



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMICS, INDUSTRY  
AND RECREATION**

(Reference: [Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2024-25](#))

**Members:**

**MR T WERNER-GIBBINGS (Chair)  
MS F CARRICK (Deputy Chair)  
MR T EMERSON  
MS E LEE  
MR S RATTENBURY**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**TUESDAY, 18 NOVEMBER 2025**

**Acting Secretary to the committee:  
Mr A Walker (Ph: 620 74843)**

**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

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## The committee met at 9.00 am

### Appearances:

Pettersson, Mr Michael, Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Minister for Children, Youth and Families, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Skills, Training and Industrial Relations

### Infrastructure Canberra

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Director-General

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General

Khan, Mr Faheem, Executive Group Manager, Delivery, Places and Spaces

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Economics, Industry and Recreation for its inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2024-2025. The committee will today hear from the Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, the Chief Minister, the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and officials from Infrastructure Canberra.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish 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 other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event.

This hearing is a legal proceeding of the Assembly and has the same standing as the proceedings of the Assembly itself. Therefore, today's evidence attracts parliamentary privilege. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the Assembly. The hearing is being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and web-streamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses used these words: "I will take that question on notice." This will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

We welcome the Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Mr Pettersson, and officials. Witnesses no longer have to acknowledge the privilege statement. As we are not inviting opening statements, we will now proceed to questions. I will ask the deputy chair to kick off while I get myself ready.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you, Chair. My first question is obviously about the distribution of arts facilities. Infrastructure Canberra's Strategic Plan 2025-27 says that Infrastructure Canberra provides "strategic advice, expertise and assurance across the ACT government and decision-makers, industry and key stakeholders on infrastructure policy, investment, planning, delivery and management". The Cultural Facilities Corporation legislation talks about cultural activities at designated locations and other places in the ACT—that is, across the ACT—and the arts policy for Canberra is for it to be the arts capital. It talks about creating "amazing art and culture everywhere, at any time, and for everyone". My question is to Infrastructure Canberra: what advice have you provided to the minister about the equitable distribution of community arts facilities?

**Ms Geraghty:** Thank you for the question, Ms Carrick. We provide advice in relation to infrastructure and infrastructure delivery, not in relation to where or what an arts facility would be. That would probably be a better question for Arts ACT, I think.

**Mr Pettersson:** Yes. The substantive work about where arts occur in our city is the responsibility of artsACT. Infrastructure Canberra is the infrastructure delivery agency.

**MS CARRICK:** Okay.

**Mr Pettersson:** I will come back in the next session.

**MS CARRICK:** Fair enough. I will ask my questions about the criteria at the next session.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, there were significant upgrades to the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. It is now the Wood-Mico Theatre and it opened in August. I have received feedback, not from the centre itself but from users of the centre. Has any information come to your office or to the directorate about how the upgrades are going, and have there been suggestions for the plans coming up?

**Mr Pettersson:** That is an interesting question. I have not received any representations of that nature. All the feedback that I have received so far has been overwhelmingly positive about how the recent renovations have put a new lease of life in the Tuggeranong Arts Centre.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that from the centre itself or—

**Mr Pettersson:** The feedback I have received from the Tuggeranong Arts Centre is also overwhelmingly positive. They are very supportive of the investment the government made. They appreciate that the upgrades have really improved the viability of the theatre productions and general use. So no. Even if you specified the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, I am not aware of any representations of that nature.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any other plans for the centre or is that a wrap for the foreseeable half-decade about where the Tuggeranong Arts Centre might be going and what new works might be planned for it?

**Mr Pettersson:** We are wading into artsACT conversation at this point. I am sure we will go to this place when we talk about arts more generally: undertaking an arts assets needs analysis across the territory to better understand the infrastructure needs and the infrastructure assets that we currently have. That will play into that process, but we should not venture too far into it because these are not the officials responsible for it.

**THE CHAIR:** I understand.

**MS CARRICK:** It is difficult to be in this session because there is no existing infrastructure to ask about in the electorate and there is no future infrastructure in the pipeline to ask about, so I am basically excluded from this session.

**MR EMERSON:** On the Kingston Arts Precinct, I read recent reporting that indicated that an EOI for a delivery contractor for the precinct would be commenced by the end of the year. Has that started?

**Mr Pettersson:** I would direct that to the session with the Chief Minister. I do not have responsibility for that.

**MR EMERSON:** We have such short windows for these sessions, so that is why I am bringing it up here. I understand that, when this project was originally planned back in late 2015, arts organisations were pushed to make a firm commitment to becoming tenants. Does this session have any involvement in such an arrangement or such conversations this time around? Does that need to be done again?

**Mr Pettersson:** No. I appreciate the challenge that the committee has with the way this day has been structured, by trying to have Infrastructure Canberra in for the day. My portfolio's remit within Infrastructure Canberra is in community arts facilities—that is, more to Belco Arts, Gorman House and the Tuggeranong Arts Centre. The Kingston Arts Precinct is a project for the Chief Minister.

**MR EMERSON:** My question is: what impact will that new precinct have? It is going to be an attractive option for lots of tenants. What impact will that have on existing community arts facilities? And is the government doing work on whether any tenants will be lost to the Kingston Arts Precinct?

**Mr Pettersson:** You want to field that question here?

**MR EMERSON:** It is really about—

**Ms Geraghty:** We are accountable, so we can talk to the project if the minister is happy to—

**MR EMERSON:** What is the impact of the project on the rest of the ecosystem? Has that been considered? What are you anticipating you will see with the rest of your facilities when that comes online? This is why I am asking about how many people have been pursued as potential tenants. I have spoken with someone who put themselves down 10 years ago. How does it fit? I understand where you are coming from, but how does it affect the rest of the ecosystem? That is the question that I think is relevant to this session.

**Mr Pettersson:** I am happy to field it. I think the Kingston Arts Precinct presents opportunities, not just for arts organisations that will one day move into the Kingston Arts Precinct but also for what occurs in the spaces that they potentially vacate. They are in wonderful locations across, largely, the centre of the city. As to forward planning of what is going to occur in those locations, that work is not advanced. There is a conversation we will need to have as a city on the future uses of those spaces. I am confident that, across the ecosystem, we can continue to support arts organisations to find the right home for their needs.

**MR EMERSON:** It is a bit surprising to me that the work has not commenced yet. Do you know when that work will commence?

**Mr Pettersson:** These are not the officials undertaking it. This is Infrastructure Canberra, not artsACT. I will take the question on notice or I am happy to pick up this conversation again in the appropriate session.

**MR EMERSON:** Okay.

**MS LEE:** Page 13 of the annual report talks about the transition of tenancy management for 13 community arts facilities on peppercorn arrangements and that it was a major achievement for the 2024-25 year. Then, if you go to page 22 of the same report, the same goal is a major priority for 2025-26. Could I confirm: are they 13 separate organisations? Are they the same, and, if so, why was it a milestone achievement? And how many are there?

**Mr Khan:** Thank you for the questions. The milestone referred to in the annual report for this financial year was the transition of the management of facilities from artsACT to Infrastructure Canberra. The milestone referred to as a priority in the financial year we are in now is to update the 13 leases that exist for the same 13 facilities that you referenced in the question. That is the work that we are undertaking this financial year.

