do not have the specific number that have been rejected at this time, so I will take that number on notice.

MR CAIN: I am aware that some claims have been waiting over a year for an outcome. Do you believe that is an acceptable period for someone to wait for a compensation claim?

Mr Rampton: I understand that there is some frustration in the community around the claims processing time. It is not a straightforward process. There is a lot of back and forth between the team and the constituents. Quite often a lot of the detail is not necessarily in the claim. It is hard to get onto people sometimes. We are working towards improving that time frame at the moment.

MR CAIN: What is the full-time equivalent of staff who are working on these claims?

Mr Rampton: At the moment we have four staff members working on it, our full-time equivalency. We also have some additional assistance coming from ACTIA

to support our claim processing system.

MR CAIN: What is the breakdown of the level of these staff?

Mr Rampton: They range from—

MR CAIN: Those four, I guess.

Mr Rampton: Yes, there are four. I will need to take that one on notice to give you an accurate account.

MR CAIN: This may be for the minister. Why will you not pay interest on claims, Minister, that have taken an extraordinarily long time to resolve?

Mr Steel: Firstly, we do not accept liability automatically in relation to claims. Unlike many other jurisdictions, we do actually accept claims. Some do not and some have caps in relation to the amount that they pay out, so our claims system is generous. We are trying to work through those claims, but our focus is on investing in prevention of this type of damage happening to our roads in the first place, and that is exactly where it should be.

MR CAIN: But why is interest not payable to someone who has got a claim approved but has waited an extraordinary amount of time for the payment to come?

Mr Steel: I think there are other options. If they want to take their claim higher, there are options available to them. If they think they have not got the compensation that they deserve, they can speak to Roads ACT about those options.

MR CAIN: You really have not answered the question. Why have you decided not to pay interest when an approved claim takes an extraordinary amount of time to process?

Mr Steel: I think we have answered that question, Mr Cain. Thank you.

MR CAIN: So the answer is that you will not pay interest on—

Mr Steel: I think we have answered that question.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I want to go back to the battery electric bus chargers, just the contracts themselves. In September 2023 there was a contract for \$198,000 from a supplier for two battery electric bus chargers at Belconnen. Earlier in the year we had, in February, a contract signed for \$199,100 with the same supplier to install six battery electric chargers in Tuggeranong. Those contracts were almost the same amount—they were both just under the \$200,000 threshold—and one was for two chargers and one was for six chargers. We are interested, in our office, as to why one output that looks three time higher costs about the same as the other one.

Mr Steel: Do you want to take that one?

Mr McHugh: Yes. I would have to look at the elements of the contract to understand

the detail. It could relate to the supply of the chargers being provided through a separate contract and the installation of those chargers being applied to this contract. I suspect that is the case, but I will have to look into that. It might just be that those two contracts were for civil works, cabling and conduiting to get inside the fence works to the chargers, and the chargers were provided through a separate contract, but I will need to confirm that.

THE CHAIR: So you can take that on notice?

Mr McHugh: I will.

THE CHAIR: That would be great. As I said, we are always interested, in our office, when we see contracts that are just below the threshold.

Mr McHugh: Right.

THE CHAIR: Those are always the ones that we look at closely. I am sure they are the ones you look at closely.

Mr McHugh: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: It would be helpful if you could explain to us a bit more about what went on with those two.

Mr McHugh: Absolutely.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS ORR: Thanks. I would like to ask about the urban forest. Minister, how is the ACT government tracking in achieving its target of planting 54,000 trees by the end of this financial year?

Mr Steel: We today released our annual tree report which provides updated data on where we are up to in terms of the tree planting program. Right across government, we now expect that we are on track to plant, by next year, 64,000 trees, which is above the 54,000 committed, so we are tracking well against the targets. Transport Canberra and City Services have been planting 18,000 trees and we will look to ramp that up even further than that over this financial year and plant even more. We have had quite difficult conditions over the last couple of years. While, to some extent, it is great to have more wet weather for growing trees, it also creates problems with the planting program. But the team has been taking the available planting days and making sure that we are trying to get on top of those targets.

We have also been working in partnership with the community through particularly the Adopt-a-Park program—they have been helping with some planting activities, in terms of trees and shrubs—and to support other elements of their particular local projects which go towards supporting our goal of having 30 per cent tree canopy cover by 2045. I will hand over to Mr Iglesias to talk through some of the outcomes of the report that we released today.

Mr Iglesias: Good morning, everyone. I acknowledge the privilege statement. The minister gave a good summary of the plantings we have done. It has been a huge effort by the team when you consider we have had three years of El Niño conditions. The plantings are well on track. One significant initiative we took this year was to bolster our in-house capability to be able to deploy planting teams all over the ACT.

It might be a curious thing to say, but it actually takes quite a lot of effort to determine a site for a tree to be planted, when you consider the competition for space in the ACT and for public space in particular. It takes real effort to identify those places. The team has been doing some great work on that, and, over the course of the next 12 months, they know they have 20,000 trees to put into the landscape. It will actually go past the 54,000 target. At some stage in the next 12 months, we will go past it—I can safely say that—which is a great result.

MS ORR: Great. Taking a step back, what is the process that goes into deciding a suitable site for a tree? Can you answer that, Mr Iglesias?

Mr Iglesias: Absolutely. There are lots of different pathways in which a tree can find its way into the ground. A member of the public can go online and they can say, “This is a no brainer. There was a tree here. It has been taken out for some reason or it has died. I am going to let the ACT know.” We have planted thousands of trees relying on people literally dropping a pin on a website and telling us about it.

Where we want to deliver new trees, we need to think about the site, we need to think about the species and we need to think about the location. Is there consistency with existing plantings? Is there a need to favour native over exotic? Are there questions around what the mature canopy might do to the services in the area? That is a really big one. We have to make sure that we continue to support the services that compete for space for our trees in the verge. If you think about the nature strip in an urban location, lots of things are going on when you look really carefully, whether it be underground or above ground. Our team needs to consider that, but also needs to think about what the community wants and whether the community wants a tree in that particular location. Is it going to impact the line of sight for vehicles, for example, on local roads? Is the tree going to produce a huge amount of rubbish at a time when it is not ideal to do so? Is the tree particularly susceptible to being a weed, and, if not now, will it in the future? All these things have to be considered by our team before they make a final decision on where to stick a tree.

MS ORR: Great. Minister, this might be one for you. There is the funding that has been invested in protecting Canberra’s trees. How much is it and how will that intersect with the Urban Forest Act and help to protect and grow Canberra’s urban tree canopy?

Mr Steel: This is an investment of well over \$20 million in the budget to support tree maintenance as well as the staff required to administer and implement the new Urban Forest Act. I understand the staff have been recruited ahead of the introduction of the new act from 1 January. There has been significant engagement as well with industry and with the community. A range of pop-up sessions are occurring this month on the implementation of the new arrangements, which are new for everyone.

Obviously, with the decreased canopy requirement, the protection of more trees across the community down to above eight metres tall is a big change, as well as the canopy contribution to agreement framework. There has been some good engagement with industry on that. Tree maintenance is going to be a big focus for Urban Treescapes and Transport Canberra and City Services going forward.

We have an ageing urban forest and, in order to extend the life of those ageing trees and maximise the benefits that they provide, much of that being mature canopy, we actually need to invest in the maintenance of trees. While tree planting is critical and is something that we will need to continue, tree maintenance is going to be really important as well to make sure that even the new trees that we plant go on to survive and thrive so that we get the benefit once they mature.

Tree maintenance has been a focus of funding in the recent budget, but it will also need to be a focus of the team going forward. Extra work is required with more trees being protected, and therefore the work that is required by Urban Treescapes in engaging with the community on the tree damage applications and the canopy contribution arrangements is going to be quite significant and something that we will need to monitor. I will hand over to Daniel to talk a little bit about the engagement that we have been having and the feedback.

Mr Iglesias: We have been engaging with community but also with industry. We have had sessions with arborists. We see arborists that are active as a business in the community to be real partners in this whole process, because they are going to be at the coalface with people who are potentially going to put in an application under the new act. We want arborists to understand the concept of the Urban Forest Act, which is basically to keep more trees in the ground and to really work with the homeowner or the landowner to challenge their thinking: does the tree need to go; could it stay with a bit of pruning? We have an amazing asset in this city and that is the whole focus of the act, and the arborists are a key component.

Our training has been in ensuring they understand the elements of the act. There are quite a few new elements in the act that look at extending more protection to our trees. We expect we are going to get a doubling of applications once the act goes online on 1 January. We cannot be sure, but we are preparing for a doubling. What that means is that, with the money, we have been able to invest in the training of new staff but also in the familiarisation of new processes that we will have to undertake. They are new to us as well as to the public, obviously. We are making great headway, but it is taking a large proportion of our effort so that we can be sure that we are going to be ready by 1 January.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Braddock, a supplementary?

MR BRADDOCK: I come back to species selection, which you mentioned. I have had representations from people concerned about the species selected—in particular, how some are identified as sleeper weeds in the Canberra Nature Map yet are being planted by TCCS. I want to check: is that the case and what is being done about that?

Mr Iglesias: Yes; it is. We plant tens of thousands of trees and sometimes the community that we work with actually understands the nature of the location and the

site better than we do. They have a really good understanding of it. We see that as a strength to be able to harness. I think we can improve in really understanding what the community needs out of local tree planting. In some instances, in a very small number of cases, we have made some unfortunate decisions about tree species, whether that is, for example, trees being planted too close to, say, grassland areas which are naturally treeless areas or whether it is a species that could, in the future, become a problem. We have a list in the system of trees that we can deploy.

The community is aware of the latest thinking around trees that have been found to be weeds. We just need to make that connection and ensure that, if we are going to put something in there, it is the right thing to do. We have made mistakes in the past, but I think the important thing to realise is that, within the context of all our planting, it is a very small fraction and we are keen to get it right.

MR BRADDOCK: Could I clarify: are any sleeper weeds on that list or have they all been removed?

