



**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)**  
**MR P CAIN**  
**MS C TOUGH**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**FRIDAY, 14 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.

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## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## **The committee met at 9.39 am.**

### Appearances:

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

Pryce, Mr David, Director General

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

Rampton, Mr Tim, Executive Branch Manager, Roads ACT

Clement, Ms Sophie, Executive Branch Manager, Infrastructure Delivery

Harding, Ms Peta, Executive Branch Manager, Libraries ACT

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

### Infrastructure Canberra

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General

### Access Canberra

McKinnon, Ms Margaret, Deputy Director-General, Registrar-General and Acting Commissioner for Fair Trading

Chan, Ms Yu-Lan, Acting Chief Operating Officer

Springett, Ms Emily, Executive Branch Manager, Service Delivery and Engagement

### 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 hearings of the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services for its inquiry into annual and financial reports 2023-24. This morning, the committee will hear from the Minister for City and Government Services.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands 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 like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event or Zooming in from home.

The proceedings today are being recorded and transcribed by Hansard, and they will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and live streamed. If you take a question on notice, please say, "I will take that question on notice." That will help our secretariat to track down the answers.

We welcome Ms Tara Cheyne MLA, the Minister for City and Government Services, and officials. Thank you for your time. We have a lot of witnesses. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to that statement. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. When you first speak, please confirm that you understand the implications

of the privilege statement and that you agree to comply with it.

We are not inviting opening statements, so we will proceed to questions. Minister, my first question is about active travel. Pedal Power's funding has been reduced, and that is impacting its ability to advocate and provide programs in support of the government's active travel objectives. How does government plan to pick up the slack caused by this funding reduction?

**Ms Cheyne:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. This was a decision, I understand, made by CMTEDD, reflecting that Pedal Power is not a peak sporting body. That is the way in which it had been funded; that is my understanding. I have written to them, and I am meeting with them soon.

In terms of the slack, I am not sure that there is slack. Pedal Power seem as active as ever, and our directorate maintains a very good relationship with them in terms of engagement. I am sure I will hear more when I meet with them.

**THE CHAIR:** Pedal Power runs a number of cycling programs that assist Canberrans. There are cycling programs that help to teach women how to ride. There are cycling programs that help to teach children how to ride. There are programs that Pedal Power runs that help to teach people how to fix their bikes. Have you or the Active Travel Office looked at this from a policy point of view? If Pedal Power is no longer able to run those programs, what will be the impact on the government's active travel policy?

**Ms Cheyne:** I will ask Ms Cox to come to the table.

**Ms Cox:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. We do not provide Pedal Power with direct funding from Transport Canberra and City Services, but we do acknowledge that they provide many valuable services.

All of our active travel initiatives are guided through the Active Travel Plan, which was released a couple of years ago, and the actions in that plan. We do not have a specific program for people who are learning to ride, but we do know that there are lots of community organisations that provide those services. There are several community organisations that also provide services on how to maintain and fix bicycles, things like checking tyre pressure and making sure chains are safe. Those services do exist, but they are not provided for through the specific active travel program.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you done any analysis—maybe you can take this on notice and provide the information—on what cycling programs are in existence in Canberra, and who they are run by? Can you also provide how much the active travel budget is at the moment? Is that information that you can provide to me?

**Ms Cheyne:** We can certainly take on notice the active travel budget. I am not sure that it is the directorate's responsibility to do an analysis of publicly available services.

**THE CHAIR:** If government does not offer cycling programs, and the community offers cycling programs, would it not help if the active travel policy understands what programs are on offer in Canberra?

**Ms Cox:** We do understand what programs there are. We have not performed a specific analysis, so we do not have one single document which lists the programs that exist. But the Active Travel Office staff have really good connections and, through the bicycle advisory group, are very aware of the programs that exist, and work very often with those community groups on an operational basis.

**THE CHAIR:** But you do not have a list of the programs, and you are not sure what the impact would be if some of them stopped?

**Ms Cox:** That is correct. We do not have a single list of the programs.

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Clay, I am not sure that we have seen evidence from Pedal Power or others about how that impact of what they provide is currently measured. It would be pretty impossible for us to do any modelling if there is no data or analysis from them about the impact. But if it does exist, I am happy to be corrected.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**MS CARRICK:** That analysis would be valuable.

My understanding is that Pedal Power does not provide any of those programs on the south side because often they are funded by the CRA on the north side. Is there an equivalent funding source for Pedal Power on the south side?

**Ms Cheyne:** I think that is a question best directed to Pedal Power.

**MS CARRICK:** They have told me that a lot of their programs are funded from the CRA. They run them in Haig Park because of that funding source. It makes it difficult if you are not in the CRA area.

**Ms Cheyne:** Noted.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, you said you are meeting Pedal Power in the near future, so you will be able to discuss this issue. Pedal Power has provided analysis to me in terms of the impact of that loss of funding and the impact on those programs. Will the government undertake some analysis of what the impact of that will be on its active travel agenda and objectives?

**Ms Cheyne:** I cannot say that until I have seen it, Mr Braddock, but I look forward to receiving it.

**Mr Pryce:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. I met with Cecily from Pedal Power only last Thursday to talk about potential options around provision of courses and other things, as well as how they can manage their funding and their strategy going forward.

They are keen, obviously, to have a sustainable operation where they can deliver the programs and services that are needed. Obviously, there is a complementary benefit to us when they do. Again, I believe that was a positive discussion and I have committed to working with them about what that might look like into the future, especially with

budget processes going forward.

**THE CHAIR:** That is great to hear, Mr Pryce; thank you. Ms Carrick?

**MS CARRICK:** My question is about the public space amenity. Can you explain to me who is responsible for weeding and tidying up public spaces?

**Ms Cheyne:** It is the City Presentation Branch.

**MS CARRICK:** How many of them are there? Where are they located across Canberra?

**Ms Cheyne:** There are depots right across Canberra. Let me test my knowledge. I have visited them all. It is Mawson, Kambah, Belconnen, Charnwood, Nicholls, city, Dickson, Reid and Deakin. I am blanking on the ones in Woden, but I have been there.

**Mr Pryce:** Holder.

**Ms Cheyne:** Holder, and there is another one. There is one in Fyshwick and—

**MS CARRICK:** Do you have a map of those depots and the areas that they are responsible for?

**Ms Cheyne:** Probably.

**MS CARRICK:** Okay; where would we find that?

**Ms Cheyne:** I can provide it to you.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** On notice? Thank you.

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Carrick, it would be helpful for me to understand the purpose for which you are seeking to have it.

**MS CARRICK:** Often there will be areas that are untidy. Are we able to go to the depot for that area and alert them to the fact that—

**Ms Cheyne:** No, you go through Fix My Street. That is the best option for them. That helps them to have everything in the one place. Having visited all of the depots and having spoken to the teams, receiving requests from my office, via email or via direct communication to them, really impacts how they are able to undertake a scheduled program of maintenance. A scheduled program of maintenance is actually the best way for them to keep on top of things when it comes to things looking neat and tidy, notwithstanding that there are some things that can be missed from time to time or that might be untidy outside the regular schedule for a reason. Providing it through Fix My Street allows them to provide that oversight against what else is programmed in the near future and whether action needs to be taken.

**MS CARRICK:** Is the schedule of maintenance public, so that we can see where the priorities are?

**Ms Cheyne:** Yes, it has been public for a year. I publish it on my own Facebook page every week. It is published every week on Friday at around 3 pm.

**MR COCKS:** My question is about Access Canberra's administration of the engineers registration scheme, which is due to come into force next month. I understand that there is some concern around the time frames for Access Canberra's approval of applications. How long does it take from submission of an application until a decision is made?

**Ms Cheyne:** Technically, this was me; recently, through the administrative arrangements, Minister Steel is technically responsible. However, we have officials here.

**Ms McKinnon:** I have read and accept the privilege statement. The minister is correct. Occupational licences relating to construction sit with Minister Steel and all other occupational licences sit with Minister Cheyne, so I do not have the right people here. I can get you a response by the end of the hearing.

**MR COCKS:** Okay. The schedule is fairly clear that it seems to be all Access Canberra matters, except for planning, land and lease matters. Do we not have anyone here who has an understanding of what is going on?

**Ms McKinnon:** No, I apologise. I do not, but I will—

**MR COCKS:** Perhaps I can give you the rest of the questions that I am keen to find out about. I want to know whether there are any mandated time frames for those assessments. The process seems to require essentially a double application and assessment process with an authorised entity like Engineers Australia before someone can lodge an application with Access Canberra. I am very keen to understand what exactly Access Canberra is assessing when it receives an application, and the reason for any time frames. Perhaps we can have more of a discussion once you have the right information.

**Ms McKinnon:** Certainly. I apologise that I do not have that here. We were ready for that with the officials on Tuesday, but I take your point and I apologise.

**Ms Cheyne:** Mr Cocks, if we do have that information available within this hearing, we will do our best to provide it.

**MR COCKS:** Thank you very much.

**MS CASTLEY:** I understand that this is a sensitive issue: from time to time, Access Canberra will relocate homeless people. Could you explain the process, how this occurs, who decides where they go, and how you make the decision to move them?

**Ms McKinnon:** Thank you very much for the question. It is particularly an issue around our Woden service centre because there is a mental health and drug facility—Directions—on the top floor. To the best of my recollection, we have probably done it



twice in the last three years, and it relates to work health and safety concerns from our staff entering and exiting the buildings, as well as customers coming into the service centre. When we have issues raised by a member of the public, we work with the Community Services Directorate, who have community service organisations that will reach out directly to that homeless person,

**MS CASTLEY:** Only twice in the last two years? I understand that someone was moved from the city this week. It goes back to the question of how it is decided where that person is moved to. I understand they were moved to the doorway of a licensed venue, and it was difficult to get hold of anyone in Access Canberra. How often is important—

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Castley, I might explain and then hand over to another official. In terms of Access Canberra, Ms McKinnon was referring to where we have an Access Canberra service centre shopfront. Access Canberra does not have a presence in the city centre, so in terms of what powers are being used, I am not sure that it is them.

**Mr Cahif:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. As part of the light rail stage 2A construction in the city, there was an unhomed person who was relocated from the construction area. That was done; there were quite a few parties involved, including, I think, CSD, but I will come back to the specifics.

The relocation was done by talking with the unhomed person, working out where they would like to go, moving them to that location and providing assistance, as well as further assistance as required. It was done with compassion, as well as working our way through there.

**MS CASTLEY:** Did they choose to be moved to the doorway of a licensed venue, or did they possibly move themselves on? How does that business help compassionately and get help from Access Canberra maybe to move them to somewhere more appropriate?

**Mr Cahif:** My understanding was that the unhomed person chose to go to a park bench as opposed to a front door. I am not aware of them being located at a front door. It certainly was not done as part of that process.

**MS CASTLEY:** If it occurs in the future that somebody does choose to move to the door of a business, who would they call to get assistance to appropriately move that person on to somewhere that is not the front door or a side door of their building? Who do they call?

**Mr Cahif:** Ms Castley, I could not answer that question. Our involvement here was in relation to the stage 2A construction area.

**Ms Cheyne:** If it occurred again in the stage 2A area, who is it?

**MS CASTLEY:** Yes, who do they call?

**Mr Pryce:** Again, there are various avenues that someone could call. If they have called Access Canberra, Access Canberra will connect them, probably, to CSD and, through

their service delivery, through to ACT Policing. Obviously, they deal with it sometimes and connect with the various services themselves. Again, as Ms McKinnon said, with my offices, for example, at Dickson, if we have the situation, sometimes security is onsite, and the building owners, as part of the building operations, would help to deal with the situation. They are complex issues, often, and the individuals themselves exercise their own authority and decisions, too. It is never straightforward.

**MS CASTLEY:** No. In this instance there was difficulty getting through to Access Canberra, then they got moved on to CSD, and there were multiple calls, and no-one seemed to know what to do. Just tell them to be persistent?

**Ms Cheyne:** It is unusual, but I appreciate your bringing it to our attention, and we will use it as an opportunity to learn.

**MR COCKS:** On how many occasions in, say, the last 12 months has Access Canberra been contacted in relation to unhomed people in particular areas where someone wants to make sure they are either being supported appropriately or need to move to somewhere safer?

**Ms McKinnon:** I would suggest it would be none; it would be less than five. The two issues I gave you were directly related to our own workplace, and our own staff and customers coming in, as opposed to the contact centre receiving calls on that issue.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Cocks, is that enough of an answer or do you want that taken on notice?

**MR COCKS:** I would not mind if you could take it on notice, just to confirm the number.

**Ms Cheyne:** We will take it on notice and try to come back in this hearing, if we can. I expect that it is none, because Access Canberra would not be the channel.

**MR COCKS:** Access Canberra is normally where people reach out to, for all sorts of things.

**Ms Cheyne:** Of course. I think that, in these instances, people would reach out to OneLink or to police. But I will confirm that it is none.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I want to ask some questions about libraries. I appreciate your answers earlier this week, Minister. You mentioned some pools of casuals which have been recruited. I wanted to check regarding the terms and conditions around those contracts. Do they have a minimum number of hours? How long are those contracts meant to go for? Is there any intent to turn this into permanent roles down the track?

**Ms Cheyne:** Necessarily, as a minister, I am not involved in day-to-day contracts, so I will hand over to officials who can guide you.

**Ms Harding:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you for the question. Yes, we recently completed the induction of 24 new casuals into our casual pool. They are all on ACT government casual contracts, which last for 12 months before

they are renewed. There are no set hours within those contracts as to how many hours per week or per fortnight they will work with us. They are very much designed to be used as casual labour when needed.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Essentially, these are zero-hour contracts, with no commitment from the ACT government in terms of employment?

**Ms Harding:** Yes, that is correct.

**MR BRADDOCK:** What level are those contracts at?

**Ms Harding:** We have a number of positions. We have four positions who are an ASO4 classification, which provide them with the training and opportunity to become officers in charge, if required, particularly at lower branches. We have 20 who are at ASO3 classification, which is the equivalent of our library support officers.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I also asked a question about whether there was any intention to make these roles permanent in the future.

**Ms Harding:** We would be guided by the outlines in the secure workforce policy as to whether that was going to occur.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Will that assessment actually happen or is that the intent?

**Ms Harding:** There is a requirement for us to assess people after 12 months, depending on whether they have had regular hours. I would have to refer to our corporate area for more specific information.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Minister, regarding the Civic library, which will be impacted by the redevelopment of the theatre, has the government made any plans or any announcements in terms of what will happen with that library?

