



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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

(Reference: [Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2023–24](#))

**Members:**

**MS J CLAY (Chair)**  
**MS F CARRICK (Deputy Chair)**  
**MS E LEE**  
**MS C TOUGH**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**TUESDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2025**

**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**

<b>Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate .....</b>	<b>21</b>
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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## **The committee met at 8.45 am.**

Cheyne, Ms Tara, Attorney-General, Minister for Human Rights, Minister for City and Government Services and Minister for the Night-Time Economy

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Pryce, Mr David, Director-General

Fitzgerald, Mr Bruce, Acting Deputy Director-General, City Services

Rampton, Mr Tim, Executive Branch Manager, Roads ACT

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

Clement, Ms Sophie, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery

Childs, Mr Daniel, Executive Group Manager, Territory and Business Services

Infrastructure Canberra

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Director-General

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Rutledge, Mr Geoffrey, Deputy Director-General, Environment, Water and Emissions Reduction

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, and welcome to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services for its inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2023-24. The committee will today hear from the Minister for City and Government Services.

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 any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event or watching from elsewhere.

The proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard, and we will publish our proceedings. We are also broadcasting and livestreaming. If you take a question on notice, it would be good if you could say, "I will take that question on notice." That helps our committee and our witnesses to confirm what has been taken on notice.

We welcome Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, the Minister for City and Government Services, and the many officials who are here. I remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to the privilege statement. 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. When you first speak, please say, "I have read, I understand and I agree with the privilege statement."

We are not inviting opening statements, so we will proceed to questions. I will start with the first question, and it is on recycling. I would love to have a bit of a check-in on our FOGO facility. I can see that the original completion date for our FOGO facility was June 2023, and that has been pushed back, I think, to December 2026. The original valuation was \$520,000. The revised value is \$3.5 million. But I do not think that is

probably the full cost of building that facility. We have had some big delays on building that facility. Are you able to tell me how much that facility will cost Canberra to build, and can you tell me when it will be providing FOGO services for all of Canberra?

**Ms Cheyne:** I confirm that I have read and understood the privilege statement. You would be aware that there were very good intentions by the government, entering into the Tenth Assembly, regarding our ability to get on with processing the work that was needed for the procurement of an in-vessel FOGO facility. Necessarily, the recycling facility burning down meant that that became a higher priority, and that is effectively the reason that FOGO has been pushed back—for a number of considerations, in terms of industry's ability to respond to multiple tenders at once and the ACT government's capacity to deliver.

Now that that procurement has been finalised for the new recycling facility, we are able to get underway with the planning for the procurement of the FOGO facility. It is expected that it will be a two-phase procurement process. While we have not been able to do a huge amount in the procurement space on that at this stage, it does not mean that nothing has occurred. There was a request for information inviting feedback and information from industry on technology options and solutions to divert FOGO in late December 2023. That closed in February 2024. It is that feedback that will be used to inform the request for proposal for the composting facility.

In terms of where to direct questions on this, effectively, Infrastructure Canberra is the delivery lead of the facility. In terms of the operations modelling and other aspects of that, that is City Services. In the first instance, I will hand over to Gillian to talk you through the current time lines.

**THE CHAIR:** I might direct some specific questions, in the interests of time. I think you received 10 submissions in the RFP. Can you tell me whether any of the submissions in the request for proposal were for any model other than a large in-vessel composter or were they all for a large in-vessel composter?

**Ms Geraghty:** I have read and accept the privilege statement. I will have to take the question on notice. Infrastructure Canberra has taken on the delivery partner management of the project since November last year.

**Mr Cahif:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. We will take the question on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** That is fine.

**Ms Cheyne:** Mr Fitzgerald has the answer, I think.

**Ms Geraghty:** Because TCCS ran that process.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Out of the 10 submissions we had to the RFI—and it was a request for information; it did not actually go into detail as to the proposals themselves—there were a number that proposed a decentralised model, if you will, a lower-scale model, not of sufficient capacity in which to undertake a city-wide collection for FOGO, though.

**THE CHAIR:** Do we have a cost for likely spend for how much it will cost to build the in-vessel? Have you looked at the costs of doing it in a decentralised model? It must be hard to weigh it up if we are not looking at the costs of different models.

**Ms Geraghty:** We will take that through the procurement process this year and next year, to make sure we have the best value-for-money approach for the territory.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you taken on notice what the cost of the in-vessel facility will be? Did I hear you take that on notice?

**Ms Geraghty:** We will take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** You have also taken on notice the various costs of other models.

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Clay, Mr Fitzgerald stressed that that dispersed model is not at the scale that we need for a city of our size.

**THE CHAIR:** I have noticed, though, that Cooma and Goulburn are doing outdoor composting. The Central Coast does community composting. The City of Sydney is looking at Goterra insect farming. Perth and the Western Australian government look like they are doing windrow composting and, in California, Orange County just ran a piece on their windrow composting. For whoever is running the project—do not go into detail, as that would take a lot of time—did you look at any of those other cities and how they are doing their composting models?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** Absolutely. The feasibility study that proposed an in-vessel composting solution looked at all options, and that included anaerobic digestion and other means by which to process the material. The big constraint we have in the territory is obviously one of space, and appropriately locating an outdoor windrowing facility is very difficult in the territory. Also, because you cannot control the inputs to the processing, you do receive a lower quality product as a result.

**THE CHAIR:** I might lodge one more on notice, but I want to find out where to send it. Has anyone done the modelling for the climate emissions from the delay from 2023 to 2026? Is that a question you can either answer here or take on notice and come back to me?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** The emissions have not been modelled for that delay, no.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that something that you would do or is that something that the climate minister would do?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** That would be something that we would do, as part of the waste—

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a reason that you have not modelled—

**Ms Cheyne:** It would have to be an EIS.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a reason that you have not modelled that? Is that not an

important part of—

**Ms Cheyne:** It is due to where we are in the process, Ms Clay. We have to do an environmental impact statement as part of this, and that would inform that.

**THE CHAIR:** You will be modelling the emissions lost from 2023 to 2026?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** The emissions are counted each year through our accounting process. It is something that we are keeping track of. We have not modelled the future emissions. There is an assumption that that remains consistent over that period of time.

**THE CHAIR:** It is also past emissions. We were meant to open in 2023. It is now 2025, and we are planning on opening in 2026. Have you modelled how many emissions we have released into the environment as a result of not opening?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** Not at this stage, no.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Carrick?

**MS CARRICK:** My question is about cycle paths. What is the status of planning for a protected cycle lane between Woden town centre and the city?

**Ms Cheyne:** There are multiple parts to this, Ms Carrick, because it relates also to SLA and the plans that they have. Infrastructure Canberra colleagues can speak to that, at least briefly.

**Ms Geraghty:** It is probably a question for the Minister for Transport as well. We are looking at, as part of our works for the planning of stage 2B of the light rail, adjoining projects, which include a cycle path connecting the city through to Woden. That will feature in some of our material to come forward in the environmental impact statement for 2B.