Mr Iglesias: It depends on what your definition of a sleeper weed is. This is the difficult thing. We have a document that lists species that are not considered to be weeds. There is no authoritative list of sleeper weeds that we can rely on. It is often down to opinion and experts having different views. But, having said that, if a case is put to us that we are talking about a potential sleeper weed, we will listen.

Mr Steel: What I should say is that the list is reviewed on a semi-regular basis under the Municipal Infrastructure Standards. We have undertaken reviews working with organisations like the CSIRO and the ANU specifically in the recent past, looking at the climate adaptability of all the species on the list and adding new species that will thrive in a hotter and drier climate. That work is done to update the list periodically. I know there are also claims running around at the moment that we should ban London plane trees from the list and not plant them at all because of some of disadvantages in terms of pollen and the impact on people with asthma during the spring months. These things need to be looked at closely. Often a plan will have advantages and disadvantages associated with it, and ultimately a call needs to be made about whether it continues to be on the list, but it is reviewed on a semi-regular basis.

THE CHAIR: I have a supplementary. Does the Biodiversity Conservation Forum discuss the tree species list?

Mr Iglesias: Yes. In fact, it is on the agenda for Thursday. That is a good forum to get that aired. EPSDD also has, or had until recently, a weed advisory group which considered these sorts of issues as well. They are a good resource as well.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a substantive but it continues on trees. At Yerrabi Pond, I have noticed that a number of trees are now dead and have signs saying they have been vandalised. I want to check if there is any information on that but also find out what the policy is when such a situation occurs.

Mr Steel: It is obviously very unfortunate when, pre-emptively, newly planted trees are vandalised. One of the actions that Transport Canberra and City Services have been taking where a tree has been vandalised is to actually let the community know.

Firstly, they often think we removed it, which is often not the case, or we are removing it because it is vandalised, so letting people know is important. That is consistent with our other policies around signage on trees before they are removed so the community is aware well ahead of time and, if they have any concerns, they can raise those. It is about letting people know that there was vandalism, and, of course, Transport Canberra and City Services will look at replacing those trees when they can.

Mr Iglesias: In relation to the damage and the vandalism, our policy is to refer it to ACT Policing and to provide them any intelligence we may have. Often, as is the case at Yerrabi, they have an active community group and they are often the source of some intelligence. We routinely cooperate with Policing, and, if there is anything that we are aware of, we will share that with them. The best thing to do is to return a tree to a location, because it is important to stick to the principle of what we are trying to do. Trying to understand why the tree was removed is almost impossible, but we will certainly work with the locals to ensure that Policing have the information they need to pursue it if need be.

MR CAIN: Minister, regarding the number of buses in service with Transport Canberra, table 25 on page 108 indicates that there are currently 455 buses in the fleet. Is the 455 number inclusive of the accessibility and special needs transportation fleet?

Mr McHugh: No. That is the number of operational city buses that are running on the route network and excludes special needs transport buses.

MR CAIN: How many of those buses are there?

Mr McHugh: I might hand to Judith Sturman who will have that level of detail on the SNT fleet.

MR CAIN: Or you can take that on notice for sake of time.

Mr McHugh: Unless she has the answer at hand.

Ms Sturman: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Around 30 buses that we have deliver the special needs transport. We can provide an accurate figure.

MR CAIN: Of the 455 buses which are not in that category, how many are compliant with accessibility standards set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992?

Ms Sturman: All of them except for 15—that is the easiest way to state it—which is 96.7 per cent of the fleet.

MR CAIN: I understand there is still a number of Renault PR100.2 Mk2 buses in service, in spite of the fact that their retirement was announced in December 2020. Minister, as you are aware, these buses are became non-compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act at the end of last year. Are these the 15 that have just been referenced or are there others that are not compliant as well?

Ms Sturman: These are the 15.

MR CAIN: What, if any, contingency plans are in place if a mobility impaired person is unable to board one of the non-compliant buses?

Ms Sturman: The background is that we had a plan that would see those buses being replaced by 2020, as per DDA compliance. Due to the issues with the supply chain and delivery of buses to replace them, unfortunately we were unable to replace them at that time. The contingencies we have in place, which were actually in place before as well, because we realised that we have a lot of customers that need accessible buses, include the information that we provide which identifies which next bus coming is an accessible bus, and customers can also call to find out or they can call if there is no accessible bus and they have a difficulty. We have field staff that can assist those individual members of the public. However, that is very unusual. We have very little feedback from people that require that service.

The main reason is that the fleet has two peaks—a morning peak and an afternoon peak—when the full fleet is required, and those are the main times when, if we need to use those buses, we will use them, but we avoid using them where we can. The typical time we will need to use them is when there are maintenance requirements on other buses and we need to use those buses. It is to maintain reliability across the fleet.

MR CAIN: Of the buses currently in service, how many are fitted with bike racks?

Ms Sturman: I cannot give you the actual number, but the only buses that are not fitted with bike racks are the Steer Tags. I will take that on notice.

MR CAIN: This is my last question, Chair. Regarding those Steer Tags buses that are not fitted with bike racks, as you have said, are there plans to phase them out or to fit them so that they can take bike racks?

Ms Sturman: Yes. There is a replacement strategy for the fleet for the zero-emission program and the Steer Tags are part of that. They are one of the older types of buses that we have, so they will be early in that process. I cannot give you an actual date, but we can advise the order in which the buses will be retired, and that is contained in the zero-emission transition plan.

THE CHAIR: Minister, in hearings last year we spoke about the *TCCS emissions reduction plan 2019-20 to 2024-25*. That is the internal document that measures TCCS's own emissions rather than ACT transport emissions. You said at the time that it was finalised but it was an internal document so it could not be published on open access. We cannot see any mention of this document anymore in the annual report. Can you tell me: does that document still exist? Are you still using that emissions reduction plan?

Mr Steel: It would be in place and would be updated as well. Yes.

Mr Corrigan: We will take the detail on notice.

THE CHAIR: You do not have someone who can speak to that here?

Mr Corrigan: Not at the moment.

THE CHAIR: I might continue with the things that I would like taken on notice so that we can get the right information. I am wondering why it was removed, where it is and whether it exists, whether it can be published, and why it was removed from the annual report. There is also an Emissions Reduction Working Group in TCCS. Does that group still exist?

Ms Hughes: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement.

MS CLAY: Can you tell me whether the Emissions Reduction Working Group is still meeting?

Ms Hughes: If you are happy, I will go back to the first question that you asked. The reporting that we do on zero emissions is fed to CMTEDD and is published through the EPSDD annual report. All the reporting that we do in that space is all fed through that avenue. We have a section in our annual report which talks about emissions and sustainability, but most of our formal reporting is put into the annual report. There was a question earlier with regard to the six-monthly reporting that we have committed to. That occurs as well, and that goes through to EPSDD for inclusion in their annual report.

MS CLAY: Is that in relation to the *TCCS emissions reduction plan 2019-20 to 2024-25*?

Ms Hughes: That report still exists, so we are reporting against that, but our reporting is fed into EPSDD for their whole-of-government reporting.

MS CLAY: But it is disaggregated against yours?

Ms Hughes: Correct.

MS CLAY: In the EPSDD annual report?

Ms Hughes: Correct.

MS CLAY: So we can look at that figure over—

Ms Hughes: That is correct.

MS CLAY: Can you tell me what activities were done under that that have reduced TCCS emissions?

Ms Hughes: A number of different things. We have a large fleet over and above the transport fleet that we currently have. There has been a focus and we have had good discussion about the electric busses that we are bringing on. We also have a broader fleet of about 400 of either mowers or street sweepers. We have tools that we use in our directorate as well. We are looking at transitioning most of those, if possible and they are fit for purpose, to electric as well.

We also have gas usage in some of our businesses, particularly cemeteries and Capital

Linen, but also in the Yarralumla nursery space, so we are looking at whether there are opportunities for us to change from gas in particular where possible. That is quite challenging, certainly at the moment in the Capital Linen space and the cemeteries, because there are not actually alternatives that are viable in that space currently, but we will continue to look at what we can do there.

MS CLAY: All that information is in the EPSDD annual report?

Ms Hughes: And some of it that is captured in our annual report as well.

MS CLAY: We might track through both of those and then we might lodge on notice anything we cannot find.

Ms Hughes: Of course.

MS ORR: Minister, can you provide us an update on the new MyWay+ ticketing system?

Mr Steel: We were obviously delighted to be able to partner with NEC to deliver the new ticketing solution. Work is underway to plan and design the new system and hardware has been ordered. While I appreciate that the community has not seen a huge amount of information, it is critical to get this design piece right on IT infrastructure projects like this and to make sure that we have got the right design that meets all of the needs.

One of those pieces has been the integration with the digital account in the future as well. This is an account that is used by around 300,000 people, both in the territory and interstate. We want to make sure that as many government services as possible can operate from that account. The ticketing system is one of those that we want to make sure is integrated as part of that so that people can access their accounts online. I will hand over to Judith to talk a little further about the work that has been happening with the ticketing system, which we still expect to become operational next year.

Ms Sturman: The ticketing program has been ongoing for a number of months. It is a very technological program. A lot of back-end work has to be done to actually set up the ticketing before we can bring it to the public interface. That work is underway. As the minister said, we have equipment that has been ordered. There is actually a Fyshwick building where all of that equipment is being stored; so it is actually in Canberra now.

NEC are working very strongly with us in this very exciting new technological solution. It brings some advancements to the current system which are quite dramatic and lead quite a few other states at the moment in terms of how that will eventuate for the community. People will have a choice of how to pay for tickets. They can use a credit card to tap on and tap off and they can go onto an app and sign up so that they can use their iPhone to pay. Along with that comes a lot of information, and there is an opportunity to opt in to receive information. The information for real time will be incorporated in the journey planner. It brings a whole lot of changes that will be great improvements and remove the barrier that we currently have that some people experience to accessing public transport.

The other aspect is that we are working with the community. We have an accessibility reference group, which includes the Australian blind society, the deaf society, vulnerable people and women in Canberra, where we will introduce the app and have them walk through how they need that information on the app. We are doing that engagement piece so that it will be fit for purpose for the community. That will be ongoing over the next coming months and after Christmas. As we piece together the back end, we will be able to bring more to the fore in the public environment.