**MS LEE:** How many of the community organisations are going through that transition?

**Mr Khan:** There are 84 peppercorn leases in total and we are updating all of those this financial year. The 13 are a subset of that.

**MS LEE:** So all 84 are going to be done this financial year. That is the plan.

**Mr Khan:** Correct.

**MS LEE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** What are the broad terms of the peppercorn arrangements?

**Mr Khan:** As they are currently?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Mr Khan:** They are quite varied, which is why we are undertaking a process of standardisation. There are a number of historic arrangements embedded in those leases that make them quite bespoke.

**THE CHAIR:** Generally, when I think about a peppercorn arrangement, I am thinking not much—

**Mr Khan:** The financial arrangement underpinning a peppercorn lease is effectively a payment of one cent. These are leases provided effectively free of charge by the government to community tenants. The purpose of the standardisation is to have a standard peppercorn lease for each of the 84 leases that we currently have. We acknowledge that there will be a need for some reflection of the bespoke arrangements in each of those separate leases, but we will separately add those as addenda. We will

then have a clearer governance structure for the use of those facilities.

**THE CHAIR:** The more standardised peppercorn lease is what we are aiming to have by 31 December 2026? There was a transition to new peppercorn arrangements on page 12 for 13 operators of the community arts facilities, and those peppercorn arrangements are concluding on 31 December. I might have put the wrong date. I wrote 31 December 2027 in my notes, but it might be 31 December 2026.

**Mr Khan:** The peppercorn arrangements themselves are not concluding. Many of them are in holdover now. That means that the lease term, as it was entered into, has expired, but the lease rolls over on its current terms. Letters of comfort have been provided to all lessees that those arrangements will hold as we go through the process of standardising the leases themselves and work with the Government Solicitor's Office on that.

**THE CHAIR:** Barring some sort of black swan event, the lessees could expect to have those new arrangements going forward?

**Mr Khan:** We will be starting direct consultation with each of the affected lessees. We have been talking to them through this process. We are now at a point where we will be able to meet with each of the peppercorn leaseholders individually over coming months to have discussions about what is different and some of the benefits that will be derived from having this more standardised approach to our lease management of those facilities.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you provide a list of the organisations that hold the peppercorn leases—who and where?

**Mr Khan:** We have provided that to the—

**MS CLAY:** That is already on the record.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it? I did not see it.

**Mr Khan:** We are happy to provide it again, if that would assist the committee.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary, Ms Clay?

**MS CLAY:** I understand you can talk to the people who have a peppercorn lease. There are people who do not have peppercorn leases, like M16, which is one of our long-established arts centres. Are you talking to people who do not have peppercorn leases? What are the eligibility criteria to get a peppercorn lease if you do not have one?

**Mr Khan:** Thanks for the question, Ms Clay. We are always talking with all of our tenants across peppercorn arrangements or if they are on a community rate, as M16 is currently at the Blaxland Centre. The purpose of the standardisation that we are going through at the moment is not to adjust or change any of the arrangements. Any decision to move to a peppercorn lease is a decision of the Minister for the Public Service, who makes that decision. That is where the decision-making authority sits.

**MS CLAY:** So your standardisation process will not, in fact, look at whether people should have them? An organisation that is paying \$40,000 of its \$70,000 funding on a lease will have to separately go to the Minister for the Public Service to get that change?

**Mr Khan:** As part of this process, we are not looking at adjusting or changing the current tenancy—the terms in the subset of category between peppercorn and community—for any tenants.

**MR EMERSON:** Regarding the standardisation of these peppercorn arrangements, what is it that needs standardising? Is it things like who is responsible for maintenance and upgrades?

**Mr Khan:** That is exactly right. It is about more clearly delineating the responsibilities of the tenant, the responsibilities of the government as the landlord and owner of the facility, ensuring that we have accurate asset registers, and the ownership of the assets within the facilities. It is about ensuring that we have appropriate documentation and clarity of roles and responsibilities in the relationship between landlord and tenant.

**MR EMERSON:** And, I assume, lease duration—that sort of thing—as part of that as well.

**Mr Khan:** That is right.

**MS CARRICK:** Is a peppercorn lease \$1 or \$10,000?

**Mr Khan:** They are typically a perfunctory amount of one cent or \$1. Some change, but there is no peppercorn lease at \$10,000.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I want to come back to Mr Emerson's questions about the Kingston Arts Precinct. I accept you are not doing it. You said it is for the Chief Minister. Does that mean it is a tier 1 or a tier 2 project? Is that the basis upon which it is defined as being under the Chief's bailiwick? I am looking at the program. I am just trying to understand to make sure we are in the right session.

**Mr Cahif:** There was a decision of government that the Kingston Arts Precinct component of the overall precinct would be delivered by Infrastructure Canberra.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you. That is clear. I was trying to understand why it is with the Chief Minister and not with the minister for the arts.

**Ms Geraghty:** That might be a question for the Chief Minister.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Okay. I just want to make sure we are asking questions in the right session. Minister, you have responsibility for the Old Bus Depot Markets in your portfolio.

**Mr Pettersson:** Correct.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Can I get any advice on the integration between the Old Bus Depot Markets and the new Kingston Arts Precinct, in terms of how that precinct is

going to be put together and whether the construction of the Kingston Arts Precinct will have any impact on the Old Bus Depot Markets?

**Mr Pettersson:** I am happy to field this question. I appreciate the awkwardness of the outputs we are looking at. One of the key considerations in looking at the future of the former transport depot is how it integrates with the wider Kingston Arts Precinct and vice versa. There is consideration in the current tender for the former transport depot, regarding the timelines around when the Kingston Arts Precinct will come online. We want to try to align what is occurring in that space with what happens with the Kingston Arts Precinct. We want the two separate conceptualisations to come together to be part of one Kingston Arts Precinct. The short answer is yes, it is a consideration.

**Ms Geraghty:** I could add to that. Infrastructure Canberra and artsACT are working very closely together. ArtsACT are negotiating and working on that lease, and we are responsible for the precinct. We have governance forums and we are working together to ensure that there is a streamlined approach to the precinct.

**MR RATTENBURY:** There is the former transport depot and the performing arts space next door—the one that was controversial for a while; you know the one I mean. What is going to happen from an access and parking point of view during the construction of the Kingston Arts Precinct?

**Mr Pettersson:** Do you want to field the question now?

**Ms Geraghty:** I am happy to. We are in the process of procuring a delivery partner through an ECI model. That delivery partner will help inform how we work through access to the site and, more generally, how we will ensure that we maintain the lease holders on the site. Mr Khan, would you like to add anything more to that?

**Mr Khan:** We are only at the early stages at the moment. That is the reason we are bringing on an ECI.

**MR RATTENBURY:** We will leave it there. Thanks, Chair.

**MR EMERSON:** Am I able to ask you about the Old Bus Depot Markets?

**Mr Pettersson:** No. That sits with artsACT.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I have already checked that.