**MS CARRICK:** Once the planning is done, can the cycle path commence prior to light rail commencing?

**Ms Geraghty:** That is probably a question for government, rather than the public service.

**MS CARRICK:** The annual report, on page 402 of volume 1, says that satisfaction with paths is under target, mainly due to the need for better maintenance, repair and more paths. How is the directorate responding when it comes to better maintenance, repair and more paths?

**Ms Cheyne:** Mr Rampton will be able to expand on this. There are a number of initiatives that the government has invested in and undertaken quite recently, so we are yet to see the full benefit emerging out of those at this stage. One of them in particular relates to the insourcing of a grinding crew, which are able to tackle some of those smaller, make-safe works that we need, rather than us having to put that into a contracted package.

We have also commenced a process for insourcing a panel replacement crew. Again, if you are looking at paths when you are walking around, you will often see that it is not just one big, long line of concrete; it is divided into segments of concrete paths. When we are talking about a path replacement crew, we are talking about those panels in that concrete path that need to be replaced.

Usually, there is a make-safe component, and that is often when you will see perhaps a different treatment applied to remove the trip hazard. Often, you might see some asphalt-coloured treatment and, later, because it has previously gone through a contracted package of works, that is when many areas in a particular space will be addressed at once. Mr Rampton can expand on that.

**Mr Rampton:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Minister Cheyne gave a fantastic description of some of the processes we are doing. I will add that what we saw probably during this particular reporting period was the back end of that wet few years that we had, so we were still experiencing a lot of increase in pavement lift as a result of groundswell that we saw during those wet periods.

With respect to some of the insourcing, our grinding team is operational. We had our little crew for grinding become operational at the start of October last year. We are in the final throes of recruiting our concrete maintenance crew, our internal crew, so that we can jump on top of those patches of footpath that we can urgently repair, rather than having to go out to contract.

**MS CARRICK:** How do you prioritise maintenance and gaps in the path network—new paths?

**Mr Rampton:** With respect to the missing links, which I am assuming you are referring to, Ms Carrick—

**MS CARRICK:** Yes.

**Mr Rampton:** we will look strategically at where that path is leading to. Is it near a school? Is it near a set of shops? Is it leading to a public transport facility? We will look to categorise it with respect to what it is serving; then, when we have some funding associated with the missing path program, we are able to select which one we would like to implement.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Looking at page 404, which has a target for increasing the length of community paths, the target was 60; the achievement was actually 36. It mentions that the reason this was underachieved was because less than anticipated path assets were gifted to TCCS by developers. Can I understand a bit more as to what is happening? Are the developers not meeting their obligations with the territory on that factor?

**Ms Cheyne:** Generally, what happens, in a range of developments—and it is easiest to start with something like SLA—when SLA are undertaking an estate development or a precinct development, there may be paths that they are investing in as part of, effectively, building that suburb. As with many assets, whether it is a playground, a toilet or whatever it may be, paths are then effectively handed over to TCCS for their



ongoing maintenance.

I believe this target is a combination of both what new development is bringing, in terms of active travel infrastructure, and where we are increasing our path network. In that particular year, for that target, that is where we have had a lower completion of path assets that have been handed over to TCCS.

**Mr Rampton:** We will typically get handed the asset about 12 months after it is finished, so that it is past its defect liability period. It is then handed to TCCS to manage, and that is when we start to report on it.

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is: why has that target not been achieved?

**Mr Rampton:** Essentially, because we have seen less potential development or handover of assets to TCCS during that period.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Why?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** The target itself is a long-term average of the number of paths that we see completed in any given year. It depends on where a particular development is up to, as to whether or not the asset is ready for transfer.

**MR MILLIGAN:** A number of constituents from Kaleen have contacted my office. A number of them have raised concerns regarding cycle safety along Maribyrnong Avenue. Has the government considered installing a dedicated cycle path, particularly around the primary school in that area, and what cost would be associated with installing such a path?

**Ms Cheyne:** I do know the constituent you are referring to, Mr Milligan. I will have to check whether I have that information available. I think it relates to the Kaleen floodway; is that correct?

**MR MILLIGAN:** No. It is along Maribyrnong Avenue—installing a dedicated cycle path along Maribyrnong Avenue, which runs through Kaleen. It is wide infrastructure, as it stands.

**Ms Cheyne:** I will take it on notice, Mr Milligan.

**MR MILLIGAN:** On page 50 of the annual report, it states that there were 3,516 path inspections done by the directorate. What is the basis for those inspections? How many of those inspections were done due to complaints put through Fix My Street, and how many were actioned?

**Mr Rampton:** With respect to the inspections, the vast majority were in response to Fix My Street or constituent indications of issues in the network. With the number of path defects that we were seeing during those work periods, we were a little bit on the back foot. We were working diligently around reacting to Fix My Street and reacting to ministerial responses that were coming through. Of those 3½ thousand inspections. I think the annual report states that about 3,200 repairs were done. We will always prioritise the make-safe repairs in first instance—that is, cold mix or grinding—and

then, if the path requires replacement, we will put it on a future program for replacement.

**MR MILLIGAN:** What was the response rate, from TCCS when it received a complaint from the constituent through Fix My Street to it being inspected and then being rectified, on average?

**Ms Cheyne:** Generally, Mr Milligan, similar to what I was explaining before, the inspection is carried out and, if the issue is identified, then TCCS, Roads ACT, will prioritise the make-safe of that area to reduce the hazard that exists. Then it will usually be scheduled into broader project work for replacement, depending on the priority and the hazard that exists.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Is there a target in terms of how long it will take, from when the complaint has been lodged until when it will be completed? Do you have a target of 30 days or—

**Ms Cheyne:** It really depends on the assessment that is completed. Some people appreciate that what is in front of them is their biggest issue, but it may be relatively minor compared to some other things, where we need to make a larger and quicker investment. So it really depends on that assessment process as to the time frames.

**MR MILLIGAN:** How is the team made up? How many teams do you have that go out to do these repairs? Are they adequately resourced? You mentioned that there have been delays in rectifying some of these problems. Is there a need for further investment or an increase in the number of resources or people in these teams?

**Mr Rampton:** We have a small team of inspectors. There is in the order of half a dozen inspectors in the team. They are the ones who will go out and do the initial review of the footpath. They will then classify whether it is a high priority for immediate make-safe repairs or it will go into a wider program. As we mentioned before, if immediate repairs need to be done, we can now utilise our small grinding team to do it. We also have an external contractor that we use because our team is not big enough at the moment to cover all the grinding requirements. For all the path repairs, the larger replacement repairs are all done by external contractors at the moment. There is a view to having our two small crews of concrete replacement people on board over the coming months.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Do you have an expected time frame when you want to bring on more contractors or explore that option?

**Mr Rampton:** Not really. No. At the moment, once we get our internal crews on board, we want to see how that impacts our delivery. Obviously, we have visions and goals for that, but we will not know until we actually get them operational.