**Ms Cheyne:** No.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Also, what is the time line for the Molonglo Valley library, considering consultation was done for that mid last year?

**Ms Cheyne:** That goes to budget processes.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Thank you.

**MR MILLIGAN:** I would assume this comes under your area. It is in relation to the call on to government to act, back in April 2022. It was obviously with Chris Steel at that point. It is about the Hall stormwater infrastructure and laneways. It does not seem that there has been a lot of progress on that matter. I know a bit of an investigation report was done and some community consultation, but that is as much as I know at this point. Could I get a bit of an update on how that is progressing?

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Clement will be very happy to assist.

**Ms Clement:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. Thank you for the question. We have funding at the moment to progress the design of the stormwater improvements for Hall to address some of the issues. That work is progressing. We have had consultation over the last six months with the Progress Association in Hall around that. Based on the current information I have, we will have completed that design work by the middle of the year.

**MR MILLIGAN:** How much money has been put aside for that design?

**Ms Clement:** I have to take that on notice—I do not have it at hand—just to be accurate.

**MR MILLIGAN:** The design will be done in the middle of the year. Is there an expectation of when the government aims to have that infrastructure completed?

**Ms Clement:** The construction is still subject to funding.

**MR MILLIGAN:** You mentioned that the government is communicating with the Hall Progress Association, but what about the general residents of Hall? Has any sort of correspondence gone out to each household?

**Ms Clement:** I would have to go back and check on that to be accurate, but I understand we have done some consultation. That is potentially via the Hall association, though, rather than directly with the residents. I will need to take that on notice.

**MR MILLIGAN:** The association does not necessarily have a relationship with every resident in Hall, as you would expect. There are other residents who are unaware of where progress is up to.

**Ms Clement:** I will take that on notice, and we will make sure that we are talking to all residents.

**MR MILLIGAN:** Great. Thank you.

**MS CARRICK:** Regarding stormwater, the planning policy talks about blue-green networks. Where is the interface between stormwater and blue-green networks, given that stormwater is often part of the blue-green network?

**Ms Clement:** I would probably need to hand that to the Roads ACT representative.

**Ms Cheyne:** Roads ACT is responsible for the stormwater network that exists. Infrastructure that we are developing is for Ms Clement. Mr Rampton is the executive branch manager for that.

**MS CARRICK:** I am just asking about the interface between stormwater and the policy around the blue-green network, or the blue network.

**Mr Rampton:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Essentially, the interface is around the difference between hard assets—concrete pipes or channels—versus once we start to get into the open grassland channels or lakes. That is the difference between the blue and the green assets that we have in the stormwater space.

**MS CARRICK:** I am looking at Yarralumla Creek. It is a concrete blue-green network. Well, it is a brown network, or maybe grey.

**MR COCKS:** A bit of both.

**MS CARRICK:** What are the plans for that stormwater, given the policy around the blue-green network?

**Mr Rampton:** With respect to Yarralumla Creek in particular, studies were done previously, working closely between TCCS and EPSDD, around the flood implications and the future needs for that particular corridor. I do not have those specific details at hand, but we can take that on notice.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a question on recycling rates. Our recovery rate for waste has dropped. Since 2005-06, we have been hovering around the 75 per cent mark, with a bit of seasonal dipping. We went down to recovering 67 per cent of all our waste last year, and our target was for 88 per cent recovery. We wanted to recover 88 per cent, but we only recovered 67 per cent. Can you tell me what is going on with that figure?

**Ms Cheyne:** I thought we answered this on—

**THE CHAIR:** No; I do not think so.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** It is slightly different.

**Ms Cheyne:** Okay.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The recovery rate has been influenced by what we are now finding through better reporting obligations. We see a higher quantity of material flowing across the border to New South Wales for landfilling. Generally, we have previously encountered construction and demolition waste. It gives us a better handle on where waste is flowing, and that is influencing our recovery rates. Generally, the recovery rates from households have continued to be strong, but we are now seeing material flow to other locations from other sources.

**THE CHAIR:** Our construction and demolition waste is not being recovered here, so it does not appear in the ACT figures; it is going over the border. Is it being recovered when it goes over the border?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** From our understanding, approximately 212,000 tonnes of material is going across the border. At this stage, our understanding is that that material is not being recovered; it is landfill.

**THE CHAIR:** That is unfortunate for such a large volume. There are some other strange things in the figures and I want to find out what is going on with those. Our waste to landfill per head of population has dropped. Is that because of the construction and demolition waste going across the border?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** That is part of the reason.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there other parts to the reason? Waste to landfill per head of population dropped from 0.187 tonnes to 0.169 tonnes, which is great on its base. I just want to understand why. That is quite a significant drop.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** It is. We look at the entirety of the material. It does reflect that there has been a reduction in waste generated per household. We saw that through the last waste audit. We are seeing, just in the red bins and the yellow bins, generally less material. That is highlighting the fact that we are seeing diversion through other means, such as the Container Deposit Scheme and others. It is always a difficult area for us to understand exactly. The other contributing factor is that the demographic and the housing typology is changing. We are seeing that a higher number of residents live in apartment buildings, and their waste generation is generally a lot lower than we see in single—

**THE CHAIR:** Interesting. That all sounds plausible. It would be an excellent reason, saying it is being diverted and recycled more, except that our recycling per household has also dropped. I do not imagine we are diverting it from the rubbish bin to the recycling bin if the recycling rates have also dropped. Is that your read of it?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** My read is that the actual generation rates have decreased. Generation, being the foundation of our waste hierarchy, is actually our preferred approach. Similarly, the response in relation to the changing housing typology is also relevant for recycling.

**THE CHAIR:** I find that quite likely, and that is actually really good use, if waste generation has dropped. I am wondering whether waste generation has dropped because of conscious government policy or if waste generation has dropped because of the cost of living and people are buying less because they cannot afford it. Have you done any work on that or any surveys? I do not know whether you can even tell that from your audits.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** No; we cannot tell that. It is a very detailed piece of analysis that is subject to a whole range of variables that I do not think we would be able to isolate. But what we saw in the waste audit is that, from year to year, there is a general change in how we approach day-to-day living. Newspapers are no longer as prevalent as they were, so that generation has decreased.

**THE CHAIR:** That is good news too. It looks like only 40 per cent of material is being recovered from the total household waste stream. Have I got that figure right? When you look at household waste and household recycling, I think it is only 40 per cent.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** That sounds correct.

**THE CHAIR:** You corrected me the other day and I appreciated it. We are recovering a really high level of recycling from our yellow-top bins, but, when you put the red-top bin and the yellow-top bin together and look at everything coming out of a household, we are only getting 40 per cent of that stuff. That seems quite low, particularly when

we are setting targets of recovering 88 per cent of all our waste. What sorts of policies are you bringing on to increase that and make sure that is going to improve?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** As I mentioned at the last hearing, ignoring the fact that we have undertaken other initiatives, such as the Container Deposit Scheme, it unfairly—

**THE CHAIR:** Skews that figure.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** skews that figure. We know the CDS has a huge uptake in the ACT and it is a large portion of the yellow bin. It is not counted within the household recovery rate, but, if you go to consumption within a household, it is actually a huge part of the recovery rate. If you include the CDS on a per household basis, you would see that recovery rate dramatically improve.

**THE CHAIR:** It is a shame, though, because we cannot include the CDS, because the directorate is reporting the CDS per item rather than per tonne, so we are not able to compare. We talk about 80 million bits of packaging, but we are not actually measuring how many tonnes it is. If you measure the tonnes, you would be able to put those together and see what was going on.

**Mr Fitzgerald:** The tonnage information is available. I am happy to take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** It would be great if you could. Thank you. Are there any more questions on this?

**MR COCKS:** I have a very quick supplementary. Do we know how much the CDS has simply substituted yellow bin recycling?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** In terms of—

**MR COCKS:** Have we seen an increase in recycling as a result of the scheme or is it just substituting for what otherwise would have been in the yellow bin? If so, by how much?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** One of the greatest benefits of the CDS has not necessarily been recycling rates. We already had strong recycling habits in the territory. It is actually litter. You see it on the streets. Prior to the CDS, a large amount of this material was ending up as litter on our streets. Now, because we have monetised and incentivised its collection, we have seen that material drop off significantly. The main driver of the CDS scheme—and this is consistent right across other jurisdictions—has been the reduction in litter across our streets.

**MR COCKS:** But the question is about the volume of recycling. Do you have data on what the shift has been?

**Mr Fitzgerald:** I will take that on notice. I would have to work through the specifics of it.

**MR COCKS:** That is fine. Thank you.

**MS CARRICK:** My substantive is about parking at local shops. It is a major issue when I go around my electorate, and I am sure it is the same in other electorates. Shop owners are concerned about people parking all day and limiting access to their potential customers. What investigation do you do at local shops to determine a solution?

**Ms Cheyne:** I will hand over to officials in a moment. It can depend on the types of businesses that are at the local shops and proximity. In some areas that might be quite close to a shopping centre entrance, 15 minutes might be appropriate. In others—for example, if there are hairdressers—two or three hours of turnover might be appropriate. We take feedback seriously and work with local shops on that. There are numerous examples, including in Woden, that I think Mr Rampton will be able to talk about. The other side of that is the parking operations that are undertaken by Ms Springett's team. That relates to observation of what is occurring and taking action against Access Canberra's accountability indicators—that is, to engage with the person, then educate, and then enforce if behaviour continues. I will hand over to both to fill you in.

**Mr Rampton:** Thank you. Around shops, we sometimes have a number of competing interests with regard to the demand for parking. We have the need for parking for customers and also a need for parking for staff to operate some of the shops. We get quite a few individuals and business owners from shopping centres reaching out to us to review parking at local shopping centres. We have done quite a few in recent times, including at Yerrabi, around the lake, the Florey shops, and Garran. We are currently talking with people from Torrens as well. We try to find a balance with short stay, high-turnover parking for people to pop in quickly. We will always talk to the business owners and identify their operating hours and their typical customer base. We regularly send out teams to talk to business owners before we make any changes. We look at making changes, and then we go back to the business owners to provide the next stage of feedback before we implement changes.

**MS CARRICK:** What sort of compliance is there after you have implemented your range of changes, including how long you can stay in a car park?

**Ms Springett:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. In terms of parking operations, we look at neighbourhood and local shops as a key area to ensure compliance, noting the importance of turnover for those businesses, as well as access to facilities for the community. We work really closely with our Transport Canberra and City Services colleagues to share what we are seeing on the ground as well. We have foot patrol and licence plate recognition in operation if we see areas of pressure, and, if the community talk to us about particular pressures while we are on the ground, we feed that back. We undertake a range of compliance activities. That can be educating somebody who might have overstayed, right through to enforcement, and that includes around local shops.

**MS CARRICK:** Do you walk around the towers? We are going to have up to 40 residential towers. People are parking on footpaths around the towers, blocking even a pram moving through. Do you walk around the towers and see where there is consistent parking on the paths and put signs up? If you walk around WOVA, the new 800 apartments on one hectare, you will find there are people regularly parking on the footpaths.



**Ms Springett:** I will answer from an enforcement perspective, and then I will pass to Mr Rampton in terms of signage. Absolutely, parking on footpaths is a key risk and harm consideration for us. We understand it blocks access for prams and for people with accessibility challenges. It is something that we do enforce. That includes not only residential areas but also, as you suggested, around higher density dwellings. If we are seeing issues that we think could somewhat be ameliorated through a change in traffic control devices—which is a fancy way of saying signage—and restrictions in place, we feed that back to TCCS.

**MS CARRICK:** Would I go through Access Canberra to identify the sites?

**Ms Springett:** Absolutely. You can. We have an online form where you can report any parking issues. That is assessed and triaged. We will manage whether it is an enforcement issue or we will ensure that it goes to our colleagues if it is more a road planning or transport related issue.

**MR COCKS:** I am glad you mentioned Garran and Torrens, because they are two acute problem areas and ones I have been trying to engage on and advocate for for some time. At Garran Shops, there has been a long-term shortage of parking. I understand that land is zoned suitable for an additional parking area behind the shops, and I understand that there was consultation some years ago around the potential for that to be opened for parking. Has there been any more progress?

**Mr Rampton:** Not specifically around that piece of land. We have been focusing on trying to make the existing parking more efficient and effective for the needs of the shopping centre. But, if there is a piece of land that could potentially be used for parking, that would be subject to further investigation and obviously budget processes.

**MR COCKS:** I understand there was consultation. I have seen the letters that went out in Garran. Nothing has happened since that consultation?

**Mr Rampton:** Not with respect to additional parking.

**MR COCKS:** On Torrens, I have a similar question. Where have you managed to go with the issues facing Torrens?

**Mr Rampton:** At Torrens, we have had a number of meetings. We had a particular meeting onsite last year with the business owners. There are a number of views between those business owners on what is required at that particular location. We are still working through that.

**MR COCKS:** Thank you.

**MS TOUGH:** My question is an Access Canberra question. I understand that Auslan services for people who are Deaf or hard of hearing have now been established at Access Canberra service centres. I am interested in knowing how this works and how it came about. How is the implementation going?

**Ms Springett:** We were very pleased to work closely with DeafACT to bring this to fruition. We launched this about a month ago, and I am pleased to advise that it has

already been used by members of the community in our service centres.

We aim to make it as simple as possible. If somebody who depends upon Auslan for their communication goes into a service centre, all they need to do is simply scan a QR code. Almost instantaneously, they are then connected with an Auslan translation service. We simply place their smart device between a customer service officer and our customer, and they can transact in Auslan, which is fantastic. I particularly note what we did here from DeafACT; that is, if your primary and preferred method of communication is Auslan, it is often very hard to then use written English. Prior to this, with many of our Deaf or hard of hearing customers who used Auslan, we would communicate via a carer or a third party, or by writing back and forth. This has provided another opportunity for us to expand our accessibility and inclusivity in our service centres.

**MS TOUGH:** I understand that it is a trial for 12 months or so. How are you measuring the success? What does success look like in this situation?

**Ms Springett:** That is a very good question, because we know that in our community there is not a large volume, in terms of numbers, of people who use Auslan. We will be looking at the value it provided to those that did. How did it improve their service experience? How did it improve the accessibility and inclusivity within the centre? We will definitely be continuing to work with DeafACT to try and seek that feedback and, where possible, talk to users as well, to understand that a bit further.