**Mr Pettersson:** Picking up on what Mr Rattenbury said, I refer to it as the former transport depot because that is the name of the space, the building. When you say “Old Bus Depot Markets”, that is the name of a commercial market provider that has the lease.

**MR EMERSON:** Okay.

**MR RATTENBURY:** It is the Canberra habit thing, as opposed to a technically correct description. You are right.

**MS CLAY:** I have a question. I think it is for this session. We have community centres that are offering arts facilities. The one that I am thinking of is Capital Region Community Services who have a theatre and a gallery space. We have arts facilities in lots of places around Canberra. How does iCBR support them through maintenance and upgrade works?

**Mr Khan:** That is not a tenant relationship that I have enough detail on, so I will have to take that on notice.

**MS CLAY:** Okay. I will talk about some of the things that I am interested in so we can get something useful back on notice. Is there an asset needs analysis for our community organisations that are offering arts spaces and arts places? Has the work on what they need been done?

**Mr Khan:** Do you mean a broader asset needs analysis—what the minister was describing in terms of the work that artsACT is undertaking?

**MS CLAY:** Are they included in that asset needs analysis?

**Mr Pettersson:** We will have to take this question to the next arts session. I am sorry. These officials are Infrastructure Canberra people.

**MS CLAY:** This is not about community arts facilities?

**Mr Pettersson:** If you are referring to the specific piece of work of the arts assets needs analysis, that is very much an artsACT piece of work.

**MS CLAY:** I have one particular example. I will tell you the example. I would imagine that there are probably 30 examples around Canberra, so there will be a lot in this situation. The Belconnen Community Theatre, operated by the Capital Region Community Centre, needs new lighting and it costs \$30,000. They cannot just absorb that. Who is looking after that? The government has obviously decided that we would like a community theatre in this place. It is a great community theatre. All the kids perform there. It is the only affordable theatre around for that type of community work. They are heading towards a place where they may not be able to operate it anymore. How is Infrastructure Canberra looking after this and helping them with maintenance and upgrades, as well as monitoring all community arts spaces around Canberra?

**Mr Khan:** In our engagement with all tenants, we take any repair or maintenance requests for any of their facilities. We have funding for that type of planned work or any reactive maintenance that is necessary at facilities. We will work with the tenant on understanding the scope, the urgency and the priority. We assess that against the core funding that we have available and the range of requests that we receive from tenants to prioritise when some of those works could be undertaken. The specific example you referenced is not one I am familiar with. I apologise, but I am happy to take further details on notice.

**MS CLAY:** That is okay. How big is the funding pool that you are talking about—the maintenance fund that is available? How much money is there?

**Mr Khan:** That is not a number that I have.

**MS CLAY:** Can you take it on notice?

**Mr Khan:** I am happy to take that on notice. There was an additional \$5.845 million over two years in the 2024-25 budget. That is for corrective repairs and maintenance works at arts facilities.

**MS CLAY:** Including those at community centres?

**Mr Khan:** Yes.

**MS CLAY:** That is great. If somebody has a repair or maintenance work, how do they bring it forward? How do they get onto the list to be considered if there is no ongoing asset program?

**Mr Pettersson:** I think there is a definitional question at hand here. Infrastructure Canberra is responsible for the maintenance and upgrades in ACT government owned arts facilities. Whether you are defined as an ACT government arts facility—which I think is the crux of your question, because you are saying that there are places that provide spaces for art that are not necessarily classified as an ACT arts facility—

**MS CLAY:** Yes.

**Mr Pettersson:** I think that is a question best picked up by artsACT officials. As a delivery agency, Infrastructure Canberra do not decide who to provide service to. They provide service to those they are told to provide service to.

**MS CLAY:** Minister, could you take that on notice or do you need me to lodge it on notice for another session?

**Mr Pettersson:** We will save you the paperwork. We will take it on notice.

**MS CLAY:** Thank you.

**MS LEE:** On the maintenance issue, page 22 of the report states that one of the major priorities for 2025-26 will be to establish a comprehensive maintenance and coordinated inspection schedule. What is the current process, and what will be prioritised to develop this schedule?

**Mr Khan:** Across all assets or across arts?

**MS LEE:** Arts.

**Mr Khan:** Our engagement with tenants will assist in informing the prioritisation of that work. We will sit with each of the tenants, we will work closely with artsACT, and we will allocate the budget according to the priority needs of each of those facilities.

**MS LEE:** Is that not happening at the moment?

**Mr Khan:** That is the work that we are undertaking at the moment in our engagement with tenants.

**MS LEE:** In terms of the comprehensive maintenance and coordinated inspection schedule, what will change? How will that change?

**Mr Khan:** Do you mean the transition of the management of those facilities from artsACT to Infrastructure Canberra?

**MS LEE:** Ms Clay was talking about the requests for maintenance. At the moment, is it a haphazard, try-your-luck kind of thing? It is a priority project. What is going to change?

**Mr Khan:** Infrastructure Canberra has just taken responsibility for the management of these assets. We are working closely with artsACT and are building relationships with the tenants who occupy the facilities. The reference that you are referring to in the annual report is us building our understanding of those assets—the works that are needed. Many are older facilities. From our perspective, there is a need to undertake condition audit assessments to better understand the facilities and then prioritise what the schedule of work would look like, while ensuring there is funding available for any reactive needs that may pop up in those facilities. That is what that is a reference to.

**MS LEE:** It is almost like a new landlord for these arts organisations.

**MS CARRICK:** There can be yes or no answers to these questions, given the timeframe. Are you on the cross-directorate working group for the Woden town centre?

**Ms Geraghty:** Yes.

**MS CARRICK:** Are you working with Scentre Group on arts facilities in the private development?

**Ms Geraghty:** No. The City and Environment Directorate are the lead for the Scentre Group work.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. If you have taken any questions on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. Thanks everyone.

**Short suspension**

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Chief Minister, Minister for Economic Development and Minister for Tourism and Trade

Infrastructure Canberra

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Director-General

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General

**THE CHAIR:** We welcome Mr Andrew Barr MLA, in his capacity as the Chief Minister and Minister for Economic Development, and officials. Please note that, as witnesses, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly.

As we are not inviting opening statements, we will now proceed to questions. Mr Barr, I am looking for an update on the Big Canberra Battery project, which is in the directorate of Brindabella.

**Mr Barr:** One of the batteries is, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** The only one I could name. What benefits are we expecting that it will provide to the ACT once it is operational?

**Mr Barr:** Energy security, an opportunity to store a significant amount of renewable energy that is generated in our region and by our renewable energy generators located outside the ACT, and the opportunity to arbitrage in the national energy market. All the energy that it will store will be at, effectively, zero cost, generated when there is a surplus of renewable energy, which is principally during the middle of the day, and be able to be sold back into the energy grid at times of higher demand.

There is a revenue-sharing arrangement between the territory and the delivery partner in relation to that component of the battery's role. It is, of course, one of many batteries in a distributed network. The objective for the government, over time, is to build the storage capacity, and we are doing so with different scale of battery installation.

Recently, you may have seen the switching on of the battery at Stromlo High School. There are some smaller batteries that are located at a number of ACT government facilities. There are grid-scale batteries, such as the one in the Brindabella electorate, down near one of the ACT-New South Wales interconnectors.