**THE CHAIR:** I wonder whether you could take on notice the average length of time to fix reported defects and the longest length of time. Is that information you could take on notice and bring back to us?

**Mr Rampton:** Yes. I can take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

**Ms Cheyne:** I have a little bit of information on Maribyrnong. Is this in relation to the petition last year?

**MS CASTLEY:** In the primary school area?

**Ms Cheyne:** Yes.

**MS CASTLEY:** It is sort of that corner. That is for the kids' school area, but Maribyrnong is different. They are two separate issues, but we are very interested in the update.

**Ms Cheyne:** In terms of the one relating to the petition, design works have been completed as part of the school safety program for new footpath connections and pedestrian crossings on Alberga Street and Shannon Circuit. That is the status of that project at this stage.

**MR BRADDOCK:** When is it likely that construction will be complete?

**Ms Cheyne:** It is subject to a future budget decisions.

**MR BRADDOCK:** So funding has not been done for that.

**THE CHAIR:** Colleagues, that was an excellent line of questioning, but we have spent a bit of time on it. We might move on to Ms Tough's substantive.

**MS TOUGH:** Thank you, Chair. My question is about graffiti. One of the things I am asked a lot by constituents concerns graffiti. There is a local person where I live who goes out of her way to beautify the suburb herself and get rid of graffiti, but she is just a one-woman team doing this. I am interested in knowing how the government manages graffiti. What is available to government to address it? And how are you using these powers?

**Ms Cheyne:** I certainly commend your constituent. Some of the things that she has described to you reflect a broader challenge for us, particularly when it relates to the back of fences. Under our Common Boundaries Act, fences remain the responsibility of the property owner, including when they face a public road, but I certainly respect that, depending on where they are located, plenty of constituents might not drive past their back fence particularly often and may not be aware of what is occurring there. To that end, I understand the constituent has sought approvals from all the homeowners about painting a mural there. That is one of the challenges that we have as a government, in terms of rectifying that at scale across the city.

In this term, we have an election commitment. You might be aware of significant funding for murals, especially where it relates to public unleased land or roads. What we can do in some of those hard to reach and quite dangerous areas, where we see quite a bit of tagging as distinct from street art, is try to bring the community together and have some ownership over the assets. I am talking about things like the Tuggeranong Parkway, Gungahlin Drive, and certainly the concrete barriers. They are very dangerous

and we really do not want people anywhere near them, but it also creates a risk for our contractor when cleaning off graffiti on them. They do a remarkable job, but they are certainly exposed.

In terms of the powers available, there are powers under the Litter Act and under the Magistrates Court infringement regulation, relating to fines that can be issued regarding graffiti. However, it usually requires someone to spot it happening. Given the time at which some of this activity is occurring and the locations, that can be a challenge. More broadly, when it comes to private assets, there are some powers available to us under various bits of legislation, including a recent update to a regulation in the Planning Act. I might ask both Mr Pryce and Mr Fitzgerald to expand on some recent actions there. It is a bit of a posture change for City Services in responding to something that has been really concerning to me.

I have a quick shout-out for Evoenergy. Almost all of the green boxes around town that have been tagged have recently been cleaned. They have done a great job. It is important that the ACT government does not touch assets that are not ours. Whether it is Evoenergy, Icon Water, Australia Post or whomever it might be, it needs to be appropriately directed, but we can certainly have a role in making sure that complaints are directed where they need to go. Mr Pryce.

**Mr Pryce:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. Ms Tough, in recent times—because I have been in this role for only eight months—in working with my colleagues in Access Canberra, the City Renewal Authority particularly, as well as our own teams in Place Management, we have been looking at graffiti. It is a challenge for the community, as well as for us. The minister referred to a change in posture. We are looking at how we can engage with businesses and community areas where graffiti is causing greater concern. In recent times, I have written to some businesses, highlighting those concerns and looking at ways that we can work better together, as well as flagging the powers that we have under the various acts, including the Public Unleased Land Act. More recently, by way of an example, to support the Multicultural Festival, we undertook some action around the city centre, particularly to address graffiti. But it does remain a challenge because we have private leased land under arrangements. Some of the developments are tied up with different things. There is even one where a deceased estate is involved, so we are dealing with the executors et cetera to do with that land.

I have signalled that my posture with the directorate is to take a bit more of an assertive approach, to use our powers if we need to and draw greater attention to the issue, noting that, at the end of the day, the amenity of our city makes people feel safe. It attracts business and it attracts activity, and therefore we all have a shared interest. Bruce might expand further because he has been leading that work.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Tough, was there specific information you were after?

**MS TOUGH:** I was interested in how quickly—if someone reports graffiti to Access Canberra or Fix My Street—that information makes it down the line to the teams to clear it up?

**Mr Pryce:** We have been working very hard on responsiveness to those requests. Last year alone, we received 22,000 requests for graffiti clean-up and over 45,000 square

metres of public assets were cleaned. It is a huge workload. It does filter to the team quickly. As the minister pointed out, we do need to prioritise and understand some of the constraints that we have in actually addressing them quickly.

**MS TOUGH:** When someone makes a report of graffiti, do you require a photo of the graffiti or is the location good enough? Someone may be driving and cannot safely pull over to take a photo but they could lodge it, saying, “I saw it on this intersection, on this side.” Is that enough for the team?

**Mr Pryce:** Indeed. The location is the simplest. They can provide photos and other details. Some graffiti is very offensive. Again, when we get that data, it assists us with prioritisation.

**Ms Cheyne:** It helps us respond when it is offensive, inciteful or anything like that. We will try to remove that within 24 hours. A good example is that, at the beginning of last year, in Lennox Gardens, there was some particularly pitiful graffiti across all of the assets.

**MR MILLIGAN:** My concern about graffiti is that you send out teams to clean up the areas and, obviously, there are problem areas where graffiti regularly occurs. Has the government actually looked at putting in measures to prevent graffiti from happening in the same locations time and time again? Have you looked at lighting? Have you looked at CCTV? What are you doing to prevent it from reoccurring?

**Ms Cheyne:** Absolutely, Mr Milligan. There is a range of different responses that we employ to tackle this. It really depends on the nature of what is occurring and, to an extent, the danger and the risk of the different approaches that we undertake. There are some types of paint that are more resistant to tagging, but not always. Certainly, the creativity that I have noticed with tagging in recent times is quite extraordinary. Some approaches can include more lighting.

It is really difficult for us, as we were saying, where an area might have almost entirely privately owned assets, or another agency like Evo has the assets, and they are the ones being repeatedly targeted. We are cleaning what we can. I think the most effective thing is for us to work in a more coordinated way and make sure that the entire issue is fixed rather than waiting for another agency to act or referring it to them. I think that is what Mr Pryce and Mr Fitzgerald were getting at with the change in posture—that we are trying to see how we can better assist the community to take responsibility and assist them with what might be on their land, in addition to infrastructure that we can install that might deal with the situation.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Milligan might lodge further supplementaries on notice.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Yes.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I have a question about library workforce. Minister, in your correspondence with me, you mentioned that 61 per cent of employees have feelings of burnout. There were not just the planned closures of libraries over the summer period; there were also ad hoc closures due to staff absences. I have a series of questions. Is the workforce sufficient for the demand that has been placed on them? What is being done

to ensure that staff are supported and that we continue to provide the service that the Canberra community expect from the libraries?