**MS TOUGH:** Assuming it is successful, is it something, hopefully, that will continue in the future?

**Ms Springett:** There is definitely a lot of opportunity across other areas of government, as well as looking at some of our other services, such as the contact centre and how we can continue to look at enhancements in technology, again, to improve that accessibility.

**MR COCKS:** Going again to Access Canberra, on page 80 of volume 2.1 of the annual report—this is note 25—it seems to indicate that Access Canberra employee expenses were about \$16.8 million above the original budgeted amount. What was the cause of this?

**Ms McKinnon:** There are things that would have affected that. One is the volume of transactions and the need to ensure frontline services. The second would be the impact, particularly of Fair Work and secure employment, and the ACT government's own secure temporary workforce. We had people on contracts, and the Fair Work amendments offered them permanency, so we are holding more FTE than we budgeted for. Having said that, we have quite a healthy turnover in a number of areas because we are an entryway to the ACT public service—service centres, contact centres and a lot of our transaction processing teams. Eventually, that will level out.

**MR COCKS:** When did the directorate become aware that an overspend was likely and who signed off on that?

**Ms McKinnon:** It would have been me, under the FM Act, signing it off. We have been aware for some time that that is where we were tracking to.

**MR COCKS:** The 2023 actual expenditure was \$91.789 million. For some reason, in the 2024 budget, it dropped down to \$78.731 million. Of course, then we have our actual for 2024 being back up, at \$95½ million. What steps did Access Canberra intend to take that would have enabled it to deliver a budget amount in 2024 that was significantly lower than what was spent in 2023?

**Ms McKinnon:** Mr Cocks, before I hand over to Yu-Lan, we have been undertaking a whole range of internal efficiencies and customer improvements over the last two or three years. For example, our licensing and registration team, which does most motor vehicle transactions back of house, had three different mailboxes and four different queues. We have now streamlined that and, as a result, we are resolving more of those customer questions on first touch. About 50 per cent are resolved on first touch rather than having to go back and say, “Where is this form?” et cetera.

Right across Access Canberra, there has been a whole range of business improvements that have made a difference. Most of them are very small, but, cumulatively, they do help us to deliver better service and try to get back to budget.

**Ms Chan:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you for your question. There are also some changes in the way that some of the costs were allocated. The budgeted amount had gone down a little bit because there were changes in our centralised IT, are they are now accounted for. Previously, directorates received CRP for that amount. DDTS would then invoice us; we would pay that back. That is now handled differently, so that amount does not appear in our budget anymore.

**MR COCKS:** If accounting changes are the reason for this, is anyone supposed to compare what is budgeted with what is actually spent?

**Ms Chan:** The budget and the actual amounts are still year by year and are still tracked.

**MR COCKS:** Are they prepared on the same basis? Are they covering exactly the same thing?

**Ms Chan:** It is now acknowledged in our actuals. Because we do not pay the invoices from DDTS, they do not come into our actuals. It is now handled through a different appropriation style.

**MR COCKS:** But we still have an issue where we were tracking at one level of spending. According to the annual report, the budget was then suggesting that there would be more than a 10 per cent saving. Now, expenditure is \$16.8 million higher than budgeted. I am trying to understand what has happened.

**Ms Chan:** We have had a number of pressures, and we have had increased staffing costs, as Ms McKinnon has explained. Some of those contribute to our costs.

**MR COCKS:** Do you have a precise date for when the directorate knew that you would be overspent on employee costs?

**Ms Chan:** We do regular projections every month. This is something we have been

discussing for some time.

**MR COCKS:** When did you make the minister aware of those projections?

**Ms Cheyne:** Through a range of different ways, Mr Cocks. I would not say that I found out in the annual report or in estimates. Through the budget process, and multiple years of budget processes. I would say I am aware of the cost pressures in Access Canberra. A considerable amount of work is done to model, forecast and identify areas where there can be greater efficiency regarding processes. Certainly, there are a lot of pressures on Access Canberra and the services it provides.

**MR COCKS:** Would you be able to take on notice the first advice you received that there was a likely overspend?

**Ms Cheyne:** It would probably have been communicated to me in a weekly briefing, and I would not have a date.

**MR COCKS:** Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that not something that can be taken on notice, as to when the minister was first made aware of the likely budget overspend?

**Ms McKinnon:** Obviously, we meet frequently with the minister. The reason we are a bit confused is because Access Canberra is one unit, but there are many different lines of business. I would be saying to the minister, for example, that there were 3,000 customers on our first day back in the service centre, and that was causing pressure downstream in terms of applications and processing of particular licences.

In aggregate, we would continue in the specifics to brief the minister about areas where we were having pressure points et cetera. I am not sure, unless it is through the budget process, whether there would be a date when we definitively called our budget position. I can take that on notice.

**MR COCKS:** Thank you.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I have a question about First Nations rangers, which Minister Orr mentioned would be best asked during this session. I want to know what work is underway to employ more First Nations rangers in land and water management, and how we are doing with effectively managing that workforce.

**Ms Cheyne:** Mr Rutledge can assist here.

**Mr Rutledge:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. A few years ago, we employed what were, at the time, named Ngunnawal rangers—six rangers. They were employed under the COVID-19 economic response. We found, though, that naming them the Ngunnawal rangers certainly was a limiting factor, and we wanted as many First Nations people as possible in the parks service and right across EPSDD.

When it comes to working with traditional custodians around cultural knowledge and cultural interpretation, of course, we work with Ngunnawal people. We have a small

network where we work with our First Nations people to make sure that we are providing an organisation that is culturally safe, and we are providing them with the opportunity to work both in the parks service and right across the directorate. I looked earlier this week, and we currently have, in the environment portfolio, 15 First Nations people.

Within the parks, when we are looking for Indigenous rangers, we have four identified positions. That shows that the identified positions are one way, an employment technique to do it, but providing a culturally safe organisation, and being proud of our First Nations staff members, has been more successful than the targeted program, the Ngunnawal rangers program, as it was established.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Do you have information on the turnover rate for staff or the retention rate for them?

**Mr Rutledge:** I am happy to take that on notice. With the turnover rate generally within EPSDD, because we often see our staff move to TCCS and back, or to other parts of government, it affects the turnover rate, but it does not mean that we have lost them to the service. I am happy to run the numbers on First Nations staff within EPSDD and provide that on notice.

**MR BRADDOCK:** My question is about the satisfaction they are getting in terms of that role and whether they are able to manage the country as they would like to be able to, as part of that role.

**Mr Rutledge:** We work with, as I said, four traditional custodians when we are looking for cultural knowledge. We have either temporary or contracted staff members that do that. They might be a cultural adviser, and we get them in for a specific project. They would not turn up in our staff numbers, but that is when we are looking for that. When they are delivering cultural knowledge, they prefer to work across multiple organisations.

As I keep coming back to, we are trying to make sure that we have a culturally safe organisation, and that requires a little bit of leadership, and we have a dedicated unit for dealing with traditional custodians. But they also provide an informal staff network across our First Nations staff.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Are they able to take care of country in the way that they would like to?

**Mr Rutledge:** I do not know what you are getting at. I am not sure I understand the premise of the question, Mr Braddock.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I understand there are some concerns that they are unable to effectively take care of their country in the way they would like to, and that is affecting job satisfaction; hence that is why I am trying to explore this with you.

**Mr Rutledge:** I have not heard that feedback, but I am happy to spend some additional time looking into that to see whether those concerns are real.

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Clay, I am in the committee's hands, but I do have some answers to the questions we took on notice earlier. I also want to get clarification from Ms Carrick about the Yarralumla Creek question that she asked.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, please go ahead, Minister.

**Ms Cheyne:** Going to Mr Cocks's questions, the time frames at the moment are four to five weeks, from lodgement to approval. There are no mandated time frames for those licences to be processed. In terms of the potential double-handling, the assessment entity, Engineers Australia, determines the skills competency and experience. Access Canberra then assesses suitability, including identity, offences and any other relevant regulatory actions or insolvency.

In terms of applications approved, I appreciate that while it has been a year-long process, different applications have opened for registration at different times. 188 applications have been received, with 125 processed and offered registration, and 107 accepting those offers.

In terms of coming up to that 6 March deadline, there will be, again, consistent with Access Canberra's accountability commitment, an approach of engaging, educating and enforcing, in that order, once that time frame comes into effect, if they become aware of an engineer practising without a licence. I guess your question is: is Access Canberra aware that there may be some implications of engineers not being able to work?

**MR COCKS:** Yes, that is right. Particularly, I am interested in those who may submit applications ahead of that deadline and may then be waiting for another four to five weeks after potentially having to wait for some weeks for Engineers Australia to do a process, when Engineers Australia is still doing that education process of telling people what they need to do.

**Ms McKinnon:** Before the 6 March deadline, we will be working with Engineers Australia to focus on that pipeline, for people with applications already in train. As Minister Cheyne indicated, we take the "educate first" approach. If we have an engineer who did not manage to do this, because of our assessment process, on 8 March, we would not be looking to take stern regulatory action against them, because, for all good intents and purposes, they have an application in train, and it is in the assessment pipeline.

**Ms Cheyne:** Can I get clarification on the stormwater issue?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Cheyne:** Ms Carrick, what was your question about Yarralumla Creek stormwater?

**MS CARRICK:** It was about the interface between the stormwater and the blue-green network policy and what work is being done on the stormwater to make it a blue-green network.

**Ms Cheyne:** The only thing I have to add to the response that Mr Rampton gave before is that you would recall, Ms Carrick, there was significant damage in January last year

to the Yarralumla Creek stormwater, particularly near Curtin. City Services did prioritise repairs of that in April. It was in terms of laying concrete to repair it. It is pretty extensive, as you know—our concrete network. There have been processes underway where it has made sense, and made value for money sense, to naturalise some other stormwater areas. A whole range of factors need to be considered.

**MS CARRICK:** Is there a plan about how to stage the naturalisation of—

**THE CHAIR:** I am sorry; we are at the end of the hearing.

**MS CARRICK:** You can take that one on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. What is the question on notice?

**MS CARRICK:** Where is the plan up to, to naturalise it?

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

**Mr Rutledge:** Ms Carrick, if you ask Ms Orr later today, we will have the Healthy Waterways team here, and we will be able to talk to you about that within that part of the hearing.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, team. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. We have had a few questions taken on notice. Please get the answers back to the committee secretary within five days of receiving the transcript. We will now suspend the proceedings and reconvene at 11 am. Thank you very much for coming back. This is a busy area, and we have a lot of questions.

**Hearing suspended from 10.42 to 11.00 am.**

Appearances:

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Wright, Ms Fiona, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Energy and Water Division

ACT Climate Change Council

Howden, Professor Mark, Chair

Swainson, Ms Mia, Member

**THE CHAIR:** We welcome officials from the ACT Climate Council. Thank you for coming. We have got several witnesses for this session. I will 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 contempt of the Assembly. Please, when you first speak, if you can confirm that you have read, understand and agree with the privilege statement, that will help. We are not inviting opening statements, so we will proceed with questions.

I will begin with the first question. I was reflecting on last night's ANU Climate Update, which was an excellent presentation but not great news. The report that you have put out says that global average temperatures are 1.64 degrees above pre-industrial levels and that every month from June 2023 to September 2024 was the hottest or equal hottest on record. Our young people are now tired of every single birthday being a record-breaking birthday for them. Our current climate strategy ends in 2025. What would you see as the top priorities for the next strategy?

**Prof Howden:** Thank you. I confirm that I have read and understood the privilege statement. We have yet to discuss, as a council, substantively, that revision of the climate change strategy because, as you have observed, the current strategy finishes this year. But we have had some preliminary discussions as a council, and a couple of things pop up significantly from that.

One is a view that in the next strategy there should be a much stronger focus on climate adaptation; that is, responding to the changes in climate and changes in climate risk that we are experiencing right now, and it certainly looks like we are going to experience more over the next decade. There is a whole array of adaptation strategies which could be implemented there, and we would be looking at delving into those, as a council, to provide advice to the minister in the future.

The second part that we are particularly concerned about is how the climate change strategy would deal with equity issues. There is a whole series of equity issues that pop up from climate change. That includes the fact that, generally speaking, the people who are most impacted by climate change tend to be those who are disadvantaged—people who are socioeconomically disadvantaged; people who have various disabilities; young people and old people tend to be disproportionately hit by climate change and things like heat stress. So there is that element of inequity, where inequity needs to be dealt



with.

Also, people of different socioeconomic status, or rental status, for example, have different opportunities and risks associated with climate change. There is currently a series of programs across the ACT government to support people in disadvantaged circumstances; things like rental standards, and things like that, for insulation in rental accommodation. But we see that there is a need to ensure that that focus continues and perhaps gets ramped up in the next climate change strategy.

And continuing the ACT's really significant progress in terms of emissions reduction, we would like to see that have a focus in how the strategy deals with the next and somewhat more difficult components of emissions reductions—that is, the transport sector, waste, home heating et cetera. There are those elements as well. I might pass to Mia to add anything.

**Ms Swainson:** I confirm I have read and understand the privilege statement. If I were to add something for the next strategy—absolutely, adaptation, equity, emissions reduction—then a fourth component that we have talked about as a council that has been important, particularly over the next 10 years, is around engaging the community and bringing them with us on the change that is ahead. Building that social cohesion through a change that will be transformational for people's lives and for the economy. That would be my only addition.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, that is excellent, the four areas, and I would love to spend three hours on each and every one of them, but, instead of that, I will just pick into one. At the moment we have got interim legislated targets that are heading towards a net zero by 2045 target. Since we put those original targets in place, has there been any scientific update that would lead to advice that we should bring that target forward and be more ambitious than we are currently being?

**Prof Howden:** Thanks for that question. We did provide advice to the previous minister in relation to this, and that was based on a combination of different perspectives. The advice is identified in the annual report, and that was that a revised target for the ACT was consistent with the science—somewhat consistent with the science, I probably should put—and, also, a little bit more consistent with a fair-share approach to dealing with climate change, which could actually result in that target of net zero by 2045 being brought forward: so, net zero by 2040. That was based on a range of sources of information. For example, the science is pretty clear that we are approaching that 1.5-degree target, which the previous strategy dealt with, or the existing strategy deals with, very quickly. As I mentioned last night, we are within a few years of actually hitting 1.5 degrees on a trend basis.