We would anticipate that, over time, both through market forces and through government decision-making, the capacity and number of batteries will increase. Clearly, that is the direction of energy policy under the current federal government. We have seen this week an alternative energy policy put forward. It would appear that that policy is being driven by the National Party of Australia. Regrettably, the Liberal Party of Australia has fallen into line with what might be described as their Neanderthal cousins, as it relates particularly to energy policy.

We will no doubt have another debate, probably the eighth one this century, in relation

to both best sources of energy for Australia and emission reduction. I think that is regrettable. But it is what it is, Mr Werner-Gibbins. The important thing, and the important message, for Canberrans is that the ACT government both believes in the science and is enacting a series of practical policies. The Big Canberra Battery is an important example of attracting new investment into our economy, achieving better outcomes in terms of energy and grid stability, and being able to generate revenue for the territory.

I think that the project achieves a number of really important outcomes that our community strongly supports. We look forward to the continuation of this policy approach, and further engagement with the commonwealth. An example of that is through the neighbourhood battery program—the Casey battery is now operational; there is a central Canberra battery and a South Canberra one as well, at that neighbourhood level—together with the approach that we are taking around installing battery facilities at government sites.

The direction of travel for us is to continue those partnerships with the federal government and with the private sector in seeing more battery storage in the ACT. We warmly welcome the commonwealth's household battery subsidy program, which has delivered a very significant number of new batteries at household level into the city. The uptake in the ACT is very strong, with that program. As we continue our electrification of Canberra over the coming decades, it is important that we continue to invest in the Big Canberra Battery distributed network. That is the government's intent.

**THE CHAIR:** You touched on both of my follow-up questions. With the investment, what is the cost of the project over its life?

**Mr Barr:** We can certainly provide the detail. It is outlined in the budget papers. There is an availability payment that is made in relation to the Williamsdale grid-scale project, and a revenue-sharing arrangement. The details are outlined in the budget papers through each fiscal year.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there thinking or perhaps even plans for large-scale energy storage in the ACT going forward, so that what the current plans are is not the end of the story?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. There is an option under the contract with Eku Energy to have a second stage of the Williamsdale battery. There are also other energy players, particularly those who have existing investments in the National Electricity Market, who are also developing large-scale battery projects within the ACT. That, I think, provides a very clear pathway at grid scale, particularly co-located with large either solar or windfarm facilities, and, importantly, located on those main transmission lines, the interconnectors between the ACT and New South Wales.

We are also seeing, at a below-grid-scale level, that there is investment interest. We look forward to further iterations of that as the federal government roll out their larger scale energy transformation program.

**THE ACTING CHAIR (Ms Carrick):** Chief Minister, how do you determine what projects you are responsible for?

**Mr Barr:** There is a consideration—

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** Just quickly, is tourism involved?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly, an interconnection with other portfolios that I hold, as well as having the principal responsibility for the government's infrastructure program. But I do not micromanage every single project. There are circumstances where the portfolio minister, effectively, as the client for Infrastructure Canberra, is the appropriate lead minister. But I retain an opportunity, through the Expenditure Review Committee and through my regular briefings with Infrastructure Canberra, to be able to have a degree of oversight, particularly over all the territory's major projects.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** When the private sector delivers infrastructure, is there a town plan that guides them?

**Mr Barr:** The Territory Plan, as well as other policy frameworks that are in place. There is a degree of assessment, particularly through either economic development or the City and Environment Directorate, depending on the asset class of the infrastructure project.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** Perhaps I will cut to the chase. With Scentre Group, what town plan for Woden is guiding the social infrastructure that we need there?

**Mr Barr:** There is both the Territory Plan and the Woden district strategy—

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** But it does not identify sites for social infrastructure.

**Mr Barr:** and, of course, there is the work that is undertaken, internal to government, in response to both an Assembly resolution and work that ministers undertake in their own portfolios. I would also point to the government's infrastructure plan, which does outline a long-term pipeline of infrastructure projects for the territory.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** Not for the Woden town centre. Will the ACT government drive the agenda for social infrastructure in the Woden town centre, or will Scentre Group drive the agenda?

**Mr Barr:** The ACT government will drive the agenda.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** How do you square away the outcomes-based framework when the Civic pool will be replaced with a \$140 million government investment, fifty-fifty with the feds, with a great new aquatic centre, and the Phillip pool will be replaced with zero government investment and five residential towers—the outcomes.

**Mr Barr:** The Canberra aquatic centre is for Canberra, Ms Carrick. You seem to struggle with the concept of—

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** I do, because we like community infrastructure. You seem to struggle with community infrastructure.

**Mr Barr:** You seem to struggle with the concept of Canberra as a city. This is a facility

for the entire territory, including—

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** Where is the community infrastructure for Woden?

**Mr Barr:** residents in your own electorate, some of whom will be closer to the—

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** We can all go to Dickson pool, too, so why do you need that?

**Mr Barr:** Some of whom will be closer to the territory-wide Canberra aquatic centre, which is centrally located.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** You seem to have a problem with having social infrastructure in Woden, which is the major hub of Canberra's south.

**Mr Barr:** No, I—

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** You do.

**Mr Barr:** I disagree with your characterisation. We will continue to have to agree to disagree on that point. The largest investments in infrastructure in Canberra this decade have been in your electorate, in Woden.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** I do not invite my friends to the hospital to catch up.

**Mr Barr:** No, but everyone who needs health care in this city—

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** We are talking about social infrastructure.

**Mr Barr:** Health care is the most important priority of this government, Ms Carrick. The largest—

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** Yes, that is true, so why—

**Mr Barr:** It is the largest area of expenditure. The next project I would identify would be the Canberra Institute of Technology campus; then the Woden public transport interchange upgrade. There have been significant projects. The major new electric bus depot in this city is in Woden.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** I do not invite my mates down to the electric bus depot. We want places where we can come together.

**Mr Barr:** But you would like to be able to catch a bus to get to locations and for that bus to be zero emissions.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** No, I want people to catch buses to our town centre.

**Mr Barr:** And they do.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** And do things in our town centre.

**Mr Barr:** And they do.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** That is what the town centres were designed for—to do things.

**Mr Barr:** Indeed, and that is what they do. We have probably gone beyond the line; the Acting Chair is perhaps abusing the authority of the chair here.

**THE ACTING CHAIR:** Over to you, Mr Emerson.

**MR EMERSON:** I want to ask about the Lyric Theatre. Did the government push back on the closure of the entire car park when the TTM was submitted by Multiplex?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly, the government's view was that parking arrangements needed to accommodate loading zones and the appropriate relocation of accessible car parking. We had a discussion in the Assembly in the last sittings in relation to the location of that accessible car parking and the changes we made to reflect one of the outcomes of the Assembly resolution.

**MR EMERSON:** I am curious as to whether there was any back and forth. Obviously, the government receives TTM plans all the time; it is about whether that implies they needed to be closed or not.

**Mr Barr:** In relation to a requirement to maintain parking access, it is certainly something that we pursued, and that is why there is maintenance of parking access. It is worth noting that there are two projects underway simultaneously, and one should not conflate the theatre's land take, if you like, the construction of the theatre. One also needs to consider light rail stage 2A. Those works are more advanced.