**Ms Cheyne:** Thank you, Mr Braddock; I appreciate your interest and concern here. I also appreciate that it is a concern held by members across all parties. In terms of my ministerial statement last week, I did say that addressing this is a priority for me. Staff health and safety are paramount. Understanding what the issues are that are leading to burnout has been a significant piece of work that has been led by Mr Childs, who will be able to expand on it in a moment.

We did take the decision—and I certainly encouraged this—that Libraries ACT would adopt a model over the summer period that better reflected the demand that they experienced. January is always a quieter time, and we see fewer presentations at the libraries and fewer needs for the overall service that is offered.

We try our best to align the closure times with Access Canberra's service centre closure times, which also creates a bit of consistency in the community. In terms of the summer hours that we were looking to adopt, that reflects that demand. That, in turn, enabled many of our staff to be able to take leave.

We do have a very impressive program of activities across Libraries ACT, which I know are very valued by our community, but that does take a toll on our staff, of course, and the management of that can be tricky. We did see, in the January period, two or three additional closures due to unplanned staff leave, which was regrettable, but Libraries ACT was already working incredibly hard to bring on an additional casual pool to be able to support the workforce when that occurs. The second round of that casual pool, I believe, is being recruited and/or onboarded this week.

Mr Childs will be able to expand on the whole-of-libraries issues that we are working through and how we expect to address them.

**Mr Childs:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. As Minister Cheyne said, there has been a significant amount of work that has been going on for some months now. As part of that process, we have been reviewing our operating model and, in particular, our rostering program. We have also been looking across the board at the programs and services that we deliver, the time and impost that that has on our staff and the benefit that that has for our community.

There is quite a complex piece happening there. In amongst all of that, we are absolutely focused on risk assessing all of those aspects to ensure that, with the work volumes on our staff, they are engaged, retained and safe, and that we are minimising any psychosocial hazards that may come from all of that. We are also looking at the external environments, such as occupational violence. Libraries are situated in different areas and present different risks to staff.

We have, as the minister said, also looked at how we can respond to any unplanned absences to ensure that our workforce is geared in the right way. As Minister Cheyne said, we have a second casual pool starting onboard tomorrow, ready for deployment on Thursday. That should provide the response to be able to keep, in the short term, library closures to a minimum.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Is that casual pool actually an increase to the workforce, or is it essentially just plugging the gaps where staff happen to be absent?

**Mr Childs:** It is an increase to the workforce.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I will ask you to take on notice what the workforce is compared to what it was on 30 June, in the annual report. Are there any plans to reduce the operating hours on a permanent basis, or will it be maintained at the current standard? Are there any plans to close a library?

**Ms Cheyne:** Mr Braddock, these are matters that government is looking at as a whole, as it relates to the workforce. I do not have an answer for you at this stage. We are looking to see where the demand is for the services and make sure that we are responding appropriately to the community, right across our library offerings, with staff safety and wellbeing at top of mind.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, where should Mr Braddock direct that question, if he wants an answer? If it is not within your remit, which minister would answer that question?

**Ms Cheyne:** I did not say it was not in my remit.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay; so it is under consideration by government as a whole at the moment?

**Ms Cheyne:** I do not have an answer at this stage. I appreciate what Mr Braddock is asking. We want to see what the impact of these two new casual pools has on the stabilisation of library openings over the next little while, and that will start to inform any other actions that we might need to take to support staff.

**MR COCKS:** I will stick with the City Services theme that we had been on, but I flag that I have plenty of questions around Access Canberra matters as well. On page 50 of the annual report—the same page that Mr Milligan was referring to—under road maintenance and road resurfacing, there are three types of resurfacing treatments—bitumen spray seal, micro surfacing and asphalt resurfacing. In the second paragraph, it states that, during 2023-24, 152 sites with a total area of around 1.07 million square metres were resealed. Is it possible to get, probably on notice, a list of those 152 sites?

**Mr Rampton:** Yes, certainly. We have a list of those. We also have a map that was online during that period. We do have a list. I can take that on notice.

**MR COCKS:** You can provide the list on notice?

**Mr Rampton:** Yes.

**MR COCKS:** In December 2024, several major roads across the ACT had problems with melting. Out of the 152 sites in that list, did that include Drakeford Drive in Tuggeranong, Hindmarsh Drive in Woden and William Hovell Drive in Belconnen?

**Ms Cheyne:** Yes, Mr Cocks. We did experience a period of consistent hot temperatures

in December, and you are exactly right. Those three sections of road began to exhibit what is called, in the technical term, “flushing” or “bleeding”. There are multiple reasons that this can occur, but the most common involves excess bitumen binder being applied to the surface during the spray sealing process. During hot weather, the bitumen can rise to the surface, and it results in the bitumen sticking to tyres in some areas and plucking small layers off the road surface. These types of defects are normally observed only with spray sealing resurfacing treatment, and there are methods that allow us to rectify defects when they occur, including rolling additional aggregate into the road surface or replacing the impacted sections with new asphalt.

Some of the sections of road that were impacted prior to Christmas had been resealed less than 12 months earlier, within the 12-month defect liability period, so the responsibility for repair sits with the external contractor. These repairs started prior to Christmas and, the last time I got some advice on this, they remain ongoing. Some of the other impacted road sections were resealed several years ago, so that work is being undertaken by our internal asphalt crew, in coordination with our external contractors.

**MR COCKS:** Going back to the list of 152 sites, is it possible also to get the last time those roads were resealed, for each of those sites?

**Mr Rampton:** I will take that one on notice.

**MR COCKS:** Thank you. What was the selection process for the seven sites that were micro surfaced?

**Mr Rampton:** Each year, we work with a research organisation, the National Transport Research Organisation, to develop our road resurfacing program. We do tests on approximately one-third of our territorial road network—that is, our arterial roads and the major collectors—to get updated data on the condition of those roads. We work with the NTRO to prepare the road surfacing program. Through that commissioning, they will provide us with some advice on what type of treatment will be required. I believe that, in all of those instances of micro surfacing, that would have been the advice from NTRO.

**MR COCKS:** Is it a similar process for those that are asphalt resurfaced?

**Mr Rampton:** Yes, it is.

**MR COCKS:** How often, on average, do roads that have been bitumen spray sealed need resurfacing?

**Mr Rampton:** Road resurfacing is one of the tools that we have in our toolbox to prolong the life of our road network, so it is something that we do proactively. If we think about any section of road that we see around Canberra, if we have a piece of road that is starting to deteriorate or we are starting to see some cracking in it, it would more likely be a candidate for bitumen spray seal, with the objective of waterproofing the surface. It is definitely a preventive measure. We see the potholes forming when we see water penetrating the surface or coming in from the side, due to drainage issues. That particular treatment is certainly a preventive one.