That means, when you look at that relationship between greenhouse gas emissions and temperatures, a net zero by 2050 or net zero by 2045 target is now no longer consistent with achieving 1.5 degrees. So, if the intention is to still stick as close as possible to 1.5 degrees, you have to progressively bring that target forward, because we are exceeding those greenhouse gas emissions, which are not compatible with that target. As a result, that needs to be brought forward.

The challenge there, of course, is that you have an existing challenging target. The ACT

target was pretty much world leading at the time it was released. California, I think, pipped us at the post, being a significant jurisdiction, but that was really the only big jurisdiction that had a net zero by 2045 target. It was ambitious, and I think it remains ambitious in terms of dealing with not so much the electricity sector but all the other sectors which are quite hard to abate.

There are a range of policies, as you know, in the ACT that are aimed at targeting those different sectors—in transport, waste, household heating et cetera. But generating that change from all of the households in the ACT, et cetera, is going to be challenging. It is an existing challenging target for 2045, so bringing it forward is additionally challenging. There was an element of realism that we brought into that advice as well.

**MS CARRICK:** I have one question about what we were just talking about in the adaption side. How will the work be undertaken for the residential towers we have? How do they feature in the adaption? What are the issues, and how do they feature in what you are thinking?

**Prof Howden:** Because we have not talked about this in detail, going more granular, there is not a set of discussions that we can bring to bear to answer your question. Much of the discussion we have had within the council relates to energy and the emissions reduction aspects of apartment living—the challenges of refurbishing and updating existing apartments to, for example, have EV charging, or how to deal with strata title issues in terms of, say, putting on solar panels or putting heat pumps into apartments.

**MS CARRICK:** Yes, they need to be electrified.

**Prof Howden:** That is right. So, a lot of the discussion within the council is focused on those sorts of elements. We have talked about the implications of green space, and green space is really important in terms of climate adaptation and important for mental health, as well as cooling influences. The content of much of our discussion in council on the adaptation and apartment side of things has been about that green space and allocating sufficiently adequate green space for those residents, because there is a high density of people there. We have also talked, in part, about things like insulation and suitability for a hot climate for those towers—so, in terms of materials, design and the location of those towers—but we have not produced a report in detail on that.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Has the council turned its mind to what the priority climate adaptation strategy should be for the ACT, going forward?

**Prof Howden:** We have not done that prioritisation process; but those things that we talked briefly about before, the particular issues that look pretty challenging for the ACT, are around extreme events and extreme fire conditions, and the smoke associated with those fires. Typically, storms and hail damage, et cetera, and floods, are an ongoing issue for us, as well as for many other jurisdictions—the high winds associated with those storms and, of course, fires. Even though, looking out the window today, you would be thinking that fires are not a big issue, the time will come again when they are a major issue for the ACT. There are a whole range of different adaptation strategies for each of those.

One of the common elements across those is having appropriate refuges for people so

that when there is an incredible heatwave, they have cool places to go; if there is smoke in the atmosphere, they have places to go where there is clean air and safe places to go when there are floods or other damaging factors. Part of that is thinking: “What is the nature and governance of those facilities?” Part of it is about designing our systems so that they are not as prone to damage as they were in the past; thinking about increased risk and bringing that into how we organise ourselves and how we build.

**MR BRADDOCK:** A key aspect of the next climate change strategy, you think, will be climate adaptation.

**Prof Howden:** That is our council’s view. That was a relatively small part of the existing climate change strategy, which had a very strong focus on emissions reduction. We are saying that we think that focus on emissions reduction should continue, but the adaptation component should also be beefed up.

**Ms Swainson:** Can I add to that?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**Ms Swainson:** The council does have a community engagement strategy, and the focus of our community engagement in the last six months of last year was around what community and business wanted to see in the next climate change strategy. Adaptation came through really strongly as something that they wanted to see ramped up alongside emissions reduction. We talked with community sector NGOs; we talked with environmental-based NGOs and we talked with businesses as well. It was something across the board.

**MS CASTLEY:** You mentioned the EV-ready buildings, and I know it has been a big issue in Gungahlin, my electorate. I am wondering if you have considered the broader impact of the increase in EVs with regard to tow truck drivers and mechanics, and things like that. Do you advise government on what that should look like and how we bring that business community along with the increase?

**Prof Howden:** It is a good question. We have recognised that as a council, so it has been part of discussions but not part of analysis or reporting. The systemic implications of decarbonisation are quite wide-ranging, and that is just touching the tip of an iceberg. In thinking about employment and thinking about certification of people to accelerate decarbonisation—

**MS CASTLEY:** Yes, certification—

**Prof Howden:** we have talked about how some arrangements there, perhaps, are not optimal and discussed briefly what could be done there, but not a deep analysis.

**MS TOUGH:** I am interested in the engagement strategy. I am in my 30s; I have heard about climate change my entire life. It is something I have learned about in school and forever—it is a constant in my life. I am interested in knowing how the engagement strategy works and who, in particular, you focus engagement on—whether there are particular groups or it is public. How do you go about engaging with the Canberra community?

**Prof Howden:** Thanks, Caitlin, for that. Part of the act under which we operate does actually specify that the council needs to engage with the public and engage with the business community in the ACT, so that has been an ongoing part of how we have operated.

For example, in the black summer period we held town hall meetings, where we engaged with the community and allowed people to express their concerns and identify needs that they had, and we then reported back to the minister. That engagement in the past, I think, it is probably fair to characterise as a little bit ad hoc. As a result, because of that ad hoc nature and recognising that, Mia has developed a strategic engagement approach, which I think you can report on, Mia.

**Ms Swainson:** Yes. We wanted to have a transparent, evidence-informed approach to exercising that engagement with community and business, which is one of our functions under the act. I might have led it, but everyone was involved. We spent about six months doing a design process, where we went out and spoke with all of the interested actors in the ACT in business, or who we thought would be the interested actors in business, and community. After hearing from them about how they wanted to engage with us—there was actually a really big appetite to engage and more than we had expected—we then set out three objectives of our engagement strategy, and the strategy is published on our website.

The first one is around a really structured approach to engaging with people who you would expect to have a voice. Environmental NGOs we meet every six months, with a roundtable format—sometimes online, sometimes in-person. With community sector NGOs that meeting is facilitated by the ACT Council of Social Service, so it goes to all of their members, and that is generally a roundtable forum; it is online. We also meet regularly with the Business Chamber. We have suggested an online forum, and I think they are now interested, which is very exciting for us, but to-date it has only been with the chamber themselves. Who else have we got? With young people, we engaged with the School Strike 4 Climate. With the Ngunnawal community, we had a joint workshop with the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee.

We engaged with a whole range of people. It is a work in progress. We listen to what they have to say, and we take that on in terms of thinking about how we shape the advice we provide to the minister. It factors into some of the priority topics we might suggest to the minister, and we hope to have our finger on the pulse to make sure that is reflected in what we provide the minister. Is that helpful?

**MS TOUGH:** Yes; it is. I saw in your report or somewhere that you were looking at doing adaptation workshops. Obviously, adaptation has been a thing. Have they been undertaken or are they still in the planning phase?

**Ms Swainson:** Thank you. That is a really great question. That is something that came out of the design work we did. We keep putting it on hold because there are other actors who are doing something similar. We are waiting to see and make sure that what we do does not duplicate the work that others do. Thank you for noting it. We have three streams. We have talked about the first stream. The second stream is adaptation workshops. It is a live conversation about whether we do that or whether we wait for

others. There are others in the pipeline. The third stream is around broad community engagement. We have held one online forum, which was open to members of the public. About 60 people attended—in the daytime, which showed quite strong interest.

**MS CARRICK:** Community councils might be interested too.

**Ms Swainson:** Yes. I think we asked them to put out the information.

**Prof Howden:** As Mia just mentioned, we had a webinar the year before last. It was open to anyone. It was an opportunity for the Canberra community to get to know the council, what we did and ask questions. We also lined up for an exhibition at the expo. What was it called?

**Ms Swainson:** The Sustainability Canberra Expo.

**Prof Howden:** Several council members turned up to that, with the prospect of people asking us questions.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Professor Howden, you mentioned, in an earlier comment, that climate adaptation in relation to natural disasters was a critical element. How is the council going to be able to advise or be involved in the government processes, whether it be the new version of the Strategic Bushfire Management Plan, which is currently under development, or other forms of natural disasters you mentioned—storms, hail, and so forth?

**Prof Howden:** Thanks for that question. Firstly, as Mia has mentioned, we are aware of various other activities on adaptation that are being undertaken within the ACT government, as well as by other groups. Part of what we need to do is be aware of those processes so we can contribute appropriately. One of those processes is a series of scenarios that are being developed by the government which delve into this. Effectively, the adaptation of storylines is being developed within the EPSDD. We contribute to that through, for example, workshops—which happened last week, I think—and ongoing workshops. We also give presentations to various groups. For example, there is the Multi Hazard Advisory Council that gives scientific updates so that they are aware of what the latest science is and how that may translate to changing risk in the ACT.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Are you able to provide us with some sort of feedback to ensure the science is incorporated into those processes but also so that the actions are effectively budgeted and happen?

**Ms Wright:** I have read, understood and agree with the privilege statement. With regard to that question, Mr Braddock, the main role of the Climate Change Council is to advise the minister. Any actions that the council does are advised through the minister. Questions of that nature would go to the minister and the directorate, in terms of how the actions are carried forward and budgeted for. That sits outside of the council's remit.

**Prof Howden:** I can expand on that a little. That is entirely appropriate framing. We have no influence over how those things are done. That is definitely a minister and department matter. However, as a council, we have, on occasion, asked how our advice has influenced those decisions and sought feedback from the department and the

minister as to how the ACT Climate Change Council has informed what is going on. We try to close that loop, but we are not empowering that loop of change, if that makes sense.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not know if the council has a view on whether adaptation is being coordinated well at the government level at the moment. For instance, we hear from a lot of schools that the classrooms are hot and they do not know how to manage smoke, and each individual school seems to have to deal with that situation by itself and they do not have any budget for that. Does the council have a view on whether government should be coordinating and funding that adaptation?

**Prof Howden:** I do not know that we are that firm in our approach. We try to collate information from different sources and feed that to the minister. The point of integration of those risks, discomforts and impacts are integrated into other policy decisions. That is not the council's remit. We have to put boundaries around the things that we deal with and how we operate.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes; that is fair.

**Ms Swainson:** I can add to that with an example of school infrastructure. There was a school infrastructure inquiry and we were invited to provide a response to that. As part of our role, we did provide that advice.

**MS CASTLEY:** My substantive follows Mr Braddock's question about bushfires. You talked about the risk. There is the Multi Hazard Advisory Council. Some concerns have been raised about the gaps in bushfire preparedness for the ACT, inadequate hazard reduction efforts, current policies, and restricted deployment of the remote area fire teams under certain weather conditions. With no regular updates from authorities and limited resources available from New South Wales, the ACT has heightened risk of uncontrolled fires, lightning etcetera. Does the council recognise that this situation leaves the ACT at risk of another repeat of 2003? What is your engagement and advice to the ACT government on that situation, when things are difficult and we seem a little unprepared?

**Prof Howden:** Again, quite a lot of that falls into operational decision-making and strategy needing to be developed by the relevant bodies. Our role is about trying to inform the development of that strategy rather than the operational plan. We do not assess resourcing suitability of different components of firefighting forces. That tends to fall well outside of the climate change elements. But what we can flag is how climate change alters risk in relation to fires and sometimes bring specific pieces of information into focus—for example, research which shows that broad-scale controlled burning is actually not particularly helpful in fire management and can be quite damaging in terms of natural resource management and biodiversity, but that very targeted controlled burning can actually have very substantial benefits. Where there is good research that can relate to better management under climate change, we bring that to the attention of the minister.

**MS CASTLEY:** Thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** I will circle back to some of the top priorities outlined by both of you at

the beginning. Many of us are concerned about the equity issues. We are seeing that climate change is easier to both reduce emissions and adapt to when you own a home, for instance, and have a bit of wealth behind you. Are there any specific areas that you think the ACT needs to move into further? We have touched on apartment dwelling, but are there any specific areas we need to move into more strongly as we look at equity?

**Prof Howden:** At the moment, we have a report by one of the councillors, Tom Longden, which relates to that, but we have not addressed that in the council. That happens next week. This meeting is a week too early. The sorts of areas that we mentioned before, such as equity issues relating to the ability to manage climate risk and also enabling people to participate in the emissions reduction task ahead of us, are things that we have discussed as a council. Mia, do you want to add to that?

**Ms Swainson:** I think you are right, Mark: we are maybe just a week too early in terms of having a council view. Equity and a just transition are things that come up regularly when we engage, mostly with the community sector NGOs. There are certainly issues around equity that we have talked about and are very alert to, but it is not something on which we have a council view. We are very alert to it, but it would be best to give you a well-formed view.

**THE CHAIR:** A well-formed view for the new strategy, perhaps.

**Ms Swainson:** Yes.

**MS CARRICK:** You mentioned that transport was high on the emissions list at this stage. Would your advice go into transport—electrification of the bus fleet and the benefit of good timetables that encourage mode shift so that people do not have to drive their cars? It is an equity issue when you have to drive and pay for parking. There is a whole range in the transport sector.

**Prof Howden:** Again, it is something that the council is aware of and we have discussed, but we have not necessarily analysed it. We recognise the overall benefits of having an electrified bus fleet, for example, not just in terms of greenhouse gas emissions but also in terms of pollution and cost, because petrol is increasing in cost and electricity is not increasing anywhere near as fast. We have discussed issues about the importance of access by people to environmentally suitable activities and public transport to enable people to do active pursuits and similar things. We have also discussed the importance of EV-related policies to ensure that people who are not necessarily wealthy can still access electric vehicles—ways in which policies could be adjusted to encourage that. One of the pieces of advice was in relation to extending some of the policies to the used car fleet as well as the new fleet. Used cars tend to be more accessible to people who do not have a lot of money.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, councillors. Thank you so much for your time this morning. Ms Wright, thank you as well. I do not think we had any questions taken on notice, so we do not have to chase up any responses, which is excellent. Thank you for your time.

**Hearing suspended from 11.31 am to 12.30 pm.**

Appearances:

Orr, Ms Suzanne, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Carers and Community Services, Minister for Seniors and Veterans

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

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

Burkevics, Mr Bren, Executive Group Manager, Environment Heritage and Parks

Wright, Ms Fiona, Executive Group Manager, Climate Change, Environment and Water

Malouf, Ms Ros, Executive Branch Manager, Climate Change and Energy Programs

Ogden, Dr Ralph, Director, Catchment Planning and Water Management

Cooney, Dr Rosie, Senior Director, Office of Nature Conservation

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning and welcome to the public hearings of the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services. We welcome Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, and officials. Thank you for coming.