MS CLAY: Great. I was going to ask how the new system will make it easier for Canberrans to use public transport. I think you have touched on that a little bit, but is there anything that you would like to add?

Ms Sturman: I think the main thing is that it brings public transport into the domain of everybody. One of the ways that we are seeing light rail being used is that you can just walk up to light rail, you can buy a ticket at the stop, you can get your information and get on, and it is very user friendly. At the moment, at a bus stop, if you do not have a MyWay card, the only information is what is on a paper timetable, and you probably have no sense of whether that bus is going to turn up. With this, you will now be able to make sure that you have a ticket. You might travel by car three days a week and then decide to use public transport, and you can do that without having to invest in buying a MyWay card; you can just use your credit card easily. That is probably one of the key aspects.

In the future, there will be opportunities to enable mobility as a service application, joining up all sorts of transport—active travel transport, such as scooters; rideshares; and all sorts of other aspects—into one platform. That will enable us to make that for the public a very easy solution to get different methods of transport all on one app on their phones.

MR CAIN: Will the existing MyWay cards be compatible with this new system?

Ms Sturman: There will be the ability for them to work but they will need to be upgraded onto the system.

Mr Steel: So the answer is no to that question, but there will be a travel card that you can have if you would like one.

MR CAIN: Will people who are currently registered with a MyWay card going to be sent an upgraded card? What is the process there?

Ms Sturman: There is a big communications process underway and there is a big process for transferring people who have registered, so that they can be invited to use the new cards. Unfortunately, we do not have a lot of people that registered their cards. So the main communication will be for people to either get onto the app or, if they want to use a card again, to get a replacement card. With all systems, there is a stepped change that people will need to make.

MR CAIN: Minister, just finally, what is the expected cost of this whole new payment system?

Mr Steel: I think we have released the contract on the contracts register with the cost and announced the cost. I am happy to hand over to Ben McHugh.

MR CAIN: Which is what?

Mr McHugh: I would not have the exact dollar figure at hand. The contract is in two parts. One is for the development and implementation of the new system, and the second phase is the operations of that contract for 10 years beyond that point. That detail is published and available. We can also provide those numbers on notice.

MR BRADDOCK: Can I have an update on the Gungahlin Transport Plan project?

Mr Steel: Sure. I would invite Geoff Davidson up to talk about that work.

Mr Davidson: Thank you. The Gungahlin Transport Plan is currently being finalised, and we expect to award the contract within the coming weeks.

MR BRADDOCK: How is the active travel feasibility study feeding into that plan?

Mr Davidson: The Active Travel Plan will look at the Gungahlin Town Centre and the surrounding road network as well. It will identify what the modal priorities are. It will identify some short-term priorities for the town centre and how some of the existing congestion points can be resolved. It will take a much longer-term view in terms of what the vision is for that transport network and how we can achieve that vision over a longer-time horizon. The feasibility studies, of course, will be an input into the plan itself.

MR BRADDOCK: What is the status of the community route links that were identified as part of that feasibility study? How are they going to progress?

Mr Davidson: I might ask my colleague Sophie Clement to speak to that one.

Mr Steel: There was funding in the budget for design for a number of those links.

Ms Clement: The Gungahlin active travel feasibility study was completed recently, and we have had funding in the budget to develop those links into a detailed design. At the moment, we are currently finalising the plan around that so that we can get that scope right. We will develop the high-priority elements into preliminary sketch plans, and then we will probably select the highest priority ones to develop up to detailed design, which means they will be construction tender-ready documentation.

We are planning to get a tender out for that design consultant, so that they will be starting works in the new year, and they will progress through that work. It will involve going out onto site. There will be site investigations, so we will have to do survey work, which is quite a big investment, and then looking at the detailed design of how they will actually fit into those different road corridors. We will liaise with the transport plan work to make sure that our work is matching in with what is proposed through the transport plan or is informing what is happening in the transport plan.

We have a couple of intersection projects that are in feasibility and preliminary design work coming out of the recent budget as well, and the active travel detailed design work will also coordinate with what is proposed through those intersections, where they might overlap with the links.

MR BRADDOCK: Which particular links are going to the detailed design stage?

Ms Clement: I do not have the list in front of me. The high-priority links—which will be between eight and 10—will go to that preliminary design stage. Because the detailed design does require survey work, we need to understand what is happening in the ground in that moment, and we know that we will not be able to construct it all at once. We want to make sure we are effective with that investment of detailed design. At that point we will make a decision about which ones go to detailed design, but they will be based on high priority from a safety and a community kind of user perspective in the area.

MR BRADDOCK: Can you just please let me know, or take it on notice, the links that were the high priority that are progressing to the next stage?

Ms Clement: Certainly. I can take that on notice.

MS ORR: How do you see the Casey traffic and transport improvement study and the government's effort to improve traffic and parking in Casey fitting with this bigger piece of work? How is it all going to come together?

Mr Davidson: They will all be put into the transport plan. With the transport plan itself, there will be a range of future scenarios that will be considered and options that will be tested. Existing work that has been undertaken will be fed through as an input into the project.

MS ORR: What is within the scope of being considered for the project? Can you just run us through that, Mr Davidson?

Mr Davidson: It is yet to be commenced, but the whole purpose of the transport plan is to make sure that there is a plan with a longer-term horizon that will look at how we can achieve the vision of the transport strategy at an area level for Gungahlin district itself and look at what the modal priorities are for the network and what initiatives might be required, both infrastructure and non-infrastructure, in order to achieve that vision.

Hearing suspended from 10.44 am to 11.00 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to our public hearings for the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. We will go to Mr Cain for questions.

MR CAIN: Minister, in the research that you obtained from the Australian Road Research Board, was asphalt the recommended preferred resealing?

Mr Steel: It depends on the type of road. We use and apply it in different areas. In areas that have very high use it performs better, particularly around areas like

intersections, where the road surface can be subject to deformation. Particularly when you have breaking activity and turning activity in an area, it is often applied to those areas.

MR CAIN: That is asphalt, you mean?

Mr Steel: Yes. I will hand over to Tim Rampton to talk a little bit about why we apply that and the work that has been done by what is now known as the National Transport Research Organisation.

Mr Rampton: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The research that we had done for us by the former Australian Road Research Board is something that we have done each year. We have a monitoring system where we will go and test the surface of our territorial roads—about one-third of our network or our territorial road network—each year. We will pass that data over to NTRO and they will do the research for us on what the finding is.

They provide us with some advice and research-based evidence and suggestions on the treatments that are required for a particular road. That will be dependent on the condition of the road. It will be dependent on the traffic volumes, including the heavy-vehicle volumes and bus volumes, for example, as well as the subsoil drainage under there and the base under the wearing course. The research does not necessarily just say asphalt. It does say different styles and different types of treatments are applicable, and that will depend on a case-by-case basis on particular roads.

MR CAIN: Approximately what percentage of our roads are treated with asphalt versus bitumen?

Mr Rampton: I cannot give you the exact breakdown of that, but this year we are enhancing our road resurfacing program, going up to an accountability indicator. Previously, it was six per cent of our territorial roads and three per cent of our municipal roads. We are moving that forward and increasing that on the back of the funding that has come from the strategic road maintenance funding, where seven per cent of our territory roads and four per cent of our municipal roads will be resurfaced each year. That will be an increase of one million square metres up to 1.26 million square metres. The road resurfacing program itself probably represents around four per cent of our network each year. If you work that through, we are looking to refresh our roads every 20 to 25 years.

MR CAIN: Minister, I make reference to a *Canberra Times* article of 15 September last year. It said that the potholes that we experienced are also the result of neglect, according to the chief executive of the Australian Road Research Board, Mr Caltabiano, and that the problem is that the ACT government may have taken the short-term, cheap solution in the past, causing bigger problems now. Do you accept that conclusion?

Mr Steel: We have been working with Mr Caltabiano and what is now known as the NTRO to develop the evidence base for the strategic road maintenance program. So we have quite a close relationship with that organisation, and that had led to the announcement that we made to increase our road maintenance funding by 52 per cent

up to \$153 million. As part of that, we have accepted the view that there should be more asphaltting that should occur. So there is an increase of about 150 per cent in asphaltting that will be undertaken as part of the program.

There is no doubt that some roads in the ACT have been affected by the rain that we have had and, yes, that does show where there are defects in the road network that rain gets into those defects and can cause potholes. That has happened right across the country. We know that we need more funding from the federal government for, particularly, the end of the road lifecycle—the road rehabilitation end of the life cycle.

I was really delighted that, just over the last few days, we have seen the infrastructure review come out with a recommendation to increased funding for the Roads to Recovery Program. We in the ACT use that funding for that rehabilitation. That program has not been indexed at all for years. So it has not been increasing while the price of actual investment in roads has, of course, increased dramatically. Things like asphalt have gone up 30 per cent in the last couple of years.

The announcement today of the doubling of that program, up to \$1 billion in 2027-28 is very welcome. The ACT will get a share of that. We do not know exactly what that share is at this point in time, but we really welcome that extra funding, which will help us to fund those roads that are at the end of their life so that we can undertake that rehabilitation. Of course, we are continuing to invest in the resealing program or resurfacing program to make sure we try to extend the life of those roads as much as possible.

We have certainly demonstrated in multiple budgets that we are investing in extra funding for road maintenance. We have done that responding to the concerns the community has had about potholes and the wet weather that we have had. Now we are seeing a very significant increase now from both the ACT government and the federal government in this space, and it is very welcome.

MR CAIN: So you agree then that the potholes were really in part due to the neglect in not properly maintaining the roads prior?

Mr Steel: There is no doubt that potholes are a manifestation of a defect in a road that is exacerbated by rain. We have seen that right across the board, but I think we have probably fared better than some other local governments around the place. That is why we have undertaken the work with the NTRO to develop the evidence base about what we need to be investing to make sure that more of our roads are in good condition over the long term. We have done that evidenced-base work, and we are making the investment to make sure that we extend the life of our roads as much as possible. We are also investing in roads at the end of life through the road rehabilitation project which is underway and which we hope to grow with this new funding from the commonwealth.