As we move along the tree, when we get to asphalt, they are typically a road that may have a lot more damage; we need to strip off some of the pavement and then re-lay it. When we get to the other extreme, where we are talking about road rehabilitation, that is where we are looking practically at ripping up the road, redoing some of the base and installing the road again.

**Mr Pryce:** Our annual road resurfacing program is outlined on our website, and you can see the 2024 program there, with maps.

**MR COCKS:** I do not think you got to the average time frame; is that something you can provide or—

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

**Ms Cheyne:** We will see what we can get. We will try and be as helpful as possible, Mr Cocks.

**MS CASTLEY:** I have a question about the snake capture program. 301 snakes were captured by a private snake handler.

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Castley, this might be for Minister Orr.

**Mr Rampton:** Minister Orr, on Friday.

**MS CASTLEY:** All right. According to the annual report, pages 90 to 93, urban treescapes received 1,378 requests relevant to the Tree Protection Act 2005 and 1,145 requests under the new Urban Forest Act 2023. Can you outline what specific improvements the Urban Forest Act 2023 brought compared to the Tree Protection Act 2005, and how is the government ensuring that these improvements are effectively implemented and monitored?

**Ms Cheyne:** This is something that we are very alive to. The Urban Forest Act has some very admirable objectives, in terms of assisting government and decision-making when it comes to tree removal, to ensure that best practice is applied and that trees are only being removed in limited circumstances; and, where they are, that trees are either being replaced or there is a contribution being made into a fund to allow more trees to be planted. We have seen very good results in terms of where those have been approved. We have seen developers and individuals choosing to plant new trees, and all of this has been implemented with the aim of maintaining and increasing our urban canopy.

What we have learned, in the year of operation of the Urban Forest Act, is that there were some unintended consequences in terms of how bodies corporate were being classified vis-a-vis developers and what they were being asked to provide. A developer has a higher level of funding that they need to contribute into that fund or more trees to plant. You can imagine that, for a small unit complex which does not have a lot of land on which to plant, nor much in the coffers, that becomes quite problematic.

We addressed that through the regulation towards the end of last term. I understand that that is no longer an issue that is being raised with us. More broadly, what we have learned, I suppose, is that while the objectives of the act are very pure, in terms of how

they are interacting with some other government priorities, whether it is housing, construction or roads, or other objectives and priorities of government, having every tree on public land being a protected tree can create quite a bit of work for any proponent.

That is exactly why we had an election commitment to bring forward the review of the act. It was due for the start of next year, and that has begun now, so that we can address some of these issues, so that it better meets the objectives across government.

**MS CASTLEY:** From 1 January 2024, the total amount paid under financial settlements for canopy contribution agreements was \$10,800, with all funds yet to be spent. Why have the funds from the canopy contribution agreements not yet being spent, and what is the government's plan to ensure that they are utilised effectively to enhance the canopy?

**Ms Cheyne:** Thank you. Mr Iglesias, to you.

**Mr Iglesias:** Thank you. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Those funds are able to be kept for specific reinvestment into the urban forest. What we want to be able to do is identify priority improvements that we can make within the urban forest. That might be investing more money in maintaining mature trees. There are a lot of highly-valued mature trees all over Canberra that require work to be undertaken to extend their life, to keep them healthy and to keep them contributing. What we will be doing over the course of the next six to 12 months is, once we have a substantial amount to invest, we can get an indication of where we might get our best bang for our buck. But our overwhelming strategy is to invest it wisely so that we can get a good return for the urban canopy.

**MS CARRICK:** I was just wondering if there was a revenue budget for the canopy contribution.

**Ms Cheyne:** That is exactly what Ms Castley was referring to then. We have to remember that, when annual reports were reported on, the Urban Forest Act had only been in operation for a short period of time. So that overall contribution has been small. It also has been smaller than we had modelled, because more people are choosing to plant trees than to contribute to the fund.

**MS CARRICK:** That was how much was collected—\$10,800 or so?

**MS CASTLEY:** Yes.

**MS CARRICK:** I was asking whether there was a revenue budget. Was there a budget set for how much you expect to come in?

**Ms Cheyne:** I believe so. As I said, with what we expected versus what is occurring, what is occurring has been less than was modelled.

**MS CARRICK:** Okay. Where would I find the revenue budget—the budget that says how much you expect to come in?

**THE CHAIR:** Is that something Mr Iglesias could take on notice perhaps?

**Ms Cheyne:** Yes, I suspect so.

**Mr Iglesias:** We could certainly take that on notice.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Are there any indications that the Urban Forest Act is actually driving a change in behaviour in terms of retaining trees or not?

**Ms Cheyne:** It certainly has been recognised in terms of its objectives and I think in terms of certainly making it clear to the community and to developers that there is a process to be followed and that we value our trees and our canopy. This is why the government has also undertaken a significant tree-planting program as well. So it is all working in concert together and in line with the strategy. We certainly do not want that to be undermined in any way but, equally, we do not want it to make it so cumbersome, burdensome or conflicting with other government objectives that we see some unintended consequences, such as removing trees without going through the proper process. That is the balance we are aiming to achieve with this review.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Thank you.

**MR COCKS:** I have a question about the review that you mentioned into the act. What is the current status of the review and could you provide, maybe on notice, the terms of reference?

**Ms Cheyne:** It is an internal review, Mr Cocks. So there is less of a terms of reference; it is more of a 'has been an issues' log that has been developed where either peak bodies, industry leaders or just the general community has raised concerns with us or even across government where we are looking to see how that is working against the other objectives of government and to then do some broader work on what some further changes may be. But, in terms of a terms of reference, it is not a public consultation review at this stage. We are working through the feedback that we already have, which is not insignificant. In terms of the timeline, it is early stages. The election commitment was for it to begin at the beginning of 2025, and we are in week six.

**MR COCKS:** Perhaps I can rephrase the terms of reference side of the equation. Could you provide some information about the scope of the review and the objectives? What is it that the review is going to actually deliver?

**Ms Cheyne:** Sure. I will take that on notice.

**MR COCKS:** Thank you.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Out of the 13,000-plus tree-related inquiries, how many of them were relating to potentially dangerous trees?

**Ms Cheyne:** That is a difficult question to answer, Mr Milligan, because trees are living, generally, and the circumstances relating to what makes a tree dangerous or not can depend on what might happen in a 10-minute period in a storm. A tree may go from having been assessed as incredibly healthy and strong with no signs of damage or anything like that and then a particular storm activity may come through and a large

branch may come down. So there is no way to mitigate all risks when it comes to trees. What I can say is that we have got an incredibly talented team of arborists who assess our trees and assess the complaints that are received or requests for them to be managed in whatever way that may be, and they determine the process to undertake from their assessment. That also influences the timing.