I remind you of the protections and obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege and draw your attention to that privilege statement. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. When you first speak, please confirm that you have read that and that you understand and agree with it.

We are not inviting opening statements, so we will proceed straight to questions. Minister, I will start with the first question. It is on climate emissions. We have some good news. We have got ACT tracking at 50 per cent below 1990 levels, which is good, and our per capita emissions are looking really, really good. I am a little puzzled about what is going on in some of our particular streams of emissions, though. Transport emissions rose in 2022-23 and they dropped in 2023-24. Do you have any idea of what is going on with our transport emissions?

**Ms Orr:** Thank you, Ms Clay. I have read and understand the privilege statement. Ms Clay, just skipping the commentary because it was quite detailed, I think the question, if I have understood correctly, is: what is influencing the transport emissions numbers and the changes that we are seeing in those.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Orr:** I might get the appropriate official, who seems to be Geoffrey, to run you through that.

**Mr Rutledge:** I have read and understand the privilege statement. I might pass to Dr Ogden in a short period of time, but the short answer is we do not have a clear analysis of the rationale behind it. What we did see, though, and we saw this across the city, with transport post COVID is that there was a sort of a rebound effect post COVID



that saw transport emissions go up, which was both car driven and also aviation driven. Then there was a slower uptake on public transport. Passenger numbers on public transport took some time to return to pre-COVID levels. They have been at pre-COVID levels now for the last couple of years, including the time that you talk about.

We know that there are a couple of things going on, but I cannot attribute a portion to that. Obviously, there are people moving to electric vehicles. That is a slow uptake but that does drive down emissions. Working-from-home policies, particularly with the federal government, and flexible working conditions mean that transport is fluctuating a fair bit, particularly on a Monday and a Friday, and we are seeing a reduction in that. Government has now introduced a policy of free transport on Fridays to make it more attractive for the Fridays, because the traffic is well down and, therefore, city centres are much slower than they were, not yet recovering from pre-COVID levels.

So those are a couple of things that are going on. More recently, there are the federal government's changes to fuel efficiency standards, and they will be a slow thing. I think it is a combination of all of those. I do not know whether Dr Ogden has anything further to add.

**THE CHAIR:** It is all right. I might jump in and redirect. That was excellent. Thank you. So they have reduced a little bit but they are growing as a proportion of our overall carbon footprint. So we are now over 65 per cent. Would you consider reducing transport emissions pretty urgent, given the increasing share they are taking of our carbon inventory?

**Ms Orr:** Chair, I think that might be bordering on asking for an expression of opinion so—

**THE CHAIR:** Is the government bringing forward policy to reduce transport emissions, given their increasing share of our carbon inventory?

**Ms Orr:** Chair, I am not wanting to be difficult this early on in the process. We are not in a position to announce future government policy.

**THE CHAIR:** Is the government currently working on any policy that will reduce our transport emissions, noting that our transport emissions are an increasing proportion of our overall tracked emissions?

**Ms Orr:** Ms Clay, the government, supported by the bureaucracy, is always looking at the ways that we can respond to our net zero commitments. The proposition you have put forward would be part of that consideration on a continual basis.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. We also notice that waste emissions dropped quite a lot. Do we have any information about why that would be?

**Mr Rutledge:** Nothing specific, Ms Clay. As we heard earlier today from Mr Fitzgerald, our waste profile has also been changing a fair bit. So it may be as simple as some of the—

**THE CHAIR:** Decreased consumption possibly, yes.

**Mr Rutledge:** Maybe.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. Our current legislated target is to reduce emissions by 65 per cent to 75 per cent by 2030. Are we currently on track to make that target?

**Ms Orr:** I might jump in there and then pass to Geoffrey on the detail. My understanding of what has been briefed to me is that we are certainly on track to where we need to be at this point in time, noting that there are a lot of variables that go into the future that we might not necessarily be able to pre-empt, such as health pandemics and changes to transport and work from home. But one of the things that we are looking at is that there is a new climate strategy coming forward—as the existing one will be ceasing—and what comes out of that and how that might feed into actually helping towards new avenues or improved avenues for actually starting to address our emissions. So, while I am happy to say that we are considering and looking at it, I think it is a little bit early to necessarily detail what those things will be.

**THE CHAIR:** Does the government have an understanding of where we would need to be in 2028 to meet that 2030 target?

**Ms Orr:** There is a little bit of a judgment call in there I think, Ms Clay. If you go back to the modelling and what is fair and what is factual, the modelling will be over that period based on the information we have to date. That does not mean that, if information changes or if variables change, the modelling will not change, but certainly—

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. Is there modelling for 2028? Is that what you are telling me—that it is modelled for each year?

**Mr Rutledge:** Ms Clay, we do not model for each year. We have a trajectory, of course, and you can take a slice of that. As the minister said, the government is about to develop a new climate change strategy. We know where we need to be and we know, as we did five years ago, that the harder areas were going to be transport and fossil fuel gas. So you can imagine that they will remain a focus in emissions reduction.

**Ms Orr:** Ms Clay, I think the subtlety and the difficulty in answering your question as to whether 2028 is the point where everything is okay—or any point really; it could be any point—is that, based on what is in place now and what we know of it, you can have that trajectory. As I have just said, we are actually looking at a new policy and new things might come out of that which puts a level of uncertainty into it. So I could not sit here and say either way yes, or no, that is not going to have an impact on where that trajectory might sit. That is something that we will continue to work through—but very cognizant of the commitment we have under the legislation to hit net zero.

**MS CARRICK:** My question is following on from this morning where we talked about the stormwater and the blue-green network.

**Ms Orr:** I must admit, Ms Carrick, that I was not present for whatever happened this morning. So apologies in advance if I repeat anything.

**MS CARRICK:** Let's just talk about the blue-green network, but it is part of the

stormwater. Given that the blue-green network is government policy, what work is being done on Yarralumla Creek to naturalise it and bring some water into the landscape for biodiversity, given that there is no lake in the Woden area?

**Ms Orr:** Ms Carrick, I think you have pointed to a particular project. I would also point out that other people, depending on where they live, will come forward with a project that they would like to put forward. My understanding—

**MS CARRICK:** I think Yarralumla Creek has been on the books for a long time.

**Ms Orr:** If I can finish my answer. My understanding is, in looking at the water network, it is actually a system approach; it is not necessarily a component of each system in isolation. So I think the answer is going to have to maybe be scaled up a little bit in helping you get to your particular question. What I might do is hand over to officials, because they are going to be far more across the detail of this.

**Mr Rutledge:** Ms Carrick, thanks for the question. I will ask Dr Ogden to join me to talk a little bit about the Healthy Waterways project. Healthy Waterways has been a project running for many years. The focus has been lifting water quality, and some of that is also pushing water into the landscape, as you say. At the moment, we are getting close to the Belconnen wetland being open, which will, again, keep a lot of pollutants out of Lake Ginninderra. You will be very familiar that Lake Tuggeranong has been a focus for government and its election commitment to do a further 10-year plan on how we can fix or make amends in Lake Tuggeranong.

On Yarralumla Creek, there have been some residents that have seen some of the great work that we have done in other parts of the city and have brought forward their thoughts. We have consulted in the past looking at Yarralumla Creek and possible projects along there. Athllon Drive in Mawson got some work done. But, when you look at the whole waterway system where the water quality issues are, Yarralumla Creek is not the highest priority. The highest priority at the moment is certainly Lake Tuggeranong, because that is where we are seeing the ill effects of pollution. Dr Ogden, do you have anything further on Yarralumla Creek works?

**Dr Ogden:** I confirm I have read and understand the privilege statement. As Geoffrey said, in the past we have built assets in the area to begin to naturalise it. We have the pond in Mawson and we have a rain garden at the flood memorial in Curtin. We also did some works at the bottom of the creek where it transitions to a natural creek again. There was a lot of erosion there so we put in works that were simply to prevent the erosion rather than naturalise it in any way. I have been consulted as part of the tram development. As a part of the tram development they are looking at putting a green belt through there with active travel and water quality assets, and they are looking at naturalising. So there is ongoing in that sense but there are no other projects on the boil now.

**MS CARRICK:** I just raise it as we are at risk of losing the creek because it could potentially be built out. There is so much building going on there and high-density residential going in that, unless there is a plan for the creek to protect enough space, its future could be damaged by a lack of planning for it.

**Ms Orr:** I think that is a bit of a statement. Ms Carrick, is the question essentially going to how we can continue to ensure the lake—

**MS CARRICK:** How can we bring forward the planning so that we ensure that we do not build out the creek and lose the ability to naturalise where it is appropriate to naturalise? Without a plan, how do we know?

**Ms Orr:** I guess that is somewhat going to considerations in planning too. But I think Mr Ponton is eagerly trying to get me to stop talking so he can answer a question because he wears both hats. So I will stop talking.

**Mr Ponton:** No; I was going to say something very similar, Minister. I have read and understand the privilege statement. I was just going to note exactly that. The Woden District Strategy has references to Yarralumla Creek and there are a number of initiatives for the blue-green network that specifically reference Yarralumla Creek. In terms of exploring that further, it might be better for the planning session next Tuesday.

**MS CARRICK:** All right; I will bring it up then. But it is a biodiversity thing.

**Ms Orr:** Mr Ponton, maybe we could leave the planning stuff to one side, because that sits with another minister; maybe we could provide a little bit more information on how any environmental considerations for the waterways, under our responsibilities, would be fed into the planning system considerations.

**MS CARRICK:** Yes. There is a really good program, Connecting Nature Connecting People. It does connect all the greenbelts, from the surrounding hills and ridges down into the main waterway and out to the river.

**Mr Ponton:** Yes. I might ask Mr Rutledge to talk further about this. In terms of the planning work that was done on developing the district strategies—and I do not want to dwell too much on that because it will be discussed on Tuesday—in terms of the mapping and understanding of what those potential actions need to be, that was done very closely in consultation between both the planning teams and the environment teams, as the actions and initiatives identified in the district strategy were intended to bring together a whole range of policy areas into one sensible location.

In terms of implementing that, that will be identified for different parts of government and monitored over the next couple of years. Mr Rutledge, do you want to add anything to that?

**Mr Rutledge:** It is always about prioritisation. With Connecting Nature Connecting People, the priority in the last couple of years has been in the upper parts of Sullivans Creek, around Mulligans Flat nature reserve, where we did some work in preparing the riparian zones, protecting sedimentation and erosion around that.

We are always looking, across the whole network, at how best to prioritise. As I said, with water quality, our focus at the moment, because we have been working right across the network, is more focused on Tuggeranong. Our most recent work in Connecting Nature has been in the upper Sullivans Creek area. We always look to the environmental impacts and the water quality impacts. That is how we make those assessments, and we

work where we can.

**MS TOUGH:** My question is about Lake Tuggeranong and the Healthy Waterways plan. I am wondering where that is up to, with improving the water quality of Lake Tuggeranong.

**Mr Rutledge:** There are a couple of things that you will have seen, because you are from the area. You would have seen the naturalisation of the Tuggeranong Creek drain behind Calwell. That is a fabulous outcome. I am trying to think about how we can get more people to see it, because it is one of those places that is not part of people's normal morning walk, but it is actually a really good example of how we can turn what was hard, grey infrastructure into nice blue-green infrastructure with a good water quality asset. That was the last piece of work. As you know, the government has committed to a 10-year plan, so now we are trying to think about what we will do over the next 10 years and do a bit more work on that.

**Ms Orr:** Since taking on the portfolio, I have come to appreciate that, in putting forward solutions to some of the water quality issues and ambitions that we have, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. There are a lot of responses that can be taken. Dr Ogden has shown me a whole bunch of them across Canberra, which was very informative. Not all of them will be pretty. Some of them will be quite practical. Not all of them will be big. Some of them will be on a smaller scale.

It is a matter of thinking about what is the issue at hand and what is the most appropriate response to that. From what I have observed, we have built up quite a lot of knowledge and understanding, and can apply learnings to future parts of this larger reform program to get the best response to the issue at hand, given our understanding today.

I will pass over to Dr Ogden to run through all of those things, because he is far more across the detail, in a very impressive way which makes me feel that I am clearly not a scientist.

**Dr Ogden:** The report has been drafted. It is currently on its second draft. It has been reviewed. We are about to revise it, and it will be heading up the line. It is backed by three technical reports. There is a plan, and there are three technical reports behind it. It is a strategic plan which gives the government ideas about options for resolving the water quality issues. It is not an implementation plan. It is a strategic plan with options that the government can use to decide which ones it wishes to pursue.

**Mr Rutledge:** What we are learning along the way is that the problem has been created by engineering. We have built everything to land in our urban lakes, and we cannot engineer our way out of the entire problem. The behaviour change of getting people to collect their leaves and compost it onsite or use their green bins possibly will be as effective. Also, that is a slow-burn issue because you can engineer a thing; you can spend a lot of money on engineering a solution, and you will be cleaning out the gross pollutant trap for the next 10 years. As a community, and particularly in some parts of the city where you have a lot of deciduous trees and you have impacts on the waterways, if everyone could look after their garden or if we did a bit more street sweeping, that will also have an effect.

It is really interesting; as the minister said, when we started, we were looking for the scientific solution, and we were coming up with engineering solutions. Actually, the more we look at it now, we think behaviour change will have a really lasting effect. So expect to see more behaviour change activity, and probably less engineering activity; that is where I would predict we are headed.

**Ms Orr:** It is about where the balance is, in the mix, and what will, on probabilities, get the best return.

**Mr Rutledge:** Absolutely.

**MS TOUGH:** With things like what we saw at Lake Tuggeranong the other week, with the trade wastewater going into the lake, does that set back improving the overall water quality or is it the case that one-off occurrences are not—

**Dr Ogden:** That is an unfortunate event, for sure, but it will not set it back; no.

**MISS NUTTALL:** On the behaviour change programs, are they things like the Leaf Collective activities that have happened previously?

**Mr Rutledge:** Leaf Collective was our trial, and that is where we employed some social researchers. We found, though, that it will morph into less of the Leaf Collective model and certainly into ongoing advertising, ongoing distribution of leaf litter bags and ongoing encouragement of people to use their green waste bins. I think that is where we are headed.