As we debated in the Assembly in the last sittings, once those works conclude, a proportion of what was colloquially known as the Mooseheads car park or the Theatre Lane car park will be returned for parking. The theatre construction site is not consuming all of that car park and, once light rail stage 2A construction in that section is complete—this largely relates to a range of important long-term improvements in stormwater management, for example, in that area, to avoid floods, responding to what we anticipate to be increased frequency and intensity of storm events in our region—more car parking will come back online.

**MR EMERSON:** How many rows of car parking does that relate to?

**Mr Barr:** I will take that on notice for you, to give a precise answer.

**MR EMERSON:** Okay. Do you know when that will be?

**Mr Barr:** I will also take that on notice, to get the most accurate date. Obviously, that can change, depending on construction vagaries—good weather et cetera. I ask officials every week to follow that up with the contractors. I am very aware of the issues and the challenges. They are temporary, and we have sought to balance the loading zone and accessible parking needs.

General parking is more challenging at the moment; we acknowledge that. New car parks, new structured car parks, have been built and opened within the precinct, and they were open and operational with hundreds of extra car parks. Clearly, not everyone is aware of them, so we have gone to great lengths to publicise their availability. Again, for the record, that includes, in Nangari Street, the 10-storey, more than 200-space car park that is located very close to this precinct.

Around City Hill, the One City Hill development, which is complete, has a very large car park, with EV charging as well, and it is open and accessible for people. It is a relatively short walk to the Melbourne Building, on the western side of Northbourne Avenue.

**MR EMERSON:** In that response, on notice, could you indicate the number of car parks that you anticipate to reopen—the likely time, understanding that it is indicative only?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR EMERSON:** Thank you. As part of that, how many of those are likely to be accessible parking spots?

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

**MR EMERSON:** With the remainder of the car park that is the Lyric Theatre component, is it the intention to reopen that at all or is it to sell that site for development without bothering to reopen it? I am curious.

**Mr Barr:** The timing of the land sale is a matter principally for the City Renewal Authority and will be driven by market demand at that time. Clearly, the National Capital Authority, who are the development assessment approval entity, because it is a designated site, will have a requirement in relation to replacement car parking. We are conscious of the sequencing of development; so, on the other side, opposite the Melbourne Building, the Capital Airport Group has a project that they are more advanced on. We have sold the land; they have lodged development applications.

There is a considerable amount of car parking underneath that project as well. In the sequencing of land release and development, it is about ensuring that new car parking comes online before we take other car parking offline. As much as possible, that is the land release philosophy. That is why, for example, the City Hill car park at the moment is not on the land release program for this year. We want to ensure that some of the other projects proceed and the development is underway before releasing that block of land. Similarly, the balance of the Theatre Lane land release will occur even beyond the City Hill land release, later in the decade.

**MR EMERSON:** In maximising usage of the city's theatre facilities, does the government anticipate the new Lyric Theatre being used while other events are running in the Playhouse and the old Canberra Theatre?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, there would be potential for there to be simultaneous events. Whether all three would be in action at once would be a matter for the theatre booking and levels

of demand. Certainly, the planning anticipates that there would be occasions—not every night but occasions—when all three—

**MS CARRICK:** Wouldn't it be four?

**Mr Barr:** The Courtyard Studio as well?

**MS CARRICK:** Yes.

**Mr Barr:** It is a relatively small venue.

**MS CARRICK:** We will take it!

**Mr Barr:** Around 150. In theory, yes, all four theatres could be staging events. It is just as well that there are nearly 10,000 car parks within the broader city precinct, including 5,000 very nearby. There is also an expectation that, given the city's population will have tripled by then, and that there is significant public transport connectivity, not everyone who attends a theatre show would drive. Also, not everyone who attends a theatre show would drive their own car. It is more than likely that there would be more than one person in a vehicle coming to a show at the theatre.

**MR EMERSON:** The consultants' traffic report for the Lyric Theatre works approval, which is the basis for not putting any underground parking under the theatre, says that the report does not account for instances where there are simultaneous events at the Lyric Theatre, Playhouse and the old Canberra Theatre space. Is it concerning that that is the basis of the analysis?

**Mr Barr:** No, because there is considerable existing car parking and new car parking being built within the immediate precinct. In simple terms, we are not building a drive-in theatre. The available funds can either build an arts facility or a car park, and it is building an arts facility, because there is significant other car parking within the CBD, we have made a considerable investment in public transport capability, and we are tripling the CBD population.

**MS LEE:** I want to double-check whether you took this on notice or not; I missed the first part of it. You have mentioned a number of times that, obviously, as the roadworks for stage 2A of the light rail continue to be finished, there will be more car parks available and opened up. Did you take the timeline for that on notice?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, I did.

**MS LEE:** In terms of the decision about closure of the Theatre Lane car park, who made that decision, or which entity?

**Mr Barr:** It would be a combination of iCBR and CED.

**MS LEE:** I know that Mr Emerson asked the question, but I do not know that there was a complete answer to it. In terms of the request from the developer as to how much they say they needed, what was that discussion with the government?

**Ms Geraghty:** Do you mean Multiplex?

**MS LEE:** Yes.

**Ms Geraghty:** Multiplex are our delivery partner. They are under contract with us through an ECI arrangement, and they work very closely with us. We have ongoing conversations and would have worked up a solution with them collaboratively.

**Mr Cahif:** It is fair to say that, in all of these proposals, there is a balance that has to be done in terms of cost and constructability. That is something that we would work through very closely with Multiplex. They started the early works, which required site establishment, as well as undertaking all the site investigations, and some of the other early works piece.

We work very closely with CED and CFC in this space, particularly regarding the impact on the existing theatre centre. When a proposal is put forward to us as to what site requirements there are, we will work through what the impacts are there and work out what the appropriate balance is.

**MS LEE:** Chief Minister, you mentioned in the last sitting period that you would go away and do some more work in relation to making sure there is a balance between loading zones and more accessible parking. Do you have any further updates on that?

**Mr Barr:** Yes. A number of loading zone spaces have been switched for accessible car parking spaces.

**MR EMERSON:** There are two.

**Mr Barr:** Yes, that has occurred.

**MS LEE:** Can I double-check in terms of whether I can ask questions about this topic in this session? I want to go to page 13 of the annual report, where it talks about the ACT Cladding Rectification Program.

**Mr Barr:** That is not me.

**MS CLAY:** On the Lyric Theatre, the ACT government has already committed \$89.1 million to that, and I have seen ballpark figures that it might cost half a billion or so to build.

**Mr Barr:** Sorry?

**MS CLAY:** \$500 million. I have seen—

**Mr Barr:** No.

**MS CLAY:** Okay. What we know is \$89.1 million. Do we have a ballpark figure for the total cost?

**Mr Barr:** We do, and we are in the final stages of the contract negotiations. Once the

contract is agreed, it will be made public.

**MS CLAY:** That is great. The most similar project that we can see to our Lyric Theatre is the Sydney Coliseum; that had a 2,200 seat capacity. It was designed by Cox Architecture—the same architects. Have you had a look at that one?