**MR MILLIGAN:** In relation to the teams that go out there and assess these trees and go out there to remove dangerous trees, has the policy changed over the last 12 months or two years in terms of how those teams operate? Also, what is the impact of that policy change, if there has been one, in terms of clearing those dangerous trees in a timely manner and the backlog? Has there been a backlog because of that policy change?

**Ms Cheyne:** The teams would be operating within the confines of the Urban Forest Act—so in terms of policy change might be what you are referring to. Some of those assessments—in fact, many—interact with the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, who provides advice where that tree has a protected status, and on private land, that is where it is over a certain size or potential significance. In terms of backlog, I would say the biggest contributor to backlog in terms of addressing tree issues has been the weather. I know it seems like a cop-out to blame the weather all the time, but it has significant impacts. We look outside today and it is bright blue skies and sunny, and yet we had wet weather for several days and the ground is damp. For many of the trees that we need to remove or that might have been felled or whatever reason, they are in difficult terrain and/or terrain that is quite damp. One of the things that influences us most significantly in terms of those timelines and blowouts that can occur is when machinery gets bogged and then breaks and then that further delays the program. We have invested in some additional machines, including an Avant, which is an articulated loader, and it is quite light and it is quite powerful. That is assisting the teams to get across the backlog. But having significant storm events where there is an enormous amount of debris that comes down does delay the team.

**THE CHAIR:** Would you like to turn this into your substantive, Mr Milligan?

**MR MILLIGAN:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Do you have further questions you could lodge on notice, perhaps?

**MR MILLIGAN:** I do.

**THE CHAIR:** Because we have three more members, and we—

**MR MILLIGAN:** Sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. So we will expect some more questions on notice on that line. I have some too. Mr Milligan, for your substantive.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Thank you, Chair. My question is in relation to the next safety audit of playgrounds. Considering there is \$1.3 million invested in safety audits and works of play spaces according to page 4 of the ACT Play Space Strategy, when is this report

due to arrive?

**Ms Cheyne:** Mr Iglesias?

**Mr Iglesias:** We commission an annual large audit of playgrounds. I will take it on notice as to the exact date we are expecting it. It is important to note that there is a hierarchy of inspections of playgrounds, which range from inspections undertaken almost all the time by relevant staff that are out and about through to our own qualified staff that can undertake a more formal level of inspection, and that happens quite regularly. Then we have a completely comprehensive inspection that happens every year. But I will take it on notice as to exactly when that is due.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Thank you. I noticed in the report says 548 playgrounds were inspected and they are done on a fortnightly basis. Out of the Play Space Strategy, is there a budget that is going to be allocated based on what comes out of this strategy? Is there any funding in this year's budget to go towards these repairs?

**Mr Iglesias:** We have an annual budget to deliver repairs. That is correct. That has been the case for a number of years. Obviously, we prioritise the repairs to those that represent the best safety result where we consider the biggest risk for users and where we consider that repairs will be of most use to most users. The exact number of that budget, I would have to take on notice, Mr Milligan.

**MR MILLIGAN:** So there is no money specifically for the Play Space Strategy, though—there has been no money set aside for whatever comes out of that separately to the overarching budget now?

**Ms Cheyne:** There is funding, Mr Milligan, in the current funding within the TCCS workforce and in the inspections that are conducted. Then there is the yearly large order that Mr Iglesias was referring to, and then there is funding that is set aside for repairs. All of that contributes to giving effect to the Play Space Strategy. In terms of the question you asked before about timeframes, there are three levels of inspections. A level 1 inspection is a visual inspection. That varies from twice weekly to fortnightly depending on the size and use of the playground. Higher-use playgrounds like town and district parks would be getting a more regular visual inspection. A level 2 inspection varies from monthly to bimonthly depending on the size and use of the playground. That is testing for hazards as well as operational defects, wear and tear, deterioration and other things. Again, they might need to be temporarily fenced off or closed off for repairs. The level 3 inspection is what happens once a year, and that is undertaken independently outside government by an assessor with an engineering qualification or equivalent. They conduct the inspection against the Australian Playground Standards.

**MR MILLIGAN:** On page 27 of the ACT Play Space Strategy, community feedback suggested that the government should focus on the play value rather than the safety issue. The government seems to be focused on building new playgrounds right across the territory. Why is the government focusing on decommissioning those playgrounds that offer no play value and investing in playgrounds that are already out there that could go with more investment?

**Ms Cheyne:** That is a balance that we are looking to strike, Mr Milligan, and something

that I have taken considerable interest in. We know that kids place smaller value on neighbourhood playgrounds that have smaller value in terms of play and enjoyment and even what kids anecdotally will report about what they like about playgrounds—a small play space that just has a swing set, for example. However, historically, when government has looked to decommission sites that have a smaller play value, there has been community outcry. There is a lot of nostalgia that can be associated with these spaces, and there may be one or two families who really value them due to their proximity. But that also comes at a cost. It comes at a cost of what we are able to invest in and maintain for the play spaces right across the city.

This is something that we are taking pretty seriously. As an example, even in my own electorate last year, a decision was taken by the directorate, which I endorsed, to decommission a playground in Page that just had one quite deteriorating rocker in it in quite a large space that effectively could have a higher value by being open space that kids can play in and do whatever they like. But, having that one rocker in that play space, meant that it had to be still visually inspected at least every two weeks, just looking at the rocker. So all of that contributes. If you would like to have a broader conversation about bringing the community along about higher place value spaces, I would very much welcome that, noting that your colleague or previous colleague Mrs Kikkert brought a petition against the decommissioning of that playground last term.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Out of the fortnightly inspections of the playgrounds, how many playgrounds were upgraded over the last 12 months? What was the budget for it and how were they prioritised?

**Ms Cheyne:** On the playgrounds that are upgraded, Mr Milligan, that is publicly available and has been for some time. It is usually on the infrastructure projects page on City Services. So, in taking that on notice, I might just give you the link to that. In terms of the overall budget, I will take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent.

**MS MORRIS:** I have some questions about the Lanyon dog park, which is currently being constructed in Gordon next to an existing dog park called the Point Hut dog exercise area. Is the Lanyon dog park still on track to open in winter this year?

**Ms Cheyne:** That is my understanding, Ms Morris. In fact, just two nights ago, I published an aerial photo of where that construction is up to. But we welcome to the table Ms Clement, who is in charge of this infrastructure delivery project.

**Ms Clement:** I have read and understand the privilege statement. The Lanyon dog park is on track to be complete by winter this year. There will be a grassing consolidation period that we will need to get through but, based on the current program, we understand we will be able to open in winter.

**MS MORRIS:** Fabulous. Thank you. I just note that in the 2020-2023 Territory Plan the Lanyon dog park land and the existing Point Hut dog exercise area have both been marked as special purpose reserves which prohibit dogs in the area. I am just curious as to why that is the case when there is an existing dog park there and a new one currently

under construction.