With respect to the other thing that we are thinking about, as I said, we know which suburbs have more impact on waterways. It is about whether or not we need to target our messaging and have really localised messaging for some of that.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Are you able to share those suburbs or is that still being processed?

**Mr Rutledge:** I will take it on notice. I will share what I can. I am trying to work out how it would be best to implement it. We do not want to demonise anyone.

**MISS NUTTALL:** We will let them off the hook!

**Mr Rutledge:** Yes. We do not want to scare people, but we do want everyone to get involved. It is easy to say that, with basically anywhere in Tuggeranong at the moment, if the catchment ends up in the lake, we know the ill effects of that. We also did some social research work on fertiliser use, to see whether or not that was a big contributor. We had been looking at fertiliser use on the large ovals, particularly in Kambah, and they do have effects, but probably not as significant as we thought. It is a mixture of water science and ecology of water quality. Also, with the social sciences, we are now spending some time on that.

**MISS NUTTALL:** With respect to Healthy Waterways, how many projects are there currently in train and how many have yet to be funded?

**Mr Rutledge:** There are no projects in train that are yet to be funded. As I said, with

the focus now, the Belconnen wetland is the next one that will be opening. That is good to go, once the grass grows a little bit more. We have had a lot of storms. There has been really inclement weather at the moment, so we are trying to work out when it is best to pull down the fences and restore the informal dog park to the people of Belconnen. The focus will then be pretty narrowly, or a high priority, on Lake Tuggeranong.

**THE CHAIR:** We are very excited about the Belconnen wetland. Ms Castley has a supplementary.

**MS CASTLEY:** What independent assessments have been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Healthy Waterways program, and will the government commit to making all the findings publicly available?

**Ms Orr:** If Dr Ogden wants to take the first question, I will take the second part, which I think relates a little bit more to me. What independent studies have been undertaken to—

**Dr Ogden:** We have had a peer review of the materials that we are producing, but the program itself has not been reviewed, to my knowledge.

**Mr Rutledge:** No. We are, of course, testing for water quality. The University of Canberra have been doing before-and-after work. As to the program as a whole, we are looking, asset by asset, to see whether they are delivering the water quality that we were hoping for, and our assets are delivering the water quality that we were hoping for, because we are doing that through UC.

**MS CASTLEY:** Will there be a report that we can see?

**Mr Rutledge:** Yes, we have published everything that we can on the Healthy Waterways website. Certainly, in the last term of government, we provided a lot of information to Ms Lawder about that. We made public as much data as we were able to make public. The only thing that held us back on it was the software systems and getting it into a usable form so that it could be usable by members of the public. We have published as much as we can.

**Ms Orr:** Dr Ogden might be able to add a little bit more on this. Every environment is a little bit different, so to pick up something that might work in a different jurisdiction and impose it on our environment will not necessarily mean that you will get the same outcome. There is definitely a level of trial in the application of what we are doing, and we are taking the learnings from that. There is almost an in-built evaluation process going on through reviewing whether the outcomes are as you would expect them to be, using the knowledge you have gained through the experience and looking at how to improve that to get a better outcome.

From my little tour with Dr Ogden, there has been quite a significant gain in knowledge, and the ACT has actually come to the forefront in our understandings, in a broader way. Dr Ogden, if you want to run through a little bit more on that, please go ahead.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Castley, are you getting the information that you need?

**MS CASTLEY:** Yes. It is good that there are metrics to prove that it is working well. I am wondering whether the government has met all of its commitments under the ACT Water Strategy. If not, why not?

**THE CHAIR:** I wonder whether that is a substantive question.

**Ms Orr:** I think that is a little bit different from what was put before.

**MR BRADDOCK:** I have a couple of questions about programs that support rooftop solar. The first one is the Solar for Apartments Program, which was launched in November 2023 to support the installation of solar panels for apartment complexes. I have heard from constituents that they began applying in 2023 but have challenges in getting through all the paperwork due to the body corporate challenges that they are experiencing and so will not be able to complete their application by the time that the scheme closes this year. So my question is: will that program be extended or how will people who are halfway through an application be able to proceed and install solar panels in their apartment complexes?

**Ms Orr:** Mr Braddock, as someone who lives in an apartment complex and gets to deal with their own strata, I can certainly appreciate the process your constituents who have raised these concerns might be going through. If you are happy, this might be a good one to have a bit more of a chat with my office about with regard to the specific instances and circumstances that you are hearing, so that we can flag them. Noting that this process started in 2023 and I started in this role in not 2023, I might hand over to the relevant officials just to run through a bit of it.

**Ms Wright:** I have read and understand the privilege statement. You are correct: the program was stood up in partnership with the commonwealth government, and the expiration of the program is 30 June 2025, this year. The program supports the installation of the rooftop solar on multi-unit apartments through rebates and concessional loans—and that is for body corporates. As it is in conjunction with the commonwealth, there are some criteria there that we need to meet.

One of the things with this program is we really wanted to make sure that having solar installed on apartment dwellings would benefit all tenants and all owners, in the dwellings. That has probably been one of the things that we have had to work through in making sure that these solar panels are not just benefiting owners of apartments but the people that are living in those apartments as well. This is a program that we will continue to evaluate and, as we keep moving through, we will look at what rebates or concessions we need to keep applying to people in these areas.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Thank you. I will bring the particular concerns to the minister's attention.

**Ms Orr:** Please do. It certainly helps us if we know in advance, particularly when we are being asked to make an undertaking on the spot.

**MR BRADDOCK:** My next question is about the Home Energy Support Program for rooftop solar which says it is also for social and public housing. How do public housing



tenants actually go through this process? We have heard that only one per cent of public housing actually has solar panels and there are no plans to install more. So I would be keen to explore how that can be done.

**Ms Orr:** My understanding is that this program sits between EPSDD and the housing directorate. I will ask officials to answer from the EPSDD side, but noting that they might not necessarily be able to answer on behalf of Housing ACT and therefore not necessarily all of your question.

**Ms Wright:** Thank you, Mr Braddock, for the question. In a second I will pass to Ms Malouf to take you through some of the detail. But you are right: we do have some elements of the Home Energy Support Program that program that support low-income or vulnerable people in the community. But I think your question was specifically about public housing and how that process works.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Yes.

**Ms Wright:** I will pass to Ms Malouf to take you through how that occurs.

**Ms Malouf:** I have read and understand the privilege statement. Thank you for the question. Our program that we are delivering for Housing ACT includes delivery of electrification and installation. It does not include solar at this stage. The Home Energy Support Program eligibility is for homeowners that meet a vulnerable criteria to be able to access solar. There is a rebate available for solar of \$2,500 and there is also a rebate up to \$2,500 in addition to the solar rebate for electrification of assets—hot water heat pumps, heating and cooling and cooktops.

**MR BRADDOCK:** So that would not be applicable to public housing tenants?

**Ms Malouf:** It is not available to public housing tenants, no.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Thank you, for the clarification. Just going back to the Solar for Apartments Program, will that program be extended?

**Ms Orr:** It is a joint program between the territory and the commonwealth. So we would not be able to give you a conclusive answer without commonwealth agreement.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you able to advise when you might, given that the program ends in June? When do you imagine that decision might be taken?

**Ms Orr:** Ms Clay, I note that there is an upcoming federal election, and I could only speculate that the outcomes might be impacted because of that. Unfortunately, we are dealing with quite a bit of uncertainty, and I would be hesitant to give you a date when it is not within my ability to do that.

**Mr Rutledge:** What we will say, though, is if you get your application in by 30 June 2025 and it is approved, it will be honoured. Whether or not that date will move is a matter for the commonwealth government and not for us.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Let us talk Bluetts Block. We were really heartened to hear that the Labor government has responded to the Greens calls to make Bluetts Block a nature reserve, for blocks 403 and block 12 section 1, now gazetted. Obviously, there is still the matter of block 402, which the government leases to the ANU. To the best of my knowledge, while EPSDD has not undertaken the same rigorous environmental assessment on block 402, it is contiguous with block 403; so you would expect there would be similarly high-quality environmental values there. I understand that this is still the planning minister's call, but what ecological and environmental assessments have you undertaken on block 402?

**Ms Orr:** Thank you, Miss Nuttall, for the question. I am more than happy to talk about Bluetts Block, the incorporation into the nature reserve and the continuing discussion around some other areas. I think some of the comments in your question, though, I will put to one side and I will not forward you on. I think there has been a lot of that this year from a lot of people around this particular site—and it is one we will continue to work through.

I will get the directorate to give you a bit more detail for this specific area. But I would like to make an observation in the first instance. Based on the conversations we have had the past; I think you actually would be onto this one, too. In preserving the environment, nature reserves are one way but there is also, I think, a growing concern that is in my mind of saying, “We cannot necessarily take every area that has an environmental significance and turn it into a reserve.” So how do we actually strike that balance between having the solution that allows for the preservation and improvement of nature through other mechanisms rather than just one?

So I think the conversation, particularly around these additional blocks and what you have flagged within your commentary on putting the question is: when are the other blocks going to come into the reserve? I am not sure that is quite the best question. I think the best question there is: how do we ensure the environmental properties of that area are best maintained, preserved and improved? I think we need to be a little bit more agnostic to the mechanism, so that we are getting the right mechanism in that consideration.

These are questions that I am pondering. I will probably take my time. I am not sure when I will come up with an answer to them. I am sure the directorate might give me some advice that hopefully helps. But I am more than happy, if you want to feed into that discussion, to have a chat with you. I will pass to Bren to have a bit more of a chat about some of the other parts of your question.

**Mr Burkevics:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you for your recognition of the importance of Bluetts Block. We have engaged regularly with Friends of Bluetts Block and other environmental groups that understand and recognise the values of that block. The statutory process that has occurred to allow block 403 and the underdeveloped parts of block 12 to be incorporated in the Molonglo River Reserve is really, really pleasing and important for the current custodian, Parks and Conservation Service, because it now provides a statutory mechanism for them, under the Nature Conservation Act, to take regulatory action for any harm that could occur. So that is a real benefit.

I reaffirm the minister's comments in that I think we have to take a considered and a strategic approach to the best way of protecting the ACT's ecological assets and environmental values. As part of the due diligence work that was done, which I think was discussed in previous hearings in relation to Bluetts Block, I am, as Conservator, certainly aware that there are values on block 402. The extent of those values does require further analysis and consideration in addition to all other areas of the ACT where our knowledge of those values needs to be expanded. However, what we know at the moment is that that block is under lease and that lease is guided by a land management agreement that is signed by the Conservator to guide how to protect the values.

We value the work of all of the ACT's rural lessees, who I, hand on heart, can say do have a strong interest in the environment and do all they can within their land management agreement to protect those values. But certainly 402 will remain an area of interest, but will be considered in accordance with all other and competing environmental priorities and assessment requirements.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Thank you, very much. What sort of further analysis and consideration are you intending to do at this point in time? Is there a timeline for that?

**Mr Burkevics:** I could not commit to any timeline. I rely on the good advice of conservation officials and ecologists on the best approach to undertake environmental assessments. And, of course, those resources are finite and often in great demand with a great range of competing priorities. We rely not only on remote data, existing knowledge of the site, ACTmapi, commonwealth records and ACT records but also, more importantly, on-the-ground assessments conducted by field ecologists. That is a labour-intensive but important exercise. At the moment, I could not commit to any further plans.

Noting the decision of the Territory Planning Authority to encompass those blocks into the river reserve, I think our focus will be on ensuring that the Parks and Conservation Service moves forward with the necessary statutory mechanisms to protect that block and, when time and resources allow, we will look at other mechanisms to ensure that our awareness grows of all areas in the ACT—urban, non-urban and rural—and to make assessments on moving forward with those.

**MISS NUTTALL:** That is exciting to hear. Thank you. Have you advocated to the planning minister to talk with the ANU and specifically talk about bringing block 402 back under the ACT government's purview, either with a view to making it part of the nature reserve or to undertake the same kind of ecological assessment that we have done for the other blocks?

**Mr Burkevics:** I can confidently say that it is not the responsibility of the Conservator to advocate to the planning minister. What I can say is that the Conservator has provisions under the Planning Act to make recommendations to the Territory Planning Authority in relation to nature reserves. As we proceed with understanding the ecological values right across the ACT, should further information be made available and as we assess that, then I would absolutely consider making other recommendations. But I think we are a long way between that and where we are now in relation to 402

and other areas in the ACT. Immediate priority is with regard to 403 and underdeveloped areas of 12. Certainly though, that provision is available to the Conservator at the right time.

**MISS NUTTALL:** You mentioned nature reserves and then not being necessarily the only mechanism that we could use to protect blocks. I understand that there are nature reserve criteria. Where are you up to in that discussion? Have they been viewed?

**Ms Orr:** Miss Nuttall, referring back to my previous commentary around these things, as I said, it is one that is currently on my mind and it is one that I have asked officials to discuss in early consideration of a few different projects, but particularly consideration as to what we would ask an ACT government landscape architect, once we have had a chance to appoint one, to do and potentially look at as part of a delivery of a landscape plan. I say “potentially” because those decisions have not been made. It is more that that is the consideration we are fitting in to determine where might be the appropriate spot to do it. It might not be that; it might be something else. But that advice is currently being thought about and coming my way as we look at it.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Got you.

**THE CHAIR:** There was an outstanding Assembly motion passed that we would have nature reserve criteria. Did I hear the answer that that is under consideration for the landscape architect and the landscape plan and we are waiting for advice? Is that where that is up to?

**Ms Orr:** No, Ms Clay. I have asked the directorate, in the advice that they provide to me on various initiatives, to consider this as part of when opportunities present to incorporate it in. As to the previous motion, I am not sure—

**THE CHAIR:** It was on the development of nature reserve criteria.

**Ms Orr:** Because we are in a new term, I am not quite sure whether that still—

**THE CHAIR:** Would you like to take on notice the status of that?

**Ms Orr:** I think it is the clerk that needs to take advice on that, as to the status of previous terms.

**THE CHAIR:** It was responded to by a former environment minister. I am happy if you would like to take that on notice.

**Mr Rutledge:** Yes, we can take advice. With a new Assembly, I am not sure of the status—same as the minister. I will check out the status and take on notice if there is a response being drafted.

**THE CHAIR:** That would be great.

**Mr Rutledge:** But I do not think a response is being drafted. I do not think anything further has been actioned, but I will look into it.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Bluetts is one part of Western Edge. Where are we up to with Western Edge protection? Have we got an update on that?