MR CAIN: So you are confirming that the potholes that we experienced were due in part to neglect in road maintenance?

Mr Steel: I think I have answered the question, Mr Cain.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I would like to have a chat about the circular economy and emissions from waste. I thought I would lead in with an introduction so we can do a bit of a changeover of witnesses. Good to see you, Mr Fitzgerald. Minister, in 2021-22, emissions from our waste and wastewater were at about 9.3 per cent, and we are expecting a new inventory shortly. Do you think the waste emissions are going up or down?

Mr Steel: Again, as our population increases, we expect that there will be more emissions. Getting the collection in place for the organics, to get that out of landfill is going to be critical. We have made a major stride towards that through the Assembly with the Circular Economy Act, which will hopefully give us those powers to be able to compel commercial businesses, food businesses, to divert as much of that organic material as possible away from landfill—so through regulation and then also through the program that we started with a pilot in Belconnen through the FOGO collection, which we intend to roll out to all households.

The other announcement that we have made today is that we are expanding the landfill gas capture project with LGI to capture more of the gas and make sure it gets used to generate electricity and stop as much methane as possible coming out of the landfill where it, of course, contributes to climate change. That project will certainly assist us in our goal of trying to mitigate emissions from the waste sector, which is a significant sector for us. But, clearly, in a circular approach, stopping that organic material getting into the landfill as much as possible has to be our focus. That is why we are taking the steps both through regulation and through the household collections scheme. Obviously work is well underway on that.

THE CHAIR: I am very pleased to see the business regulation and consultation coming along. I think that is a fantastic move we can do before government has made its mind up about what to do on FOGO. You gave me a similar answer on this before: that population increase would somehow affect our inventory. Our carbon inventory is set up as percentages of emissions. So, if waste or transport are increasing percentages, it is not because we have got more people; it is because other areas of our emissions are dropping, but transport and waste emissions are not—

Mr Steel: Sure; if you want to put it in percentage terms. But, in actual terms, obviously, it can be different.

THE CHAIR: Sure; absolutely. Given that you had this sudden change in plans to rolling out household FOGO—and that was a really big strut of how we were going to deal with emissions from landfill—have you done any modelling in your directorate about what delaying that for a few years will have done to our emissions?

Mr Steel: I will hand to Bruce Fitzgerald to talk a little bit about that. But I think it has all been canvased around the FOGO transition. The government has made a decision in relation to FOGO. I think you were suggesting that we had not. We are committed to rolling out FOGO across all ACT households. We are going through procurement for household waste collection, including green bins which will include that FOGO waste. So plans are well underway. We are always subject to what the market can offer in delivering that. The procurement process will help us understand that better, but the pilot is a good place to start. We have committed to a target

through the National Waste Policy Action Plan, to halve the organics going into landfill by 2030. That has not changed. We are continuing to work on actions to help us to reach that goal.

Mr Fitzgerald: I have read and acknowledged the privilege statement. We would look at the change in profile of emissions through our next iteration of the waste strategy. Now that we have released the Circular Economy Strategy and action plan, the next point for us is to revisit the waste strategy, which is now effectively end of life and does not really embrace the circular economy principles. We would look at emissions and the impact on emissions as part of that process.

THE CHAIR: Where are we up to on the FOGO contract for the in-vessel FOGO?

Mr Steel: We are still progressing through the procurement process. We are expecting to release a request for information shortly to industry to further the procurement process. That will give us good intelligence as to the capacity of the market and the deliverability of that facility.

THE CHAIR: When you say “shortly”, is that this year or is that in the next financial year?

Mr Steel: We are expecting this year.

THE CHAIR: Before Christmas?

Mr Steel: Correct.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

MS ORR: I have a supplementary. Mr Fitzgerald, you mentioned that the waste strategy was end of life and needed a bit of updating—sorry to paraphrase. Am I right then in assuming that a lot of the new work around the Circular Economy Strategy will go into whatever waste strategy is developed and we might start to see some attention to new and emerging waste streams or streams that we have not seen?

Mr Fitzgerald: Absolutely. The beauty of now being able to review the waste strategy after the release of the Circular Economy Strategy is to be able to embed some of those key elements. One of the key principles of the Circular Economy Strategy is around economic development and the ability to actually harness better resource recovery through existing waste streams. That is what we would like to see through the new strategy.

MS ORR: This might be something that is still for a future policy decision, but have waste streams been identified that you are going to be looking at, or is that something that you will start to scope out with the coming work?

Mr Fitzgerald: It will be something that we scope out. There is quite a lot of work that is already happening, particularly around plastics and other problematic waste streams. We know largely where the future waste streams will come from and the opportunities that may present themselves. So that is where our focus will be.

MS ORR: This next question might not come as a surprise, but I note that in the Circular Economy Strategy there was some looking at textile waste, which, while not a large volume waste stream, is a high-value waste stream that we do not recover anything from. Is that something that could be considered in the future waste strategy?

Mr Fitzgerald: Absolutely.

Mr Steel: I think we have to further develop that with industry, looking at what the opportunities are there. I think there is certainly a lot of enthusiasm to look at how we can expand what we are currently doing through the pilot that we have undertaken with Koomarri, in particular, which has been based at the resource management centres, and what opportunities there are to potentially look at a hub to co-locate some of the business and potentially research as well to see what we can do to deal with those textiles—some of which are plastic.

Recognising that we are not home to the big fashion houses, we do have some local designers here that might be able to use some of those materials. Trying to look for those linkages and connections is a real opportunity. That idea of actually having a physical hub—like a textiles hub, for example—is something we are really excited to talk with industry about.

Mr Fitzgerald: There is also on the national stage an emerging products stewardship process being led by some of those big fashion houses to look at options for the recovery of as much material as possible.

MS ORR: Minister, I was pleased to read last week about the infrastructure review and that the Australian government has increased infrastructure funding to the ACT by over \$27 million, including some extra funding for the Molonglo River bridge. Could you share what this funding is for?

Mr Steel: This funding essentially acknowledges that the Australian government is a genuine partner in helping us to deliver infrastructure projects in the ACT. That means that when a project which we are both committed to increases in cost, due to cost escalation and the current inflationary environment that we are in, in order to actually get on and deliver that project those cost increases have to be met with additional funding, not just from the ACT government but also from the federal government, through a fifty-fifty funding arrangement. It is really welcome that we have got that extra funding from them for some of those existing projects that we are committed to that have experienced cost increases. I might invite Sophie Clement to talk a little bit about some of those particular projects and the exact kind of cost escalation that they have been experiencing.

While all other states and territories were potentially seeing cuts to their funding from the commonwealth for some of those projects, the ACT did not experience that overall. We saw an increase in support for our projects, which is very welcome. We are looking forward to working with Minister King and the federal government as we continue to develop our infrastructure program, using the new federal-ACT investment framework as a mechanism to have those discussions about future investment priorities for both of our governments and what is important for the city of

Canberra.

I think it is well known that we have not necessarily received our fair share of infrastructure funding in the ACT for some time. That has been recognised by the federal government, as well as the fact that we are a very rapidly growing city and this infrastructure is actually critical to connect communities to support economic development and to move more people more efficiently around the city as our population grows.

Ms Clement: The announcement last week saw three projects that had had significant cost pressures and a contribution from the commonwealth government to bring up a matched fifty-fifty contribution for those cost pressures. The cost pressures across those three projects were primarily due to the industry-wide cost escalation that we have seen over Australia in the last 18 months to three years. That is around labour and the supply of materials, particularly steel, in the case of the bridge, where there is quite a significant quantity. As the minister mentioned, there was \$25 million to match the contribution that the ACT government had already made.

That cost pressure was realised at the time of the construction tender for John Gorton Drive and the Molonglo River bridge, so we knew in that competitive process that we would have a cost pressure. The ACT government at that time committed \$25 million in the budget and provisioned a further \$25 million, so these funds from the commonwealth will pick up that provisional \$25 million that was allocated.

The other two projects are the Gundaroo Drive upgrade, stage 3, and the Beltana Road improvements. The cost pressure in the Beltana Road improvements was also realised during the construction tender phase. That will help to supplement the contribution that the ACT government has already made towards that cost pressure. The Gundaroo Drive upgrade cost came up during construction. It was due to a few issues, particularly unexpected fines and asbestos around the underpasses and the existing bridges there. That was compounded or further increased by the cost escalation in the market at the time. So that is those three.

MS ORR: Just back to the Molonglo River bridge, how is the detailed design progressing and what are the next steps?

Mr Steel: The detailed design is progressing, ahead of construction starting next year, and we still expect the bridge to be completed around the end of 2025. I will hand over to Ms Clement to provide some further information, as well as on the work that is being planned at Coppins Crossing.

Ms Clement: Thanks. It is a design and construct contract, which means our contractor is progressing detailed design at the moment so that they can inform the construction methodology, particularly with the bridge component of that project. All the geotechnical investigations were completed earlier this year to inform the detailed design.

The team are currently progressing well on what is an 80 per cent design milestone. A significant part of that is the actual bridge structure design, which is progressing well. Concurrently, we have been seeking environmental approvals that will allow us to get

started on site. That is around construction and environmental management. The contractor has just started doing some of the site establishment work, such as clearing the ground and starting to put up fencing and site compounds.

The first piece of work will be to realign Coppins Crossing on the northern side of the river. That will involve some earthworks on the southern side of the river to bring fill across. We anticipate that those works will commence—we are hoping—before the end of this calendar year. There is one final approval around the development application and stamped drawings that needs to be ticked off, but once those works start you will see some significant activity on site.

MS ORR: Great. The other one I want to ask about is the Monaro Highway upgrade, including the new Lanyon flyover. What is the latest status on that?

Mr Steel: Thanks. I will hand over to Ms Clement.

Ms Clement: That one is also a design and construct contract. That contract was awarded, I think, in late September. That was awarded to a local contractor, Woden Contractors. They are currently busy finalising that detailed design work. We do, at the same time, have the gas utility provider undertaking some early work on relocating the gas primary main at the moment, so there is some activity on site currently.