**Ms Geraghty:** This is at Rooty Hill?

**MS CLAY:** Yes, the Sydney Coliseum Theatre.

**Ms Geraghty:** Yes, we have.

**MS CLAY:** Theirs cost \$100 million to build. Are we expecting similar results? If not, are there major differences between our Lyric and the Sydney Coliseum?

**Mr Barr:** There are. We will take on notice and give a more substantive list of those. More comparable projects would include ones in Queensland, with the Queensland Performing Arts Centre. We can give that to you, perhaps, on notice. It would be easier, frankly, rather than verbally running through a list of everything that is different, in relation to the projects. We will release the contract which will outline the scope of the project, including its gross floor area and all the features of the project, in the not-too-distant future.

**MS CLAY:** Ours is bigger?

**Mr Barr:** Again, it is easier to take the question on notice in relation to the technical specifications of that project versus the one that we are pursuing.

**MS CLAY:** Okay. What federal funding do we have for the Lyric?

**Mr Barr:** At this point there is no federal funding for the Lyric.

**MS CLAY:** Why is that?

**Mr Barr:** We have put the project forward. The commonwealth have chosen instead to invest in other projects in the ACT, including light rail, the aquatic centre and convention facilities.

**MS CLAY:** I am interested, and it is hard to get an answer from outside the system looking in: you consistently, particularly with Ms Carrick, badge this as one of our key facilities and it is for the whole of Canberra, and Canberra is going to become the arts capital of Australia. If we are going ahead with it, it does look like a really strategic ACT facility. Did you have any further negotiations?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS CLAY:** When you put up a fifty-fifty budget bid, were you given a reason as to why it was not funded?

**Mr Barr:** Certainly, the commonwealth do not have a strong history of partnering with

state and territory governments on arts facilities. They have their own investment in national facilities. Principally, in order to get through the first hurdle, Infrastructure Australia need to declare a project to be of national significance. We have been unsuccessful in having the Canberra Lyric Theatre designated as a project of national significance.

**MS CLAY:** Has the budget for the Lyric changed during the course of this project so far?

**Mr Barr:** Not at this point. There will be a final determination once a final offer comes through. That will go to the Expenditure Review Committee. We will make a determination, and then we will make a public announcement in that regard.

**MS CLAY:** Given that you have taken on notice the differences between the Coliseum and the Lyric, you mentioned another theatre that you think is a much closer match. Can you come back with the same details as to how that one is a closer match, and perhaps what that one cost?

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MS CLAY:** Can you also provide information as to whether those ones got commonwealth funding?

**Mr Barr:** I do not believe they did, but I can confirm that.

**MS CLAY:** You only need to confirm it if what you have just said is wrong.

**Mr Barr:** Yes.

**MR RATTENBURY:** You talked about Infrastructure Australia deeming something to be of national significance, to get in the stream for commonwealth funding. What is the difference between the Lyric Theatre and the new aquatic centre, which does seem to have made it into the stream?

**Mr Barr:** No, it has not, either; it is the quantum of commonwealth investment. It needs to go over a certain threshold before Infrastructure Australia become involved.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Something like the aquatic centre goes to a different stream of commonwealth funding?

**Mr Barr:** Yes, that is correct.

**MS CARRICK:** If it is not of national significance, why are we going ahead with it at this time, when we have the budget in the situation that it is in, with borrowings and debt?

**Mr Barr:** Because it was a key election commitment going back over a number of election cycles. Its need has been identified through most of this century, so it has already been delayed on several occasions. It is already factored into the territory's forward estimates. The original Canberra Theatre was built in 1965. It has just had its

60th birthday. It is, unfortunately, not of a scale, in terms of its stage, its back-of-house and its seating capacity, to be able to attract the sorts of events that are held in other cities that have a suitable facility. To not go ahead with it would be a breach of faith in relation to both a future commitment and a project that has been more than a decade in its development.

**MS CARRICK:** Speaking of Infrastructure Australia, have we received the assessment from them for light rail stage 2A yet?

**Mr Barr:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. If you have taken any questions on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. Thank you, everyone.

Berry, Ms Yvette, Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and Early Childhood,  
Minister for Homes and New Suburbs and Minister for Sport and Recreation

Infrastructure Canberra

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Director-General

Khan, Mr Faheem, Executive Group Manager, Delivery, Places and Spaces

**THE CHAIR:** We welcome the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Ms Yvette Berry MLA, and officials. Please note that, as witnesses, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly.

As we are not inviting opening statements, we will now proceed to questions. Minister Berry, is this the right session where I can ask about the Canberra Arena ice sports venue?

**Ms Berry:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** What about the Erindale Leisure Centre and activities there?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** With the active leisure centre transition from the Education Directorate to iCBR and Belgravia, has iCBR received feedback from staff and users about how that has been going?

**Mr Khan:** Thank you for the question, Mr Werner-Gibbings. We have received positive feedback through the transition from the Erindale Parents & Citizens Association, who were running the facility, to Belgravia. That is the answer to your question. There has been extensive engagement with staff, as part of that transition as well. The overwhelming majority of staff have been retained at the facility. They are continuing to provide their services at the Erindale Leisure Centre, but they are working for Belgravia, as the new operator of that facility.

**THE CHAIR:** Has there been an impact on Erindale College students accessing the facilities—not as far as we are aware?

**Mr Khan:** No. We worked really closely with the Education Directorate as part of the transition from the P&C's management of that facility to Belgravia to ensure that there was no impact on student access to the facilities.

**MS LEE:** On that transition or integration, the annual report talks about the risks of integrating the longstanding centre. It is referenced on page 209 of the report. What are the risks that the government has identified, and what is the government doing to mitigate those risks?

**Mr Khan:** As we discussed in the earlier hearing about the arts facilities, some of the funding that we have allocated in this financial year is to undertake a condition audit assessment at the Erindale Leisure Centre. That work will help us to understand the

scale and priority of repair or upgrade work that will be required at the facility. The reference to risk that you referred to is an acknowledgement of that gap in our knowledge of an asset of which we have now inherited custodianship. As we work through, in this financial year, a better understanding of what that looks like, we will then have a better understanding of what risk profile might exist for that facility. That is work that is being undertaken at the moment. At the time of publication, it was foreshadowing that.

**THE CHAIR:** Page 42 refers to the Erindale Leisure Centre asset condition assessment, which will inform future upgrades or asset replacement. When will that be undertaken? Will it consider user feedback? If not, how will the ELC users be able to contribute to that assessment?

**Mr Khan:** We will work closely with the members. Our communication with members to date has been about the transition of their membership to a new provider, and the opportunities for improvements at the facility. Erindale Leisure Centre will be a feature of the annual survey that we undertake for our pools. We use that survey on a year-on-year basis to inform investments that are made in a facility. That will be the opportunity for members to provide that feedback.

The work on the more formal condition audit assessment will also be an integral part of pulling together the advice that we provide to the minister around what investments, upgrades and repairs may be necessary at the facility.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a timeline for when the assessment will begin?