**Mr Ponton:** I think that would be a matter for the planning—

**THE CHAIR:** So planning? Excellent.

**Mr Ponton:**—session next week.

**MS CLAY:** Ms Carrick, a supplementary?

**MS CARRICK:** I was going to ask, without ecological value or mapping of the ecological values of areas across Canberra, how do we do future planning, forward planning?

**Ms Orr:** Ms Carrick, I think that is again straying into planning policy. Mr Ponton, just in the spirit of trying to be helpful and good, might make a two-minute response. But it is probably one that has to go to the planning area.

**Mr Ponton:** Yes, and look, whilst I would like to be able to assist, it is a matter for the planning portfolio. And given the structure of the public service and the role of the Chief Planner and the Territory Planning Authority under the legislation, I think it is Section 18, that advice would need to come through the Territory Planning Authority. So whilst I would like to be able to assist, it is beyond my administrative responsibilities to do so.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you.

**MS CASTLEY:** I have some questions on spending, Minister. Would you be able to provide us with an update on the general government sector expenses by function for environmental protection across the forwards?

**Ms Orr:** That is a very broad question, Ms Castley. It would not necessarily all sit within my portfolio responsibilities.

**MS CASTLEY:** By expenses, by function, for environmental protection. Is there a list that you could take on notice and provide?

**Mr Rutledge:** Ms Castley, with respect to going beyond the budget, as published, which puts forward by output class the funding that is allocated to EPSDD, I think that the last budget and the budget update are probably the most accurate information we have for the proposed funding of the environment portfolio for the next bit.

**MS CASTLEY:** In the budget outlook, the functional expenditure for protection of biodiversity and landscape is to fall over the forward estimates period from \$185 million in 2023-24 to \$170 million in 2027-28. That is a \$15 million cut in nominal terms, but it is actually a much larger cut in real terms. Once you adjust for CPI, spending on biodiversity is down by around \$40 million—about one-fifth of the total.

I understand that the government has previously stated it is because there are a number of rolling non-ongoing programs which may be extended, but no decision has been made. Could you provide us with a list of those non-ongoing programs, the expenditure profile for each of them, and a breakdown of ongoing and non-going staff?

**Ms Orr:** Ms Castley, do you have a page reference for Mr Rutledge?

**MS CASTLEY:** No.

**Ms Orr:** He would be able to identify the table you are talking about and he would be able to answer the question.

**MS CASTLEY:** Not with me.

**Mr Rutledge:** Again, Ms Castley, the budget papers provide the best description of where that is. Yes, the environment portfolio has a number of ceasing budget initiatives, and they will be up for consideration by the government when it is considering the next budget. Over that period of time, as you say, and as we have said before, initiatives are considered by government every year.

The other extraordinary thing that happened in that period of time was the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires. That saw us necessarily spend additional funding, and both insurance money and commonwealth grants in response to that. We had an extraordinary event, a catastrophic event; therefore funding increased for that. The core funding and additional initiatives are projected over the forwards; a number of ceasing initiatives are up for discussion, as the government continues with its budget considerations.

**MS CASTLEY:** It is chapter 4 of the budget review. That is what I am asking you to table, if you could.

**Ms Orr:** The budget review would not be dealt with during the annual report inquiries. That would go to the budget review part of it. Give us a minute to look at the table that you are referring to—

**MS CASTLEY:** Page 285.

**Ms Orr:** With your indulgence, we could come back to this line of inquiry once we have the information in front of us. Mr Rutledge has the annual report in front of him; I think we are now talking about a slightly different document.

**MS CASTLEY:** There are projects—

**Ms Orr:** Ms Castley, we are happy to answer the question. We are asking whether we can have a moment, in order to get the table up and see what you are referring to, and answer as soon as possible.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Emerson, we will have a question from you; then we will come back to Ms Castley.

**MR EMERSON:** Thank you, Chair. I have a question about the Canberra Nature Park plan 2021. This is a 10-year plan, published in 2021. It is a great document, and there is a lot of ambition there, which is great to see. There are a whole range of high priority actions which are to be taken within three years. Some of them are ongoing actions which will last for 10 years. Medium priority actions are to be taken within five years. Some of those are ongoing, but not all of them. I have found nine high priority actions which should be undertaken within three years, so it would have been completed by 2024. How many of those have been completed?

**Ms Orr:** I might go to Mr Burkevics to take this one, noting that, for the time period you have indicated, I was not the minister, so perhaps I do not have the best working knowledge of what happened at that time.

**Mr Burkevics:** Thank you, Mr Emerson, for the question. Reserve management plans are the responsibility of the Minister for City and Government Services, Minister Cheyne, under the administrative arrangements. Questions in relation to parks operations are best directed to Minister Cheyne.

**MR EMERSON:** This entire plan sits outside the remit of this hearing?

**Ms Orr:** Mr Ponton or Mr Burkevics, maybe you could run through it, because there is a little bit of a division within the administrative orders, as to what sits with me and what sits with Minister Cheyne, how the two relate and how we work together to deliver the whole—

**Mr Burkevics:** Yes, of course. The administrative arrangements separate some functions under the Nature Conservation Act, particularly in relation to the reserve management plans and the Parks and Conservation Service. Essentially, an easy way to consider it is that Parks and Conservation Service operations and the plans that guide those operations fall under the responsibility of the Minister for City and Government Services. Policy-type elements relating to broader biodiversity and other functions of the Nature Conservation Act fall under Minister Orr. Of course, they work in well, noting that the Parks and Conservation Service forms part of the group of which I am executive group manager, so there is a very tight relationship between policy and operations in relation to the delivery of that plan.

**MR EMERSON:** On the policy side of things, there is no input from the minister for environment that is relevant to what we are here to discuss today?

**Mr Burkevics:** From what I hear—

**Ms Orr:** I do not think that is quite the same question as what you originally asked, Mr Emerson.

**Mr Burkevics:** I am hearing a question about some priorities within the plan and how they are being delivered.

**MR EMERSON:** Yes.

**Mr Burkevics:** That is an operational question for the Parks and Conservation Service.

**MR EMERSON:** I am asking whether you play a role in checking in and saying, “How are our nature parks going,” where all the environmental conservation happens. Is there a back-and-forth relationship there in terms of reporting and monitoring the effectiveness of that plan?

**Mr Burkevics:** Absolutely. I would like to say that there is a very integrated approach. One of the provisions of the act requires, under the act, a review of the plan to be presented every five years, and a complete review after 10 years. There are a number of reserve management plans that have reached their 10-year milestone at the moment and that are under review. We do have two of those that are proceeding for community consultation, which is a requirement of the act—Tidbinbilla, as well as the Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

Canberra Nature Park still has a bit of time to go before the formal review. However, it is fair to say that the conservation areas within my group do take a significant role in the annual reporting of our conservation activities. They are reported through the annual report. It is a very integrated approach. Specific questions around elements of the plan do fall under Minister Cheyne.

**Ms Orr:** Ms Castley has an update on the elusive table. I think she has a clearer reference to the table. We could take that and keep looking at it, while we finish Mr Emerson’s line of inquiry.

**THE CHAIR:** I think we are ready for Ms Castley.

**MS CASTLEY:** Could you please table every ceasing program in environment and sustainability, including a profile of expenditure and employment over the forwards?

**Mr Rutledge:** Sure. I will take that on notice, and we will provide that on notice.

**MS CASTLEY:** Great; thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a question on offsets. Page 107 of the annual report says, in response to the Planning Bill inquiry, that the government has completed a review of the offsets policy and is developing a new one, in line with engagement in the federal government’s Nature Positive reforms. Of course, the federal government’s Nature Positive reforms have now been shelved, so we are in a different world now from when that was written. Can you tell me what were the main findings of that offsets policy review?

**Mr Rutledge:** Thanks, Ms Clay, for the question. There is a bit of commentary there. With the review of the offsets policy, basically, we found that it did a jurisdictional comparison. We found that, with offsets management and offsets identification, because of the shared nature of commonwealth responsibilities, territory responsibilities and those of the proponents, there was not a best model anywhere. It looked at the way that we manage them in the territory, because offsets normally get managed by Parks and Conservation, with commonwealth oversight. The planning authority also provides additional oversight.



With respect to where the offsets policy came to, it came to governance solutions rather than offset management solutions. That review, I am unhappy to say, probably did not land where we thought it would. We were working with the commonwealth government—whilst you say that the policy has been shelved, we would say that it had been delayed—to see if there was going to be greater clarity out of that, under the Nature Positive ambition of the commonwealth government.

We are still reviewing the offsets policy. We have not developed a new offsets policy. We have done a review, and the review has highlighted the current status, but it did not give us a clear enough picture of where to go next. We still have some policy development work to do.

If there is no further movement in the Nature Positive agenda at the commonwealth level, we can bring forward the work that we were doing in the offsets policy. We do not want to rush ahead, in case the Nature Positive agenda does get legs, and we would want to incorporate that into our offsets policy. But we also do not want to have a renewed offsets policy when we know that the current arrangements are not functioning as well as they should.

Having said that, since that time, we have made changes to the way we govern offsets. We have changed our committee structure; we have changed the people that have the oversight of our offsets management. We have made some governance changes, but we have not nailed the policy yet.

**THE CHAIR:** I deeply share your hopes that it is a mere delay. Have you tabled the review that you have done? Can we have that tabled?

**Ms Orr:** Ms Clay, when you say that it has been done, I think it is still part of an ongoing process. Until the whole consideration is complete, it would be a little bit odd to start tabling documents, or a component of it. Mr Rutledge was nodding when I was talking; he might have something to add.

**Mr Rutledge:** I will take on notice the publication status. As I say, if you are looking for a new policy, I do not think that will be revealed. We would have the consultant's report that we did. When I say "consultant", it was the university that did it. I will remind myself of whether or not we have published that. If we have not, we will consider whether we will publish it. We would be taking that alongside a new offsets policy for government consideration, so I will weigh that up as well, Ms Clay.

**THE CHAIR:** I am happy to have that taken on notice. You noted that the work conducted on offsets was looking at governance. What insights did the review provide about making offset decisions part of the planning portfolio rather than part of the environmental nature portfolio?

**Mr Rutledge:** I can share that insight with you. The insight was that they believed that the planning portfolio was the right space for it. It was well tested. The thought, with offsets remaining as part of the planning portfolio, was that you are offsetting for environmental damage done as a result of development. Therefore, it was better to embed it in the planning portfolio rather than the environment portfolio. But with the

issue as to who is best to manage it, Parks and Conservation was seen to be the best land manager to do it. It was about making sure that we had the right checks and balances, and we were able to report to the commonwealth our offsets management.

**Ms Orr:** It is still to go before cabinet and government for consideration and endorsement of any advised approach. So bear with Mr Rutledge, as he tries to navigate answering your questions without pre-empting government decisions that have not been made yet.

**THE CHAIR:** Always, Minister. We do know, from previous work from the Nature Conservation Act review, that that review suggested that offsets policy should sit within nature conservation. That was obviously engaged with that recommendation?

**Mr Rutledge:** Maybe I misspoke. The requirement on the offsets policy is for the environment minister to do it, but the review found that it was best served when it was embedded within the planning legislation. That was what the review said.

**THE CHAIR:** Embedded within the planning legislation. It is okay if you cannot answer this question: does that mean embedded within the planning legislation as a decision for the environment minister or the planning minister?

**Ms Orr:** I think that is the decision for government—

**Mr Rutledge:** That is for further discussion.

**THE CHAIR:** That is fine. Can you tell me the timeline for this offsets work and whether there will be public consultation as part of it?

**Ms Orr:** Given that we are waiting to see, partly, what happens in the federal sphere, again, Ms Clay, it would be a bit hard for us to pre-empt it, given all the uncertainty that is currently there.

**THE CHAIR:** It is a question that we should put after the federal election?

**Ms Orr:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Would there be public consultation at some point? I would assume government usually does public consultation.

**Ms Orr:** Sorry, public consultation on—

**THE CHAIR:** Public consultation on government policy on offsets: is that likely to be something you would include?

**Ms Orr:** When government has been given the full advice, and when the officials have worked through all the issues and we get certainty from the commonwealth as to where they are going, and they can advise us on the best way forward, I would expect part of that advice would come forward with the best ways to consult and communicate with the community. But those decisions have not been made. Other than to tell you that, certainly, it will form part of the advice that comes to us and decisions that would be

there, it would be a bit premature to say to you what those would be.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. I will pass over to Ms Carrick.

**MS CARRICK:** My question is about the club building energy efficiency fund. Could you very briefly tell me what that is and whether big clubs get funding under this program?

**Mr Rutledge:** Yes, it is now with us. It used to be in the gaming portfolio. I will ask Ms Malouf to give us an update on that. Basically, as the name suggests, it is about doing an assessment. The clubs come forward; we do an assessment of their energy efficiency and their energy use, and we map out a plan for how they might be able to improve that. The additional part of the program is about whether or not we think they could be used in future smoke incidents, as a refuge site. We put together a plan of works that they could undertake. If they undertake some of those works, we do some co-funding. Ms Malouf is more across this program than I am.

**Ms Malouf:** This program is available to all clubs with a gaming licence. It is considered as a C-class licence. The program offers a capped rebate of \$100,000, with a program contribution of 75 per cent for small to medium clubs and 33 per cent for larger clubs. Basically, there is a larger investment opportunity for smaller clubs and a bigger co-contribution from the larger clubs.

**MS CARRICK:** Does that mean the clubs can receive \$100,000 but they would have to co-contribute \$66,000 or \$33,000?

**Ms Malouf:** Yes. With the total amount, that is the cap; the \$100,000 is the total amount of the rebate that they are allowed to access.

**MS CARRICK:** I wonder, with some of the very big clubs, when they are in fact developers, whether they need government funding.

**Ms Orr:** That is asking Ms Malouf for an expression of opinion.

**MS CARRICK:** Fair enough; thank you.

**MS TOUGH:** I am interested in flood studies. Could you please provide some detail on the program of flood studies being conducted throughout Tuggeranong and other areas of the territory?

**Ms Orr:** Ms Tough, that is in the planning portfolio.

**MS TOUGH:** I am interested in finding out how the ACT natural resource management team cooperates with other government agencies, and delivers and partners with the broader ACT and regional community to deliver its program.

**Ms Orr:** Mr Burkevics is very keen to answer your question.

**Mr Burkevics:** Can I credit the NRM team for the wonderful work that they do. Of course, the NRM team has been successful in a large tender from the Australian

government in relation to the regional development partners program. That is worth a healthy several million dollars worth of investment in the ACT's land.