Once the contractor has progressed through that design work, and probably overlapping with that, we anticipate that they will start establishing their site compound in the coming months. I would say earlier in the new year would be the likely timing for that. After that they will pretty quickly commence the main packages of work. That will be fairly significant-looking works, starting with clearing trees and stripping the site to enable the commencement of the foundation works. That new flyover over Lanyon Drive will be a large bridging structure, so there is a fair bit of earthworks and foundation works to start with that.

There are then two subsequent packages of work around David Warren Road that will be tendered for construction separately. We broke those into packages to get a bit more efficacy in the delivery, particularly around the environmental approvals. There are some offset requirements in terms of the impact to striped legless lizards with the David Warren package of work, so we will see the tendering for the early works of that happening mid next year.

THE CHAIR: That infrastructure announcement of federal funding had \$2 for roads for every \$1 we got for light rail, and we did not have any funding in there for active transport at all. Was there any outreach to try and get some active transport funding into that or was it only ever going to be for roads and light rail?

Mr Steel: The announcement was made following the infrastructure review, which was looking at the existing infrastructure pipeline—all of the existing projects. Obviously, one of the big issues that has come up has been the cost pressures across the board experienced by all state jurisdictions, so the announcement was specifically in relation to cost pressures for some of our projects which were known and quantifiable.

There are a range of other projects in the pipeline that the federal government have funded, including active travel projects. We expect to work with them now to deliver those. They have committed, as part of the infrastructure review, that they will fund infrastructure projects on a fifty-fifty basis, which is great news because it means that some of the projects that they have funded with the ACT government have not been funded at that 50 per cent level in the past, so we will certainly be working with them now to deliver that across the portfolio of transport projects that they fund.

They were not funding new projects. We were not asking them to fund new projects through this process. They wanted to undertake this infrastructure review of the existing pipeline. Of course, we will be talking to them, under the ACT-federal investment framework, about future projects that may need to be identified as priorities.

Minister King has made it clear that the broad pipeline across the country could not be delivered with the infrastructure funding that they had, and no new projects could be funded as they dealt with the existing pipeline. That was the intent of the federal government through their review. We hope to now work with them on what the future priorities are, under our framework, which goes beyond transport as well.

THE CHAIR: Sure, I understand. Do you intend to try and put some active transport projects into that next pipeline?

Mr Steel: Yes, we are always doing that. Of course, we have funding committed by them for things like the Garden City Cycle Route, for example, which is really welcome. Yes, we will put in for future projects. There are a range of different funding programs under the broader land transport framework. The announcement that was made in relation to road maintenance funding is under the Roads to Recovery Program that we were talking about, but there are other programs for which they have also announced some additional funding and they may potentially be suitable for active travel projects as well.

I refer to the road safety program; we can put up projects that support the safety of vulnerable road users. There may be a potential opportunity there. Black Spot funding is another one that potentially supports active travel type projects. There are a range of different programs. There are other untied grants to local governments that come from the federal government that we may be able to use for that purpose.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. We did not get William Hovell in that announcement of fifty-fifty funding. Does that mean we are wearing the cost for William Hovell, noting that those costs have tripled, I think, in recent years?

Mr Steel: The ones that they have announced are where the funding has been quantified. Of course, if there are cost pressures that are known at a later stage, beyond the process that they have just gone through at the moment, we will be engaging with the commonwealth about that and they will deal with that through the budget or whatever process.

THE CHAIR: I am not quite sure that I understand. Does that mean you might still

be getting federal funding for William Hovell?

Mr Steel: We already have a commitment from the federal government for William Hovell; but, as we continue to move through each of the projects and they reach the final stages, where we can quantify the costs, we will, of course, be seeking a fifty-fifty contribution from the commonwealth regarding whatever it takes to deliver those projects. We are committed to getting on with them. We are not going to abandon them just because there has been a cost pressure in relation to them. Ms Clement can talk specifically about William Hovell, if you would like an update on that project.

THE CHAIR: You have probably covered it, but please feel free, if there is something extra.

Ms Clement: We have not tendered for construction of William Hovell Drive at this point. It will be a construct-only contract, so it will move in a slightly different way. Once we have tendered construction, it will get into the ground quite quickly. But we do not have that quantified value, once we test the market, of what that will actually look like in terms of cost.

THE CHAIR: I understand; thank you. Mr Cain?

MR CAIN: I make reference to page 309 of the annual report, and particularly the item “public transport passenger boardings”. As you have noted, there is an 11 per cent shortfall on the target. Apart from noting that working from home was a possible factor, what is the government doing to address this shortfall?

Mr Steel: That is outlined in our Transport Canberra Recovery Plan, which was developed and has since been updated with the actions that we are taking to try and bring patronage back to pre-COVID levels. We did see cities around the world drop off in patronage, caused by COVID-19, in relation directly to lockdowns as well as the broader behavioural shift that has happened in terms of how people travel, and working from home arrangements which are still in place in many different workplaces in the ACT.

We have seen patronage rise over time, and it is getting close to back where it was, but it is not quite there yet. Certainly, in the reporting period, that reflects that patronage had not yet reached 100 per cent of pre-COVID levels during that year. But the actions that we have put in place through the Transport Canberra Recovery Plan, which involve continuing to invest in our public transport system and looking at a new ticketing system, we hope will encourage more people onto public transport in the short to medium term. I will hand over to Judith Sturman to talk a little bit about some of those actions and what we are seeing with patronage.

Ms Sturman: I might just correct an earlier statement around the DDA compliance. The act intended for us to meet compliance in 2022, not 2020, as I think I said.

In terms of patronage, we are seeing around a nine per cent gap between where we are today and where we were pre COVID, but that moves around quite a bit, because we have a very trending patronage level. We also have seen since COVID some changes to the way that people are travelling. We are seeing people travelling more off-peak,

and we are seeing increases at weekends as well, with people travelling. This is across many of Australia's jurisdictions. We are trending pretty much on a par with most areas.

With the things that we are doing, we have had the expected disruption through the commencement of the works for light rail stage 2A. We have also had Woden interchange works that we expected would cause some disruption, and they have actually put some people off. But we have seen a good response to "rethink your routine", which has been an ongoing campaign to encourage people to consider public transport in the light of expected congestion.

We have also seen a lot of events being held. With Spilt Milk coming up this weekend, we are expecting a large number of event-goers to choose public transport. That helps to introduce travelling on our buses and light rail vehicles to the public. We have seen previously that that has encouraged that ongoing use.

The Multicultural Festival earlier this year was also a good way for people to get experience of travelling on public transport. I think it is a positive move forward, and we will see more people travelling. Definitely, with the new ticketing system, which will make it easier for people, we will see a rise in the use of public transport.

MR CAIN: Minister, what is the impact on passenger boardings of numerous outages in the MyWay validators on board buses? I have been made aware that there have been fairly numerous times when that is just not available.

Mr Steel: I do not think there is a direct correlation that I am aware of. Certainly, we know that the hardware is coming to end of life, the old ticketing system, and that is why we are replacing it next year with a new ticketing system.

MR CAIN: How many outages in the MyWay validation system were there in 2022-23?

Mr Steel: We will take that on notice.

Ms Sturman: There are two different sorts of outages. One of the outages, which is probably the most common, and which does not tend to be for a prolonged period, is when NXTBUS, which is the system that picks up the real-time passenger information, enables the website to record when a bus is due. That system has spasmodically been out of use. It does not prevent us from providing services, and the buses will still run. It purely means that we do not have that real-time information going out for the community.

The only other outage that we have had was earlier last week, which was to do with ageing equipment, resetting that equipment and updating it. Some of the older pieces of equipment in the bus did not respond in the way that some of the newer pieces of equipment did, and we lost some ability to collect MyWay fares for about a day and a half on not all, but some, buses. We can provide—

Mr Steel: It did not stop people boarding a bus, but it might have affected the patronage data in terms of being able to understand how many people were boarding a

bus. Some manual workarounds were put in place.

Mr McHugh: Yes, and drivers were still able to collect data using their driver device. Going to Judith's point, the outages around NXTBUS do not affect our ability to collect fares or count passengers.

MR CAIN: Is the loss in fares something that you keep track of as well?

Mr McHugh: Through the way we manage the contract on the light rail, we do a revenue protection survey, so that we understand where fares are in that space. We are looking at a similar approach with buses as we move towards a new ticketing system.

THE CHAIR: Given that we did not get a change in the EBA so that weekend driving is still only done casually or by overtime, when are we expecting to get better weekend services?

Mr Steel: The enterprise agreement negotiations are not finalised at this point. It is reaching the end of the process. I will hand over to Ben McHugh.

Mr McHugh: We are very close to putting the Transport Canberra EBA to a vote. Following that vote, we expect to provide government with advice on what opportunities that might provide in terms of augmenting service in the new year.

THE CHAIR: When would we expect an update on whether we can get decent weekend services or hourly weekend services?

Mr McHugh: Once the vote on the current EBA has come down, we will be in a position to advise government on what those options will be.

THE CHAIR: Is that likely to be before Christmas or in this financial year?

Mr McHugh: The vote will likely happen very early in the new calendar year, so we are hoping that in the first quarter of next year we will be able to provide that advice.

THE CHAIR: I would love to get an update on the waste contracts. I am not asking for any commercially sensitive information, just where it is up to and in what month we might get to the next stage—a general update. There are a lot of them out. There is the Materials Recovery Facility contract; where is that one up to?

Mr Fitzgerald: There are two contracts that are currently under assessment. There is the interim MRF—the Materials Recovery Facility—solution, which is the transporting of the material to an alternative location. That is currently under evaluation. Our rebuild of the facility that was destroyed is currently out to market. The procurement for that facility closes on 19 December.

THE CHAIR: That is good to hear. The interim one is under evaluation at the moment?

Mr Fitzgerald: Correct.

THE CHAIR: When will that be announced?

Mr Fitzgerald: We would expect that in the first quarter of next year.

THE CHAIR: We have the mattress recycling contract out?

Mr Fitzgerald: Yes. That contract has been signed. That was a single select procurement for the existing provider, Soft Landing.

THE CHAIR: That makes perfect sense. I am not sure that there are too many people in that market, so that makes a lot of sense. That has been signed and that service will just continue?