**Ms Clement:** I am not familiar with the change that might have happened, but we are working with EPSDD and the Parks and Conservation Service to ensure that the dog park can run as a facility there and that it is within the requirements or the details of the Territory Plan.

**MS MORRIS:** Great. Does that apply to both of the dog parks?

**Ms Clement:** The work that we are doing is just on the Lanyon dog park—the new enclosed dog park that is being constructed. I do not have information on the other dog park. I do not think it is within TCCS's area of management.

**MS MORRIS:** I have had quite a few constituents raise concerns that the Point Hunt dog exercise area might be closed when the new Lanyon dog park opens. Are you able to say whether that is the case?

**Ms Clement:** I think that sits with the Parks and Conservation Service. That is my understanding. We would probably need to take that on notice.

**Ms Cheyne:** They are here. This is the right place for them too.

**THE CHAIR:** Will you take it on notice?

**Ms Clement:** Yes.

**MS MORRIS:** You will take on notice whether the Point Hut dog exercise area will remain open?

**Ms Clement:** That is for the Parks and Conservation Service, and they will, as I understand it. The Lanyon dog park is being planned and built separately to what is happening at the Point Hut area.

**Ms Cheyne:** From memory, regarding Lanyon dog park, one of the reasons that it is being done now and not a little sooner is due to the classification of the land.

**Ms Clement:** That is correct.

**MS MORRIS:** Because of the special purpose?

**Ms Cheyne:** Yes, and changing that to enable the dog park. Let us get you some advice on that. That is as much as my memory has.

**Ms Clement:** There is ACT government signage marking it as a dog park area, but, at the same time, it is prohibited as a dog park area.

**MS MORRIS:** Minister, you have taken that issue on notice?

**Ms Cheyne:** Yes. We will give you as much clarity as possible, Ms Morris.

**MS MORRIS:** Thank you.

**Ms Clement:** It was about the land custodianship. That is what is taking the time, in terms of the delivery of the Lanyon dog park.

**MS MORRIS:** Thanks very much.

**MS CARRICK:** I notice that, in the Woden town centre, there are a lot of dogs walking around on the concrete. There are a lot of towers in Woden now. I am not aware of a dog park in Woden at all. What arrangements are there for dog exercise in the Woden Valley, and particularly for the people in the nearly 40 towers?

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Carrick, I refer you to the dog exercise area map, which I do not have in front of me at the moment but it is publicly available. We balance having dog parks that are fenced with dog exercise areas that are unfenced and allow for dogs to be off-leash all the time or some of the time, and there are other areas where dogs need to be on a leash but are certainly welcome. I refer you to the dog exercise area map, to answer your question.

**MS CARRICK:** I am just not aware of a dog park in Woden.

**Ms Cheyne:** There is no fenced dog park in Woden, but there is in Duffy.

**Ms Clement:** There is one in Duffy, in the Weston Creek area. There is also one in Yarralumla, and the one in Yarralumla services the inner south area, reaching across to Woden.

**MR EMERSON:** I have some questions for Parks and Conservation. I have heard concerns about the insecure employment of some of our park rangers. You might be able to provide either a detailed or a rough breakdown of how many rangers are employed on fixed-term contracts compared with ongoing contracts.

**Mr Rutledge:** I have read and understand the privilege statement. We have roughly 40 rangers in a range of classifications and they are full-time permanent rangers. Those numbers have fluctuated a little bit over the years. The only large intake of short-term contracts is for our bushfire seasonal workers. They are put on a 10-month contract. Every year we take a large intake. We train them all and then sometimes they return in future years or get another job in the park.

**MR EMERSON:** Is there often movement between those categories? Would bushfire seasonal workers become permanently employed? Is there a pathway for that?

**Mr Rutledge:** Yes. That has become a very popular pathway. In our Fire Management Unit, we have about 58 staff, but, when you look at our Parks service as a whole, 150 of them have been fire management trained. We see that as an intake. They get good training, they get good conditions, and they enjoy working in the parks, so they often move into our full-time ranger positions.

**MR EMERSON:** Roughly, how many are employed through those contracts each year?



**Mr Rutledge:** Probably about 30. I can get the exact number for you, but there are probably about 30 every year. The Fire Management Unit has 58 staff, but, as I say, it is a pathway into full-time employment within the Parks service.

**MR EMERSON:** The government is committed to recruiting 10 additional infill park rangers. I am curious as to whether work has commenced within Parks and Conservation on determining the best use of those positions, on job descriptions, and that sort of thing.

**Ms Cheyne:** Yes; absolutely, Mr Emerson. This is still subject to budget considerations, of course, but it is in the agreement and so we will be doing it. There has been considerable work undertaken in that branch in terms of where the greatest need is. But, at this stage, I think it would be premature, just in case over time, in the next few months or whatever it may be, that changes. But that work has started, absolutely.

**MR EMERSON:** Thank you. You know our rangers are incredibly hardworking and are very stretched given the amount of land that we have to cover, so I am curious about Parks and Conservation's use of drone technology. I note a local company, Wildlife Drones, has been supported by ACT government grant funding. I do not know that their product that we have funded has actually been used by our government. I am curious, and it does not have to be that specific case: are we using drones or are we looking at using drones to improve efficiency and effectiveness?

**Mr Rutledge:** Yes; we do use drones, primarily for weed identification and also for conservation matters. If I think about when we were trying to monitor the bogs and fens in the high country of Namadji, it would otherwise be a long walk—a three-day walk—or we would need to get a helicopter up or fly a drone. Under those conditions, drone technology is utilised. The other area where we use drones is when there are lightning storms. We get a good map in the morning of where the lightning struck overnight and then we might fly a drone over to make sure that no fire has taken hold due to a lightning strike. We use them for conservation research, vegetation management, weed control and bushfire prevention.

**MR EMERSON:** When identifying the weeds, the drones do not spray? Is that an area—

**Mr Rutledge:** There is no spraying with drones; there is identification of the areas. We still have to do groundwork. It is an efficient way of plotting where we have to go, and then we have the same sort of technology—iPad technology—where we mark treated areas so we can monitor where to go back if we need to go back.

**MR EMERSON:** Thank you.

**Ms Cheyne:** Chair, if you do not mind, I might answer some questions I took on notice. In terms of the Libraries ACT workforce comparison for Mr Braddock, in June 2024, on the last payday there were 101 staff in the head count and 88 full-time equivalents. In January, on the last payday there were 117 in the head count and 92 full-time equivalents. I also neglected to say that, in addition to the increase in staff, the increase in the casual pool, we will be reviewing the rostering model. All of this is strategically

contributing to a more reliable service. With each variation or change that we are making, we want to see what the impact is on the reliability of services before considering any further action. I think that addresses the question in full.