**Mr Khan:** We will complete that assessment in this financial year, in order to inform investments for the next financial year and moving onwards.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, some members of the community, including me, have found it difficult to work out who is responsible for what part of an infrastructure facility—for instance, Lakeside and Erindale—between you, as Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Stephen-Smith, as Minister for Finance. You can take this on notice: are you able to provide the committee with some information about what you have responsibility for at Erindale Leisure Centre and Lakeside Leisure Centre, and what is the responsibility of Minister Stephen-Smith, or Belgravia, as operators of the facilities?

**Ms Berry:** We are now responsible for the Lakeside Leisure Centre hydrotherapy pool as well. I think it was just during the initial project phase that it was managed through Health, because it was a new build coming out of the closure of the hydrotherapy pool at the hospital in Woden. That was the initial project, but now it is more for iCBR, and Belgravia, as the contractor. Erindale is a bit of a unique setting, but that has moved over now to Belgravia, with iCBR. That is the pool as well as the gym and the theatre at Erindale.

**THE CHAIR:** All matters will be coming to your office?

**Ms Berry:** Or Belgravia, yes, and us—iCBR. Erindale did have some upgrades during COVID. We took advantage of the time when everything was shut down to do some

minor upgrades at some of our swim centres. Erindale did get some minor works. I cannot recall exactly what, but it was things like tile repairs, paintwork and some minor upgrades. It is an old facility. The work that iCBR does through Belgravia and the user groups will give us some more information about what is required there.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In the transition from the P&C to Belgravia, it looked like a number of membership options that were utilised by the community were lost, including the ability to make a 12-month up-front payment, and a discontinuation of an aquatics-only membership. Apparently, the feedback provided by Belgravia for that was that other centres do not do that, so presumably they were harmonising that. Was there any thought given to allowing people who are relying on those community facilities and who may not necessarily be able to afford a full membership to continue to use the services that they were relying on at Erindale?

**Mr Khan:** Thank you for the question, Miss Nuttall. All existing memberships transitioned, as part of the transition of operator to Belgravia. For any new memberships that members of the community are seeking to enter into at the Erindale Leisure Centre, there is a new offering, which is consistent with the membership offering that Belgravia provides at its other facilities. It offers complementary benefits at those facilities as well, but for existing members of the community we have been able to retain, and maintain at the same rate, their existing membership fees. Those will transition, as part of the transition to the new operator. However, we will do that in consultation with members. We are working closely with Belgravia to understand the impacts that that will have on members before any decisions are made about that transition and the timeline for that.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Do you have any preliminary timeline?

**Mr Khan:** We are in close discussions with Belgravia at this point. We expect to be commencing discussions with affected members in the early part of 2026.

**MS CARRICK:** My question is about maintenance at the aquatic centres. Is Belgravia responsible for the maintenance or is it Infrastructure Canberra?

**Mr Khan:** Thank you for the question, Ms Carrick. There is a split of responsibility around repairs and maintenance at the pool facilities themselves. It depends on what type of upgrade work we might be pointing to. If I could give an example, if we were talking about a new filtration system, that would be work that Infrastructure Canberra would undertake at the pool. We would commission that work and have that undertaken. If it was the replacement of hooks that have come loose in the change rooms, that is something that we would work with Belgravia on, but Belgravia would have the responsibility for doing that work.

**MS CARRICK:** What if they do not make enough profits to do the maintenance, and are there any concerns that they could cut costs by not doing it?

**Mr Khan:** We work very closely with Belgravia to ensure that the standard of offering at the facilities meets our community's expectations. While there are different funding arrangements across each of the facilities—there are seven pools, six of which Belgravia run—we provide a subsidy for the operation of those facilities. With the

revenue generated from those facilities, there is a combination of revenue that is returned to Belgravia, as the operator, to government, and reinvested in the facility itself. There are multiple funding sources and opportunities for government to ensure that we are maintaining those facilities at the standard at which we would like to maintain them.

**MS CARRICK:** Do you oversee them and check compliance—that all the locks on the showers are operational, and that sort of thing?

**Mr Khan:** Yes.

**MS CARRICK:** If the community have concerns about things not being fixed for a period of time, who do they go to?

**Ms Berry:** Usually me!

**MS CARRICK:** I will ask them to email you then, Minister Berry. That is good. Do you check the capacity of the pools and whether they are over-capacity or not?

**Mr Khan:** We undertake spot checks to ensure compliance with each of the requirements; however, Belgravia is our contracted operator of those facilities, and our expectation is that they are meeting each of the compliance and regulatory limits that might exist at any of the facilities.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Following on from that, the territory budget indicates that we will spend \$5.8 million on the territory's pools in this financial year. You have talked about the maintenance split. Does each pool have an asset management plan which establishes how that pool is maintained and what upgrade works are required?

**Mr Khan:** We are developing the maturity of that, Mr Rattenbury. It varies from facility to facility, and the scale of investment varies from facility to facility. The Canberra Olympic Pool is a much older facility and requires a lot more than I think would be fairly characterised as more basic maintenance, in order to be kept to standard. We also ensure that there is the capacity to invest in improvements across other facilities.

Recently, at the Manuka pool, as an example, there was investment in new changing tables in both the male and female bathrooms at that facility. There was reseeding of lawns at the Dickson pool, prior to its summer opening. I touched earlier on the work that we are doing to better understand the Erindale Leisure Centre as a broader asset, and what investments should look like in that facility. It is an iterative piece of work to get to the point that I think you are describing.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Is the territory or the operator responsible for the development of those plans?

**Mr Khan:** The territory. We work with the operator, of course, to inform our understanding of that. They are at the facility, operating the facility, every day and can assist in ensuring that we have the most fulsome picture of the broader capital upgrade investment that may be required.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I was interested in your earlier description of the maintenance distinction—that government is responsible for some, but the operator is responsible for other. Exactly how is that line drawn? How is it specified in the contract?

**Mr Khan:** We will have to take the exact details of that on notice, in terms of our contract management arrangements. I would have to take on notice and find out exactly what that split looks like, Mr Rattenbury.

**MR RATTENBURY:** It would be useful to understand, because I imagine that it results in quite some back and forth, about which side of the line a piece of maintenance falls on. I am interested in how the government is effectively managing that ongoing dispute, potentially.

**Mr Khan:** We have a very productive and close relationship with Belgravia, as the operator. Preventive maintenance and some of the reactive works would sit more in the responsibility of Belgravia, as the operator, whereas the more significant planned capital upgrades would be the responsibility of the territory. I am happy to provide the information on notice.

**MR RATTENBURY:** That would be helpful; thank you.

**MR EMERSON:** I have a question about Canberra Olympic Pool. What is the timeline? You mentioned the distinction between basic maintenance and more substantive upgrades. I assume that is one where you would not want to make upgrades, given the new pool planned for Commonwealth Park. What timeline are you operating to? What is your assumption, in terms of when that new pool will be ready?

**Ms Geraghty:** The only thing I would mention for that project is that we are actually accountable to the Chief Minister.

**Ms Berry:** The new project.

**Ms Geraghty:** The new project, yes.

**MR EMERSON:** My question is in relation to the maintenance of the existing pool. That will obviously be informed by when you think there will be a new pool to replace it.