Mr Fitzgerald: Correct.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. We have the site services and landfill operations contract.

Mr Fitzgerald: That contract has been signed and commenced. REMONDIS will continue to offer that service.

THE CHAIR: Was that done via tender?

Mr Fitzgerald: It was, yes.

THE CHAIR: That is a large one; excellent. We have the transfer station and recycling drop-off centre contract.

Mr Fitzgerald: That contract is under evaluation. We would expect that it would be finalised, potentially, this year, but it may slip to early next year.

THE CHAIR: I am having a strange sense of déjà vu, Mr Fitzgerald; I think we did this same thing last year with a whole lot of things—

Mr Fitzgerald: I believe we did, yes.

THE CHAIR: before Christmas. The household waste collection contract?

Mr Fitzgerald: The tender for that procurement closed in September, I believe. It is still under evaluation.

THE CHAIR: When do you think that might be announced?

Mr Fitzgerald: We are hopeful that that will be in the first quarter of next year.

THE CHAIR: The reusable facilities?

Mr Fitzgerald: The reusable facilities one is another that is under evaluation.

THE CHAIR: When do you think that might be announced?

Mr Fitzgerald: I believe it is close. We are looking at implementation or a transfer date to the new contract in May next year.

THE CHAIR: So it will be announced soon but for a May commencement of the new contract?

Mr Fitzgerald: Correct.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. I imagine you have a number of people eagerly awaiting the outcomes of all those contracts. How is your team managing with the procurement workload?

Mr Fitzgerald: It is a massive workload. Over the last three years, we have been gearing up for this very time. We have resourced accordingly. The team has made an amazing effort to get through what are a significant number of procurements. What we did three years ago was to plan these procurements so that we could start to consolidate them into single procurements. In previous instances, we had multiple. For transfer stations we had two separate contracts, and we also had a separate contract for the recycling drop-off centre. What we have done as part of these procurements is consolidate. We have put in the hard work to make sure that the ongoing management of those contracts becomes significantly easier and we can get the full benefit from those contracts.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: Regarding the fire at the Hume Materials Recovery Facility, my understanding is that, to a certain point, you had spent \$10 million transporting waste to New South Wales. What is the expected extra expenditure?

Mr Fitzgerald: We are currently undertaking a procurement for the interim solution. We have been operating under an existing arrangement with the previous material recovery facility operator, ReGroup. In that process, we are now going through the evaluation of an interim solution that will test the value for money of the transportation cost. The total cost likely to be incurred is not known at this stage or will not be known until we go through that tender process and we have a new contractor in place for the rebuild of the facility. At this stage, the total cost is still unknown.

Mr Steel: Noting it is also offset by insurance.

MR CAIN: How much is that?

Mr Steel: That is subject to work that is underway.

MR CAIN: I mean the insurance. How much did the insurance compensate?

Mr Steel: That is what I—

Mr Fitzgerald: The territory was insured for business disruption. This is obviously an event that triggers that policy, so we will be negotiating with the insurers as to what

the total figure is for recovery.

MR CAIN: Given it was a battery related fire risk, what have you done to ensure the safety of employees? How will you mitigate the risks of that going forward?

Mr Fitzgerald: The current process for managing safety in the stockpiling of material at the interim transfer station located at Hume meets Australian standards when it comes to separation of material. It also ensures that we have the appropriate firefighting capability at the site. We have thermal imaging cameras that take images of all loads delivered to the site. The majority of fires happen at the initial delivery of material to sites, so we have processes in place to protect employees and separation of potential hot loads as they arrive on site.

For the new facility, we are looking at procuring a build, own, operate and transfer for the facilities operation. That means that the facility itself is owned and operated by the contractor. It is part of their responsibility to make sure that the site is safe and that it has appropriate protections in place.

MR CAIN: Finally, what is the status of the relocation of the green waste facility in West Belconnen to an area adjacent to Ginninderry? Where are we up to with that?

Mr Fitzgerald: The Planning Authority granted conditional approval back in September for that development. There was then an appeal lodged in the ACAT by an interested party. We are currently working through with that applicant the specifics of their concerns and looking to address those concerns, which we will hope to have resolved by, I hate to say it, Christmas, with the commencement of construction likely midway through next year.

THE CHAIR: You must have excellent Christmases or really stressful ones—I am not sure! Ms Orr, do you have a question?

MS ORR: I do. Mr Fitzgerald might get a bit of a break now. Minister, the ACT government passed the new Road Safety Legislation Amendment Bill in June. How have the newly introduced offences and stronger penalties improved road safety?

Mr Steel: I will invite Kirra Cox up. We had a road safety roundtable which was brought together by the Attorney-General over the last week. We brought together academics, ACT Policing and the MAI Commission—a range of different interested parties—to talk through what things will make a meaningful difference to road safety, given the terrible road toll on ACT roads last year, with 18 deaths, and three deaths this year. ACT Policing, as part of that, gave a presentation which went through what they had been doing in relation to Operation Toric, but also in utilising the road safety laws that have already been passed through Assembly that came out of the penalties review which is being undertaken by Transport Canberra and City Services. That included suspending drivers and taking them and their vehicle off the road. They have been utilising those new powers very effectively. We think that is making a meaningful difference to the road safety outcome.

Of course, it is not the only thing that we need to do, and there is more road safety reform coming, which I have foreshadowed for coming sitting weeks, which will deal

with some other elements that have come out of the penalties review. Also, we are talking about broader behaviour change and what is actually required for potentially specific cohorts of people and problem behaviours—people who have been causing some of those issues on our roads. I will hand over to Kirra Cox to talk a little bit about what ACT Policing has been seeing and what we are doing as part of the penalties review.

Ms Cox: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. ACT Policing are certainly using their new powers that the Assembly passed earlier this year. We can see that in some of the statistics. The number of people charged with a dangerous, serious, reckless driving offence increased from 27 in 2021-22 to 62 in 2022-23. Over the last calendar year, from January to the end of October, ACT Policing have issued 151 immediate suspension notices. That is 151 drivers who have immediately had their licences suspended on the side of the road.

I do not have the breakdown of how many of those were related to the new power that we gave them, specifically around suspensions for driving 45 kilometres an hour over the speed limit or for aggravated, furious, reckless or dangerous driving, but I am sure ACT Policing have that level of data.

The penalties review is aiming to make sure that the road transport penalties are proportionate, regarding the risk of harm on the roads, to other penalties, and make sure that we have appropriate ways to respond to dangerous behaviour on the road. Obviously, we had 18 fatalities in the last calendar year. We are up to three this calendar year, and we know that the powers that we have introduced are working to address some of those fatalities.

There are also a number of other things that we are doing. We have introduced the mobile device detection cameras, which have started issuing warnings. Infringements will come in, in 2024. We have had new campaigns, like the “Every K counts” campaign. We are looking at programs, as the minister said, targeting specific cohorts of people who are either more vulnerable to becoming a dangerous driver or are driving dangerously.

MS ORR: Is there any insight you can give us into the next tranche of road transport penalty reforms, and what we might expect to see?

Mr Steel: The next area that we have been looking at is drugs and alcohol. It is an area where we have already undertaken a little bit of reform, with a bill that is now two years old that was looking at drink riding, and those sorts of behaviours. I will hand over to Kirra Cox to talk a little bit about what we are planning to look at as part of that.

Ms Cox: In the context of looking at drug and alcohol as the next tranche of the penalties review, of the 18 fatalities last year, there were 10 drivers, that we know were drivers, of the vehicles causing those fatalities. Nine of them had cannabis in their system, five had cannabis and methamphetamine in their system, and five had alcohol in their system. That says that, at the most serious end, there are a lot of people driving while impaired.

In the next tranche of reforms, we are looking at making sure that we have a suite of options available to respond to impaired driving. That includes looking at things like immediate suspension, so that we are dealing with the risk on the road at the time that these people are being caught by ACT Policing.

MS ORR: You did touch a little bit on the other work that the ACT government is doing to improve road safety in Canberra. I think you mentioned the mobile cameras and those sorts of things. Is there anything that you want to add?

Mr Steel: There is a whole range of things. We are very close to finalising—part of the forum was designed to help inform the finalisation of—our next Road Safety Action Plan, which will be the third two-year action plan under the Road Safety Strategy, before we then develop a new strategy.

The actions in there are wideranging. They focus on vulnerable road users; they focus on safer vehicles, with speeding being a key one—the regulatory reform. Importantly, what flows through is also in relation to behaviour change, and looking at what evidence-based programs are available and working in other jurisdictions that we could adopt here in the ACT to deal particularly with dangerous driving behaviour, which we are particularly concerned about.

There are, of course, broader links into the criminal justice system with other criminal offences that have been committed that are not necessarily road traffic offences but which relate to stolen vehicles and the like. That was the subject of the discussion there.

The National Road Safety Action Plan has now been finalised, after many years of development. There are national actions for states and territories to undertake. As part of that, we will be incorporating those actions into our own local plan, where we will seek to address those based on our local context. We will be announcing a wide range of different activities that will be undertaken as part of that once it is finalised.

THE CHAIR: It was great to hear an update on how the new offences are being applied. Can you take on notice, perhaps, how many traffic infringement notices we have issued under the provisions where a driver causes actual harm to a vulnerable road user? I think that should only go back two or three years.

Ms Cox: Yes.

Mr Steel: That is negligence causing actual harm?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Steel: Yes.

MR CAIN: I have a couple of questions on shop upgrades. What is the status of the work at Hughes shops to make them more disability and age friendly?

Mr Steel: Hughes is not part of the current program of shop upgrades under the disability infrastructure program, but we do know that some members of the

community and local organisations, like the Council on the Ageing, have been raising some concerns about some defects in the paving which may cause a safety concern. Transport Canberra and City Services are aware of that and are looking at what they can do to repair those, but it is not specifically part of the upgrades program which is looking at significant upgrades to over 11 shops around Canberra.

MR CAIN: Have you been talking with the businesses about the work that is required there?

Mr Steel: Are you talking about all—

MR CAIN: At Hughes.