Mr Milligan, in terms of the playground safety audit report, I think we covered that it is annual. It will be done by the end of June this year. The last one was completed in June 2024 and the next one will be completed in June 2025.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister. We are back to the beginning. I have another question on recycling and the recycling facility. I noticed that there was a pretty significant overspend in the annual reports. It was \$12.6 million higher for transport and processing costs to recycle material interstate. That is because our materials recovery facility burnt down in 2022. We are planning on having the replacement up by 2028? Yes. Great. I have the story straight so far. Can you tell me how much we used to pay per year when we were recycling in our own facility? If we are paying an extra \$12.6 million to send it interstate, how much did we used to pay to recover it here?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** The approximate cost per year was just over \$2 million per year to process that material.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. For the new facility, the figure set down shows a \$26 million investment. Is that the total cost for how much we are going to spend to build that new facility?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** My colleagues at iCBR may be able to answer more fulsomely, but it is a build, own, operate and transfer contract—effectively a hybrid private-public partnership. A capital investment is required from the recycling firm, Veolia.

**Ms Cheyne:** It is a joint investment: \$26 million from ACT and Australian governments. There is \$10.5 million from the Commonwealth government through the Commonwealth Recycling Modernisation Fund. The remainder of the delivery phase costs will be funded by Veolia, and they in turn, as Mr Fitzgerald said, will receive monthly service payments comprising capital and operational costs for the duration of the operating term.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. The ACT government is paying \$15½ million? I am checking. Yes; great. It has taken us quite a long time to replace that facility. It has taken us six years and we are paying quite a lot for our recycling in the meantime. Would we have been able to save money if we had been able to get that facility online a bit quicker?

**Ms Cheyne:** That is a hypothetical, Ms Clay. I have confidence in the procurement processes that have been undertaken by TCCS, in partnership with Infrastructure Canberra. This is a significant investment for us in the territory and one that we prioritised. I certainly would not want speed to compromise the quality of the outcome that we get.

**THE CHAIR:** I am also a little concerned about the recycling rates that we have at the moment and the recycling that we will get from the new facility in 2028. It says in the annual report that we sent 80,461 tonnes of kerbside waste to landfill and we recovered 27,523 tonnes. That is a really low recycling rate given that our overall recycling target

is 88 per cent. Was that a disappointing outcome in terms of how much we are actually recovering for this expensive restoration?

**Ms Cheyne:** My understanding is that our technology which identifies the recovery rate has significantly improved, and that means that, rather than having a broad estimate, we now have much more detailed and reliable data, and that is reflecting a bit of a different picture, as well as the targets of what is being transported. Mr Fitzgerald is the expert.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** The other area of interest for us is around other initiatives that we have undertaken in the meantime to look at recycling. The Container Deposit Scheme recovered over 70 million containers alone through the network operator. That has displaced what we would previously have seen in the yellow bins. In seeing that increase in CDS, there is a comparative decrease in the yellow bins, and that is where you get that disparity.

**THE CHAIR:** But the yellow bins are only recovering 30 to 40 per cent at the moment, on those figures?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** Recovering from—

**THE CHAIR:** From the yellow bins. Regarding the recycling rate, we are only recycling around 30 or 40 per cent of the material that goes in the yellow bins?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** No. Regarding the material that goes into the yellow bins, I think our current recovery rate is 85 per cent.

**THE CHAIR:** That is better. Minister, we talked about this in sittings recently: in 2028, the new recycling facility, as I understand it, will not be recovering soft plastics and will not be recovering standard supermarket packaging, and we may or may not have national product stewardship schemes. If we have national product stewardship schemes, they will not be compulsory for industry to participate in. Did I get all that information right? It sounds like: in 2028, Canberrans may not be able to recover their solid plastics or recover supermarket packaging.

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Clay, this is a value question—the value of the material that is recovered. As I said last week, the trials that are underway for soft plastics at the moment, in terms of recycling and the products that they can be made into. The technology is emerging—I think that would be generous to say—and not at anywhere near the scale that we need. In terms of resource recovery and the value of the product through the recycling process at the moment, it would be at a significant cost to the community. My view is that the best thing that we can do is some packaging reform about designing out some of the hard-to-recycle packaging, because ultimately we want to have anything that is recycled to be of a high quality. That is the design in mind that the new recycling facility has been procured with: that anything that is going through will have a recovery rate that is of benefit to government.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. Designing out is an excellent idea. Does that mean our federal government counterparts will be making a mandatory product stewardship scheme to make sure the material that is hard to recycle is designed out?

**Ms Cheyne:** These conversations are ongoing between the states and territories and the federal government. I certainly know that Minister Plibersek takes this issue very seriously, but we are all at different stages of phasing out different plastics. Already, we are trying to see where we are phasing out those plastics. Sometimes it is behavioural and, in other instances, it may be more difficult because we do not necessarily have a product that easily replaces the benefit of it. Will they? That is a conversation that is still happening.

**THE CHAIR:** I will close on one final supplementary. Is it the ACT government's position, which you are putting to Tanya Plibersek at the national level, that we should have mandatory national product stewardship that designs out the packaging we cannot recycle? Is that the position you are putting to them?

**Ms Cheyne:** I have not put a formal position on that personally, but we are certainly open to anything that helps reduce soft plastics and, essentially, the scourge they have on society. Mr Fitzgerald has been involved in these conversations for longer than me.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** The Commonwealth have started the design of a regulated scheme to assist the packaging covenant organisation to work on reducing the level of single-use plastic in the waste stream. At a national level, work is progressing to actually generate a regulated scheme that enforces compliance with the obligations.

**THE CHAIR:** But it is a regulated voluntary scheme at the moment. That is the last advice I had.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** It is a regulated voluntary scheme.

**THE CHAIR:** Industry does not need to participate. I will see whether anybody else has supplementaries on this.

**MS TOUGH:** I have a quick one relating to the Container Deposit Scheme that Mr Fitzgerald mentioned. What has the uptake of the scheme been like? Are all the sites popular? Maybe you could expand more on the drop-off sites or the cash sites.

**Ms Cheyne:** The take-up has been significant—really high—and we just signed a new contract with the provider. They have taken on feedback from the community and from government about sites to make it as convenient for people as possible. In terms of the overall take-up, there has been a bit of a conversation, especially about where we have had outposts with charities, for example—that the benefits are not necessarily being realised. There are certainly many locations where people can drop off their cans and bottles for recycling.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** That is right, Minister. The take-up rate and the interactions with the depots themselves has continued to increase. Last year, we saw 75 million containers go through the depots, compared to a total redemption rate of 65 per cent. Accessibility of those sites continues to improve and we are seeing that in the numbers.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, colleagues. I am very sorry to say we are at the end of our hearing time. On behalf of the committee, thank you very much for your attendance

today. To all in the room who have made time for this, thank you. We have had a number of questions taken on notice. If you could provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*, that would help us. On behalf of our committee, thank you for assisting us with your experience and knowledge. I thank broadcasting and Hansard staff once again. Any member who wishes to ask a question on notice, please upload it to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible and no later than five business days from today.

**The committee adjourned at 10.15 am.**