**Mr Khan:** We are aware of the intention and planning to build the new facility. Of course, that informs the types of investment that we are undertaking at the Canberra Olympic Pool. We understand that it has a defined life. We have been approaching that on an annual basis in order to inform the investment that we have been making over preceding years. I suspect that that will continue. That is a feature, in part, of considerations that the cabinet and minister undertake in the annual budget process.

**MR EMERSON:** In recent budgets, over the last two or three years, have there been any potential larger investments at Civic pool that you have decided against, as they would be totally illogical, because you could not invest something that would lead to a 10- or 20-year improvement, when you are not planning to use the pool for that long.

**Ms Berry:** No. The pool is notorious for its leak issues. The government has made the decision in the past to invest quite a lot of funding in keeping it operating until another one is in place. Given that we are getting closer, hopefully, there are no critical failures around which we have to make a decision. We will deal with it if it arises—touch wood, it does not—and, hopefully, we can just keep the pool operating for a limited period of time until the new pool is up and running.

**Mr Khan:** And ensure that it is meeting all compliance requirements, of course.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, of course.

**MS LEE:** While we are on pools, on page 41 of the annual report, there is a reference to the feasibility study to determine the parameters for a new pool, featuring a dive pool, in the Stromlo Leisure Centre complex. It says, in terms of the action:

The final study, costing report and submission to government was completed and submitted in November 2024.

Is that public?

**Ms Berry:** I cannot recall. No.

**Mr Khan:** It is not.

**MS LEE:** Will it be made public?

**Ms Berry:** I will take it on notice. Most people should be aware of it, but I will take it on notice and see whether that information can be provided.

**MS LEE:** Okay. Has the government done a response in any way to it?

**Ms Berry:** No. There has been no decision made.

**MR EMERSON:** Are any of our pools equipped to host major swim meets?

**Mr Khan:** When you say “major swim meets”, Mr Emerson, do you mind expanding on what you mean by that?

**MR EMERSON:** National competitions that often will go to larger cities. Is this a consideration in terms of how the government approaches things like pool upgrades, new pool facilities and so on?

**Mr Khan:** Swimming Australia has a set of standards that it expects for the different types of pool meets that can occur—national standard, state standard, regional, and zone. We could provide to you, on notice, against those standards the current facilities that we operate in the territory.

**MR EMERSON:** That would be great—a breakdown of which facility is suitable for what. That would be really helpful. To what extent is the government prioritising

additional uses of pools, including gyms and saunas? Is there a policy position? Obviously, we see this happening a lot: with the private provision of facilities, everything is rolled into one. Is this something that we are prioritising?

**Ms Geraghty:** That is a question for Economic Development. They set the policy. We deliver what we are told to deliver.

**MR EMERSON:** Are they telling you to deliver more sauna facilities and gyms? In terms of the upgrades, you mentioned Manuka pool and Dickson pool; that is fantastic. Are those sorts of things under consideration and determined to be too expensive or not appropriate?

**Ms Geraghty:** At the moment we are continuing to operate our existing pools and facilities, and building, planning and delivering the new Commonwealth Park pool.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I would like to head back to the asset management plans. Would you be able to provide a breakdown for each territory pool, showing how much was spent over the last financial year at each pool, and how much of that was spent by the territory, as opposed to the operator?

**Ms Berry:** That is probably some detail that we do not have available today. We will take it on notice and see what it is possible to provide. I am not sure whether Belgravia would have that information at hand on what they do. We can ask them.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In that case, I might ask about upgrades at the Lakeside Leisure Centre. A few people have raised with us concerns about the state of the bathrooms. I know you were asked about this in question time, but I am interested in whether you might have more detail today, Minister. Have there been any upgrades done to bathrooms or change rooms at the Lakeside Leisure Centre recently? If so, what did they entail?

**Mr Khan:** Thank you for the question, Miss Nuttall. We acknowledge that there have been some complaints received with regard to the Lakeside Leisure Centre, particularly the cleanliness in the bathrooms. We have been working closely with Belgravia, as the operator, and have undertaken quite a few works at the site that are involved before refurbishment of the existing bathrooms and change rooms.

We have added new lockers and made some changes to lighting as well. Also, in working with Belgravia, they have made an adjustment to two contractual elements. They have added an additional area manager, as part of overseeing the facilities, in order to improve some of the responsiveness to complaints that have been received. They have also reviewed their arrangements with their contractor for some of the preventive and reactive elements of maintenance that need to be undertaken at the facilities.

**Ms Berry:** There was also damage in the kitchen. Those repairs are not complete yet.

**Mr Khan:** No, they are not.

**Ms Berry:** Those are continuing as well.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Is that the commercial kitchen element that looks out onto the—

**Mr Khan:** The café. With some of the upgrades that I touched on, particularly the shower hardware upgrades for the amenities, we are expecting those to be completed by the end of this month.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In the meantime, is there any disruption for users using the change rooms and facilities? Are they still able to take showers before and after their swim, and things like that?

**Mr Khan:** I understand there is still access to the changing room facilities while work is being undertaken. Of course, we aim to minimise—

**MISS NUTTALL:** Do you have a timeline for the works that we might be able to provide to constituents who are interested?

**Mr Khan:** We could provide further advice about what that looks like.

**MISS NUTTALL:** That is very kind; thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Going back to Erindale, with the election commitment to upgrade the active leisure centre, my presumption is that the asset condition report will be a serious informant of that process. The discussion in the next financial year would be when the report is looking like being undertaken and, ideally, completed. What timeline does that leave for the upgrades? When would they be taking place?

**Ms Berry:** It will depend on what the report tells us. There might be some shorter term upgrades to the facility that can be done relatively quickly and that are more affordable. There may be some that need to be a more medium or longer term project. Once the asset report review is done, and we have spoken with the P&C and the community, we will then understand what is required and whether government needs to make a decision about how that is funded. We will go through that process.

**MS CARRICK:** Could you provide us, on notice, with the profits of Belgravia over the past couple of years?

**Ms Berry:** I am sure it would be in the annual report, if they are required to.

**Ms Khan:** Ms Carrick, do you mean Belgravia as an operating entity?

**MS CARRICK:** No, at each pool. What profits do they make out of each of our pools?

**Mr Khan:** I am not sure.

**Ms Berry:** I do not know that—

**MS CARRICK:** They are a for-profit organisation.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, but they are a private business. We do not hold their annual reports. I

am sure that they provide them, and they are available publicly.

**MS CARRICK:** They do not report back to you? How do you know about who does the maintenance? How do you know if they are making a squillion out of our pools or they are just scraping through?

**Ms Berry:** I doubt that they would be making a squillion.

**Ms Khan:** We could take it on notice and consider it.

**Ms Berry:** We will take it on notice and see what we can find.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you. They are for-profit, so what sort of profits are they making out of our pools?

**THE CHAIR:** We will leave it there. Thank you, everyone, for the past hour and a half. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. If you have taken any questions on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*.

We also thank broadcasting and Hansard for their support this morning. If a member wishes to ask questions on notice, please upload them to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible, and no later than five business days from today. This meeting is now adjourned.

**The committee adjourned at 10.30 am**