Mr Steel: At Hughes; okay. We have heard from members of the community about the defects, and we are looking at what we can do to address those defects.

MR CAIN: On Monash shops, I understand there is a redevelopment for a childcare centre. Are you doing any other upgrades at Monash shops?

Mr Steel: Yes, there are upgrades at Monash shops planned as part of the Suburban Infrastructure Program. We know that there are a wide range of businesses and services that operate out of local shopping centres and group centres. That changes over time, and it is not necessarily up to government to determine what specific services should be offered at a specific local centre. That is up to the market to determine, and the commercial operators of those buildings.

As part of this program, we aim to make sure that the public realm around those zoned local centres and group centres is one that is high quality and one that can be used by the users of those services. Each one will be different. Each one will be tailored to the needs of the community.

In that particular case, there are some upgrades that are being made to improve seating and landscaping in the vicinity of that local shopping centre, which I understand for its immediate future use will be an early childhood service. But who knows in the future; with its zoning, there could be a range of other different uses in the future as well.

THE CHAIR: We probably have time for one more question on the circular economy. Minister, in the accountability indicators on ACT household waste to landfill and ACT household commingled recycling, we see that both figures were lower than expected. The explanation given is due to COVID and a rising population, which makes sense on one level. Does that mean that our overall waste generation during COVID reduced?

Mr Steel: I might hand over to NOWaste to talk a bit about what trends they are seeing.

Mr Fitzgerald: I do not believe that was the case. Our total generation as an aggregate of all sources was generally pretty stable. I may have to take the exact details, and some of the background data as to how those calculations are formulated,

on notice, because there are a number of different variables that do impact on the performance indicator.

THE CHAIR: Sure. I might let you know the things that I am interested in, to take on notice. It is the accountability indicators f and g. What interests me is whether our consumption of waste generation increased or decreased over that time. Also, our waste to landfill dropped a little bit, by seven per cent. Our commingled recycling dropped a lot, by 15 per cent, and it looks to me like we just started recycling badly at home. I would love you to take on notice what actually is going on with those figures during that period, and if you can tell me a little bit more than “COVID”, it would be really helpful.

Mr Fitzgerald: Sure. The total resource recovery rate stayed largely the same throughout that period. We were around the 72 to 73 per cent resource recovery rate. As a total percentage, we were still doing well, and well compared to other jurisdictions. But the actual detail—

THE CHAIR: It is actually about households as a proportion of that; thank you.

Mr Fitzgerald: Yes.

THE CHAIR: That brings us to the end. Thank you very much, Minister Steel and your officials, for coming in. If you have taken any questions on notice, which you have—we have a long list here, I believe—you have five days to get the answers back to us once you receive the uncorrected proof. Members, you have five days to lodge further questions on the portal.

Hearing suspended from 12.00 pm to 4.34 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

Ramsay, Ms Jennifer, Executive Branch Manager, Place Experience and Communications, City Renewal Authority

Dietz, Mr John, Chief Executive Officer, Suburban Land Agency

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Planning, Transport and City Services. We are hearing from the Chief Minister this afternoon.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. The committee wishes to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of the city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

We are recording and transcribing the proceedings today, and also livestreaming them. If you take a question on notice, if you can say, "I will take that on notice," that helps our secretariat.

In this session we will hear from the Chief Minister. Welcome, Mr Andrew Barr, and officials from the City Renewal Authority and the Suburban Land Agency. Could I check that everybody has received the privilege statement, that you understand the responsibilities in that, and that you are happy to agree with and abide by that? Can I get a verbal yes? Excellent. We are not doing opening statements and we are running a little bit late, so we will go to the first question. I will begin. In section 63 in the city, we have the inclusion of affordable, public and community housing. Can I get the breakdown of the different types of housing in that inclusion?

Mr Barr: In which section?

THE CHAIR: Section 63 in the city. There is an allocation of affordable, public and community housing. I am interested in how much of each kind there is in that.

Mr Snow: In accordance with government policy, our goal is to include the target that is required for affordable housing. With the recent release of section 63—now called section 121, I should say; we have changed the land reference—the expression of interest that went out for that particular release did include the requirement for a 30 per cent target. The indications so far through that process—and we are still in a commercial-in-confidence process, Ms Clay—are that the four shortlisted bidders will be able to comply with that requirement.

THE CHAIR: Is that a 30 per cent target for all types—affordable, public and community housing? I am after how much is public and how much is community.

Mr Snow: My understanding is that it is 30 per cent for affordable.

THE CHAIR: Thirty per cent affordable?

Mr Snow: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Okay, so we only have affordable in that one; we do not have any public or community housing?

Mr Snow: No. What I would say is that we should not resile from our obligation as an agency to try to accommodate those other types of housing. The challenge, of course, in a CBD context, is that, in terms of market acceptance, that is going to be challenging. I think there are other opportunities within the precinct that are less central but nearby that could certainly extend to those other types.

THE CHAIR: The challenge being that Housing ACT and the community housing providers cannot afford the sites?

Mr Snow: Possibly. That would be a decision of government in relation to the extent to which they would be prepared to discount—

Mr Barr: I would not discount community housing under a particular subsidised model in the build-to-rent space, operated by a community housing provider. I do not believe it is on the agenda of Housing ACT to be buying units within that development, but that would ultimately be a decision for them. There will not be a standalone Housing ACT construction of one separate building on that block. It would be open to Housing ACT, if they wanted to, under their policy around spot purchase, potentially to purchase dwellings within the precinct.

I am not privy to what the market response has been. Certainly, it is entirely possible to take advantage of some of the government's other tax incentives for there to be a build-to-rent component that is affordable and that is managed by a community housing provider. That is a quite likely outcome. As to whether there will be publicly owned units, it would be a matter for Housing ACT to determine that, based on their spot purchase policy.

THE CHAIR: Do we have a similar target for the Acton waterfront? Do we have an allocation of public, community and affordable in that?

Mr Snow: The estate development plan is still in preparation. Certainly, again, in compliance with the policy targets set by government, we would apply the same objective when we ultimately take that land to market.

THE CHAIR: The same objective being 30 per cent affordable? Is that what you mean by the same objective?

Mr Snow: I think there is a slight difference. Section 121 is a discrete site. I often refer to Acton waterfront as a new urban neighbourhood. What will be important about the success of that project is the diversity across not only uses and activities but

also product types. We do not want it to be just residential, either. We do want it to be a mixed-use precinct.

To answer your question directly, I think our goal would be to widen the scope of housing products potentially available, due to the larger area and the opportunities to blend some of the products when we ultimately determine the procurement method.

THE CHAIR: Given that we have not yet determined that procurement method, would CRA want to set some kind of target for public housing or is that just not how—

Mr Barr: That would be, obviously, a decision of government. They would be amongst the most expensive dwellings that Housing ACT could construct, given the land value. The government would be subsidising it one way or another. I suspect that if the outcome is to maximise the number of public housing dwellings then building them on the most expensive land is probably not the best way to achieve that.

THE CHAIR: It is well located, though. It is close to services and close to transport and—

Mr Barr: Yes, but there is obviously an opportunity cost trade-off, and it would also depend on what sort of housing was going to be built. The intent is that there would be a spectrum of options, and certainly the policy decision that has been taken is that it will not be an exclusive private sale. There will definitely be rental and long-term rental as part of that precinct. I suspect that the affordable model is likely to be long-term build-to-rent with a community housing provider as a tenancy manager.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS ORR: I have a supplementary.

MR CAIN: As do I.

THE CHAIR: Ms Orr.

MS ORR: Chief Minister, can you read us through what the SLA is doing to support government to bring more built-to-rent to Canberra?

Mr Barr: Yes. There are a number of projects that the SLA is actively undertaking on behalf of the government. Mr Dietz might be a position to talk about a number of them.

Mr Dietz: Northbourne Avenue is the first project that we have worked extensively within government and with industry on to ensure that we could deliver a successful build to rent project there. It started with a market sounding which educated an open and transparent procurement to market. That procurement is underway and we hope to have results for that relatively soon. That process is going very well.

The second process that we are working on is at the Gungahlin town centre. We have been through a very informative place design brief process to understand how

Gungahlin town centre east can have a very successful outcome. Within the ILRP for the 2024-25 year, we also have the opportunity to include about 300 sites for build-to-rent. The two processes are working hand-in-hand to ensure that, when we do go to market about the build-to-rent, it is very much informed by the place-making work we have done with the community in Gungahlin town centre east.

There are also, within the Treasury, some very specific build-to-rent opportunities around an expression of interest which allows industry to come to government saying, “I’ve got a site that is very good for a build-to-rent outcome, but some assistance from government might be appropriate.” That allows the Treasury to, on a yearly basis, ensure that they are asking industry where build-to-rent opportunities exist and then providing subsidies where they see it is appropriate.

For us, we saw at Turner, and from the market sounding, that providing build-to-rent at a market rate was about right. As long as you get the right location and really good amenities, then a build-to-rent model almost stacks up against build-to-sell. But where government really wants to ensure we are getting a great outcome is in affordability. When you include an affordability requirement, there is need for a subsidy. So our Turner model is looking at selling under a build-to-rent requirement, and then there is a subsidy which would then be managed by the Treasury for the period of providing affordable rental.

MS ORR: That program is the way that you could potentially get more of these affordable build-to-rent propositions in areas where they would not naturally be provided by the market, and they are close to transport, close to city centres—

Mr Barr: Yes. The Turner one is directly across the road from the light rail stop and is obviously walking distance from the CBD and Braddon and a range of services. It is clearly a good and suitable location—

MS ORR: If there were a market proposition—a developer who came to you and said, “We have this site. We think it’s good”—that is the sort of thing you will be looking at as well, and public value?

Mr Barr: Yes. It would seem the emerging trend for private sector providers is, for one of a better description, “shop top”. There are 140 build-to-rent units on top of the new Coles supermarket in Dickson. It is literally 30 metres from the Dickson Walk-in Centre and an array of services, so it is very possible for a private sector model to deliver. The developer built them and then sold the units to a super fund which will then rent them. I understand there is a component of affordable and key worker housing associated with that particular proposal.

I am also aware of other private sector landholders who have shopping precincts and are looking for build-to-rent on top of retail sectors. That is particularly town centre and group centre focused.

MS ORR: Great. That was my supplementary.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain, a supplementary?

MR CAIN: Yes. Going back to the Acton Waterfront, what is the time frame for the development of the temporary park and then the eventual permanent park?

Mr Snow: Thank you, Mr Cain, for that question. We have now received works approval from the National Capital Authority for advanced civil works in relation to stormwater for a temporary construction access road for a temporary park which involves importing the fill required to build up the land to accommodate it. Those works are now the subject of design work and we would expect those works to commence early next year.

MR CAIN: Thank you. You have \$35 million to allocate to this particular project. Is there any anticipation of blowouts or not being able to keep to that number or under it?

Mr Snow: The \$35 million relate to the cost of the new park as well as some contribution to the cost of some of the ancillary works as well. The board has considered different options for the procurement of the civil and landscape works associated with that park—they are significant and obviously in a very high-profile location—and we have opted for a procurement approach that would ensure that we are going to have value for money in terms of the way in which the park is not only designed but ultimately built as well.

MR CAIN: Finally, I am not sure if you will be able to answer this: what is the expected residential population of that precinct?

Mr Barr: It is still to be determined. We will make some further announcements on that in due course.

MS ORR: I understand the block of land beside the Canberra Theatre was recently sold. Can I get an update on what the plans are for that site and the timing or the anticipated timing for construction?

Mr Snow: Mr Orr, are you referring to the service—“little block 40”, we call it. Sorry. The surveyors—

MS ORR: I was not familiar with the name—

Mr Snow: The surveyors trip us up all the time in the city with their naming. I am pleased to be able to say that that land sale has settled. It has been publicly announced that the Capital Group are the successful purchaser. I am pleased also to say that all the indications are that they want to get underway with that development very quickly. The two sets of architects, for both the theatre and the new owner, are already talking about design integration between the two sites.

MS ORR: Have they indicated what they are going to put there?

Mr Barr: Yes. Principally offices, with some mixed use retail and others at ground level.

MS ORR: How will this development fit with the other activities that you are looking

at for the renewal of this part of the city?

Mr Barr: That certainly complements the Constitution Place development. It will provide a further retail and hospitality offering that will be complementary to theatre activities. That will also be a very good partner in relation to theatre parking in the precinct. There are hundreds of spaces of available for people who drive to the theatre, and then it is straight out of the carpark, into Lyric Lane, and you are then at the front door of the theatre. That has been useful.

Clearly, they have private sector demand for tenancies at the site. The National Capital Authority requirements are quite strict around effectively having a Vernon Circle street frontage and address. It will be tight and compact, mirroring the other side of Vernon Circle where the Supreme Court and Barry Morris development are, right up to the footpath. It is finally the makings of Vernon Circle being an address in and of itself as opposed to where all the buildings face. You get the back end of the buildings at the moment. The new construction—this will be a requirement of the theatre as well—needs to actually have a Vernon Circle address.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, with the increase in flexible working arrangements potentially risking an increase in CBD office vacancies, does the plan for this site for office use pose some significance risks?

Mr Barr: Not in the eyes of the developer who has bought the site for that purpose and presumably has pre-committed tenants.

MR CAIN: Are you aware of whether they are looking for ACT government tenancy arrangements?

Mr Barr: It is certainly clear they are not buying the site with a view that there would be a government tenant. If they make us a very good offer and we needed the office space, we could certainly utilise some of it, but we have made no such commitment. I would not rule out, though, that, if there were a need and the price were right, and it was cheaper and better accommodation than we had elsewhere, then we could certainly consider it, but my understanding is that they are principally targeting private sector tenants.

MR CAIN: Thank you. On the SLA side of this inquiry—I think I am in the right spot for the right question—I noticed the SLA sales results spreadsheet, which was last updated 13 October, lists all commercial and industrial sales across the ACT by the SLA since 2017. The most recent commercial or industrial SLA in this precinct, the CRA precinct, seems to have been Turner block 4, section 57, for \$59.3 million on 28 June 2022. Why were there no commercial and/or industrial sales in the CRA precinct for 2022-23?

Mr Dietz: Sorry—could you repeat the question?

MR CAIN: Why were there no commercial or industrial sales in the City Renewal Precinct recorded in the sales results for 2022-23, given the last one was in June 2022?

Mr Dietz: The last one was in June 2022, and we have not included anything in the 2022-23—

MR CAIN: Yes. Why is that?

Mr Dietz: It is not an issue of us mis-accounting. If one happened in June 2022, then it would not be in the 2022-23—

Mr Barr: I think your question is: should the SLA have done further land release? Is that the—

MR CAIN: Absolutely.

Mr Dietz: We deliver as to the ILRP. What we had been doing in the past with the sales was as part of the Asset Recycling Initiative. SLA, under the old LDA, had previously had responsibility for release of those sites. When SLA was established, we continued to release those sites. As the Asset Recycling Initiative has petered out, we have not been responsible for further sites, so there has been nothing on the ILRP for the SLA to deliver.

Mr Barr: But the CRA has obviously sold one site for commercial purposes. It has another on the market that we were just talking about with Ms Clay's question. There is a third one that has sold in the CBD precinct as well.

MR CAIN: I am obviously exploring the SLA role in the—

Mr Barr: SLA is now transitioning out of the CRA precinct as a result of the legacy issues no longer being there. Your question had two parts. It is highly unlikely there would be industrial land release in the CBD. None of the land, I suspect, would be zoned for industrial purposes. It is only commercial or residential or mixed use.

MR CAIN: Does the SLA have control over any parcels that it is planning to provide for sale in the near future?

Mr Dietz: Within the CRA precinct?

Mr Barr: That is what I presume the question is about.

MR CAIN: Or is that not going to be a relevant thing for SLA going forward?

Mr Dietz: I would say that, generally, it will not be a relevant thing for the SLA, but we are more than happy to work with the CRA and provide the service where it is beneficial.

MR CAIN: I am sure you are comforted to hear that.

Mr Snow: We would like to be the agency that takes the land to market, Mr Cain.

MR CAIN: Is that from here on? That is how it is going to work?

Mr Snow: Pretty much—yes.

MR CAIN: Interesting. Does that include any residential parcels?

Mr Dietz: From our point of view, yes. That would be the general—

MR CAIN: So we will not be seeing these precincts any longer. Is that the case?

Mr Barr: No—there are still other urban renewal precincts: Kingston and the Brickworks. Today I will not foreshadow which ones I will be declaring, but I will be declaring more. Yes—there will still be an urban renewal role for SLA that is outside of the—

MS ORR: So Mr Dietz is not excused just yet?

Mr Barr: No. There is plenty of work. We have plenty of projects to work on.

MR CAIN: Thank you, Chair.

THE CHAIR: Minister, in the annual reports we have some lines saying that our visitation to City Walk has increased, which is really good to see, and there is an ROI figure giving a return on investment of 1.2. Can you run me through the bits that go into that 1.2 figure?

Mr Barr: I am sure the team can assist.

Ms Ramsay: I missed the project you were talking about.

THE CHAIR: City Walk. At City Walk we have increased activity, which is great to see, and an ROI of 1.2.

Ms Ramsay: Yes; you are right. There has been increased activity of about 340 per cent in the evenings at City Walk since it was upgraded. We look at mobile phone data to determine the increase in footfall. We also do an annual survey to understand the average expenditure of visitors to the city centre. We have spoken with an independent researcher about how to extrapolate that to provide a guide on what the economic return is. It is essentially a portion of the mobile phone users multiplied by the average expenditure of the visitors to the city centre. Then we come out with the economic return, and then we look at the expenses and determine the return on investment.

THE CHAIR: A 340 per cent increase based on people walking around?

Ms Ramsay: Correct—in the evenings at City Walk since it was upgraded, according to our footfall data.

THE CHAIR: Interesting. What are the elements that have gone into that? What do you think has driven that enormous increase?

Ms Ramsay: There are multiple elements. The upgrades have definitely contributed,

we would suggest, because, when you look at places that were not upgraded versus upgraded, there is a difference. However, there is also increased visitation across evenings more broadly across the city centre. There are also additional experiences and businesses that have opened in City Walk since the upgrades. Brunello, which is a bar, is now there, and then there is the Central Social Club, and we also do activation like Christmas in the City.

Mr Barr: The Christmas markets last weekend.

Ms Ramsay: The Christmas markets that were on the weekend. Yes. They went really well, and we are looking forward to seeing the footfall from those.

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

MS ORR: Yes. I was going to ask Mr Snow, in three minutes or less, to explain how making places for people really helps to activate them, but that might be a bit cheeky. Actually, can I get an update on the Braddon streetscape upgrade program and how that is going? What are the outcomes? Some of it has been completed. Are we starting to see any early improvements?

Mr Snow: Thank you for the question, Ms Orr. The southern end of Lonsdale Street has now been completed—that is the Kooyong end. Throughout this project, we have been very conscious of the need to ensure that the mixed use part of Braddon continues to trade positively. We are sensitive to that in terms of the construction method we have applied. Stage 2 works at the Girrahween Street end and also further down near Assembly, in terms of one of the new crossings, is well advanced. We will extract the contract, if that is the term, on 5 December to make sure that, during the peak trading period, those traders are not affected by that construction activity.

We are also currently out to consultation on another stage of the Braddon streetscape program which is the removal of the Elouera and Mort Streets roundabout. The feedback consistently from the community when we consulted on this program was that they wanted safer pedestrian access. It needed to be more direct, particularly from the light rail stop at Northbourne Avenue straight into the Braddon area. We think the removal of the roundabout in favour of a direct intersection with increased verges, landscaping, new paving and lighting will deliver on the commitment that we made to improve accessibility and safety for Braddon.

MS ORR: Great. I think we are at time, Chair.

THE CHAIR: I think we are. Thank you very much for attending, Chief Minister Barr and officials, and I thank broadcasting and Hansard staff for their help. I do not think we had any questions on notice, so go forth and enjoy your evening.

The committee adjourned at 4.59 pm.