The NRM team do some great work in engaging with the ACT community, as well as supporting the overall operations of our conservation environmental efforts. Some work that they did last year to strengthen the governance and community engagement was to establish the NRM Advisory Council. I think that has proved highly successful in ensuring we have an engaged approach with the community with regard to NRM activities.

I have been particularly pleased, in my capacity as conservator, that the NRM tends to have a very heavy focus at the moment on protection of environmental values of rural land—working very closely with our rural communities with regard to not only environmental-type programs, farming programs, but to enhance and assist our rural lessees to protect the environmental values that exist on their land.

A really exciting project that they have stood up recently is the Ngunnawal works crew program. That has employed four Ngunnawal employees through a First Nations-owned business. It is gender-balanced employment of people between 18 and 27 years old, and it is to undertake work across the ACT in environmental matters—restoration projects.

Some areas of that Ngunnawal works team have supported the Gula, koala, monitoring, box gum woodland restoration project, urban volunteer groups, weed control efforts—of course, there is no shortage of those—and weed control along the Murrumbidgee River corridor. Later on, in May, from memory, the NRM team are delivering a regenerative farming event that will provide a wide range of sustainable farming techniques and education, and they are always very well received.

In closing, the NRM team work very closely with not only our rural lessees but Landcare and our catchment groups—again, volunteer based—to assist and program coordinate a lot of funding that those groups get. I hope that is a comprehensive answer on that.

**MS TOUGH:** It is. You said that the regenerative farming expo is in May. Is that advertised to all the rural landholders?

**Mr Burkevics:** Yes, it will be. We are working through the arrangements, through our colleagues in comms, around the promotion of that. There will no doubt be some very useful information on that distributed through websites and other means. I expect that to be made imminently, noting that I have just signed off the request for a comms plan for it.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Page 52 of the annual report talks about strategic indicator 2.1, improvement to ecosystem conditions. I am interested in terms of what appears, on the surface, to be a decline in the score since 2019. I applaud the addition of two additional ecosystem assessments, but why does the addition of those not preclude there being an actual decline in the scores?

**Mr Burkevics:** It would be appropriate to invite Dr Cooney, to explain some of the

monitoring and how that process works; and, in particular, the addition of the other ecosystems and how that has influenced some of the data. On face value, as you have indicated, it does indicate a decline. I will ask Dr Cooney to explain the program as it has been and as it is, moving forward.

**Dr Cooney:** I have read and understood the witness statement. The apparent decline in ecosystem condition is due, largely, not to the decline of the ecosystems which have been repeatedly reported in that indicator, but primarily to the addition of the high country bogs and fens. Those bogs were almost completely burnt in the 2020 Orroral Valley fire, and they were at that stage in a very poor condition. That pushed the overall metric downwards.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Is the metric almost an average across all of those different—

**Dr Cooney:** Yes. We are working on improving indicators of ecosystem condition at the moment. Within the next 12 months or so, I hope that we will be able to offer a much more rounded and nuanced picture of ecosystem condition, because there are some weaknesses in what is available at the moment.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Would you be able to provide a score per ecosystem so that we can break it down?

**Dr Cooney:** Yes. In fact those are available online, I believe. If you follow the links in the wellbeing indicator dashboard online, you can see the breakdown of those more specifically.

**MR BRADDOCK:** The report also says that there were no assessments completed in 2021-22 and 2023-24. Can you please explain why there were no assessments completed then?

**Dr Cooney:** Primarily, because these assessments take a really long time. This is a whole new condition assessment program. It requires the pulling together of a whole lot of data sources from across the whole organisation and across citizen science and community groups. In that process of doing each of these for the first time, it was found that a lot of the data was in very poor condition; it needed a huge investment of effort in data cleaning, data management and standardising the way the data was presented, to allow those comparisons and evaluations to be made.

**MR BRADDOCK:** Can you please, on notice, provide a schedule of when the assessments will be completed for each of those ecosystems, going forward?

**Dr Cooney:** Yes, we certainly can.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Page 86 of the report says that there is a decline in long-term monitoring sites for the Canberra earless dragon. I recall that there was some funding in the large budget to implement emergency actions. Funding was grouped with a few other initiatives. There was \$823,000 for this year and \$1.7 million over the forwards. Could you please provide a breakdown of that funding?

**Mr Burkevics:** Yes. Would you like some information on general activities? For a

specific breakdown, we would need to take it on notice.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Probably a breakdown of the funding associated with emergency actions.

**Mr Burkevics:** The various activities—

**Ms Orr:** Miss Nuttall, is this because the budget has grouped a number of things together and you are trying to understand what specifically went to earless dragon interventions?

**MISS NUTTALL:** Yes; indeed.

**Mr Burkevics:** We will take that on notice.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Thank you. Is there any information you can share right now about what those emergency actions are and what has been happening?

**Mr Burkevics:** We sure can. I might hand over to Dr Cooney. Of course, the Canberra grassland earless dragon is critically endangered. It is one of the species in the ACT that I and the team are most concerned about. We know that it has very limited remaining habitat which is under a variety of threats. We are still developing our knowledge base. However, some of the actions that have been funded in past budgets are proving successful. Our breeding campaigns and our expanding knowledge give us greater awareness of how to establish artificial habitats to support breeding. Dr Cooney will have great information.

**Ms Orr:** Before Dr Cooney jumps in with all the detail, I can add a little bit to this. I have actually been briefed quite a lot on this, and, given the cuteness of the earless dragon, while my office has no bias, I think it is fair to say that we have become quite excited by this particular species. What I have become quite aware of is that our understanding of this species is, it is fair to say, nowhere near as comprehensive as it is for more well-known species. There is still a lot of learning to be had as we direct recovery effort towards it. I have been really impressed from what I have seen. The genuine passion of the conservatists working on this is starting to unlock some of the answers, and they are going to continue to work through that.

I will let Dr Cooney run through a lot of the detail. It is very much within the context of there not being a specific solution; it is about working with the information we have towards the best we can do at this point and continuing to learn so we can improve on the response.

**Dr Cooney:** There are maybe a few questions bundled up there. The emergency funding itself for GEDs is to just fund a coordinator position. It is to establish a dedicated position for the first time to pull together the multiple teams and streams of thinking necessary to actually establish and run the breeding colony, expand it, do genetic analysis, coordinate a whole range of stakeholders, because the species occurs on a range of tenures, and continue carrying out trial transfers. The species has undergone a trial reintroduction to a certain site and that has gone very well. All the signs are that it is possible to reintroduce the species. That work is building on years of research and

commitment try to recover the species, which has undergone an unanticipated and really severe decline in the ACT and neighbouring areas.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In view of the funding and the emergency actions, have we changed or increased our monitoring at all?

**Dr Cooney:** We have been doing monitoring at all GED sites for probably 20 years. With the support of the Commonwealth, we are undertaking work—it is just beginning—to survey using new methods, including specialist detection sniffer-dogs, to see whether there could be any other populations. This is driven by the Victorian experience which rediscovered their local form of grassland earless dragon after about 40 years. It was thought to be completely extinct. So there may still be some hope that there are other populations around.

**Ms Orr:** Before anyone gets too excited that we might have the same experience as Victoria, I might expectations manage a little bit and say that, while Victoria was very privileged to have that experience, it is not common to find species that have disappeared and then pop back up again. So, while we are quite happy to do the mapping and take the additional information that will come from that, we are cautiously approaching the potential that there could be more sites. We have not found them.

**MISS NUTTALL:** We can only hope and manifest. I understand that some of the highest quality earless dragon habitat and monitoring sites are on rural farmlands. Is that correct?

**Dr Cooney:** There are a couple of sites on rural leases.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Do you mind me asking how you are engaging with those farmers around the management of those areas?

**Dr Cooney:** I would need to hand that question over as a PCS question.

**Mr Burkevics:** Thanks, Rosie. The land management agreements provide very specific guidance to rural lessees on joint responsibilities for land management. But, in relation to the Canberra grassland earless dragon, conservation officials on the ground have very close and effective working relationships with those rural lessees on a day-to-day basis to ensure they are protected. Our knowledge and ability with regard to that species continues to grow.

**MISS NUTTALL:** You have already touched on this: what sort of support and compensation is provided to them to ensure optimal management? Is there any sort of compensation provided for the management of these sites?

**Mr Burkevics:** Primarily the use of environmental grants is the mechanism that is used to support applicants with regard to their environmental objectives. All of those are published online. I have no doubt that there is in-kind assistance provided by conservation officials in terms of advice, and potentially some minor resources as well. There is a range of mechanisms, but, at the moment, compensation for species is not an option available.

**MISS NUTTALL:** What legal habitat protection mechanisms do those areas have?

**Mr Burkevics:** They are rural leases that are formed under the Planning Act. There is no provision of the Nature Conservation Act that applies, other than the normal provisions that apply to a threatened species. At a lease level, rather than the LMAs, which are Planning Act matters, the usual Nature Conservation Act requirements apply at a species level.

**Mr Rutledge:** Just before we leave the topic, the specific funding for the emergency action was \$348,000 over two years.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Thank you.

**MS CASTLEY:** Am I correct in understanding this? You would identify that there was an earless dragon on a farm. Then they would have to plot out land to protect it, but the only way to get compensation to help with that and the management of that is through applying for a grant. Is that correct?

**Mr Burkevics:** It all depends on the circumstance. If a threatened species is detected and conservation measures are required, there will be a discussion about the best approach to undertake that. A range of measures is regularly used, as I mentioned, through grants, in-kind support et cetera. If we are talking about compensation, that would mean there has been a loss somewhere, and that is not something I have typically identified.

**MS CASTLEY:** Not compensation but money to manage what they need to manage, at the cost to the farm, now that the threatened species has been identified. That is a comment rather than a question.

**Ms Orr:** Chair, we answered Miss Nuttall's question that we said we would take on notice, and she said she is satisfied, so can we just confirm we will not take that on notice anymore?

**THE CHAIR:** Which question has been removed from notice? James has it. Excellent.

**MS CASTLEY:** A private snake catcher recently captured 301 snakes, highlighting the scale of the issue here in Canberra. Unlike dangerous dogs, for which there are dedicated resources, there is no government employed snake catcher or adequately trained ranger—that is my understanding—despite residents paying rates for these essential services. Could someone explain why there is no government supported snake management service despite the crucial role?

**Ms Orr:** I might get the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to answer this question.

**Mr Burkevics:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Ms Castley. As you would be aware, the matter of snakes was scrutinised quite well by the previous Assembly. There is quite a bit of information online in response to a motion and a petition on the position. The regulation of snakes occurs under the Nature Conservation Act. It is a requirement of the conservator, who has developed guidelines for exempt animals. I think the situation that you mentioned relates to an individual snake catcher who is attracting quite a bit



of interest in relation to their activities and calls for help. They are business decisions that have been made by that operator. What I can confirm is that there are five licences that cover 17 people in relation to snake catching, so there are other businesses and people who have the capacity, the authorisations, the licensing and the training to undertake snake catching activities. I am sure that, if an individual operator were struggling to deal with the workload and other commitments, other businesses and people would be happy to receive referrals.

The ACT government has emergency snake relocation capability, but it is a function that has been made available to the private sector. From the discussions that I have had with the businesses, and through work in assisting the government with the petition and motion last year, I certainly identified that there was no appetite for the government to take that back, because of the business opportunities that it provides. Of course, there is also a range of pest animal businesses. Should they decide to consider snake relocation avenues for their business, they could put in a licence application. I note that one challenge for some of these businesses is that snakes hibernate in winter. It is busy in summer and quieter in winter, which is a challenge for some of those businesses, but they evolve and adapt their business model accordingly. If a particular business that is licensed under the ACT's arrangements is having any difficulty, then I would certainly encourage them to reach out to my office and we would be willing to assist.

**MS CASTLEY:** How many businesses are available to collect snakes?

**Mr Burkevics:** There are five licences and they cover 17 people qualified to undertake snake relocations.

**MS CASTLEY:** Are you aware that all 17 are actually out collecting snakes?

**Mr Burkevics:** What I am aware of is that all 17 people are equipped to do that function. How they make business decisions and what they do is a matter for them. But I know that, in our consultations—

**MS CASTLEY:** They are doing it for free. It is not a business decision. They are doing it for free, because the government has not provided any cash to help them, even though it was raised last term.

**Mr Burkevics:** If they are doing it for free, that is a business decision for each of the individual businesses—

**MS CASTLEY:** It is about community safety. Why is the government not helping them with this?

**Mr Burkevics:** I am not aware that all of them are doing it for free. I would be surprised if they could maintain that.

**MS CASTLEY:** They cannot maintain it. They are doing it for community safety, because there is not enough of them. I am wondering why the government made a decision to not do more.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Castley, if you could ask a question and get the answer and then ask

another a question, we will track better.

**MS CASTLEY:** Sure.

**Mr Burkevics:** There was strong interest from the community that the licensing arrangements that were previously undertaken only by government were made available to the private sector. That has been undertaken. There are guidelines that guide me, as Conservator, in the allocation of those licences. As I mentioned, if a particular business is having difficulty with regard to their business activities, they are welcome to contact my office at any time.

**MS CASTLEY:** Great. Thanks.

**MR EMERSON:** I have a question about Indigenous protected areas which were first established in 1997. These areas of country are managed by First Nations groups in accordance with traditional owners' objectives and they deliver biodiversity conservation outcomes for the benefit of all of us through voluntary agreements with the federal government. Eighty-five IPAs have been established, covering almost 100 million hectares of country. Every other state and territory has successfully established multiple Indigenous protected areas. Why has the ACT not done so?

**Mr Burkevics:** I can make some opening remarks on that. The challenge has been that no native title has been confirmed in the ACT. I think it remains open, as who has the right, whilst the government does recognise Ngunnawal people as the traditional custodians. Native title is the ultimate law that would apply. I suspect that one of the challenges may be that there is a variety of views. That will require further consideration, moving forward.

**Ms Orr:** I could add to Mr Burkevics' comments. I think what Mr Burkevics intended to say was that the government recognises Ngunnawal people and all people and families with connection to this country. I just want to make sure that we are clear on that. Going to the native title issue, it is quite complex. We might be able to help you through my Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs portfolio. Mr Emerson, while I will not take it on notice, because I will have to get advice from the officials as to whether that is something they can bring forward—it is a Commonwealth matter—I am more than happy to follow up with you to see if there is any further information I am able to provide.

**MR EMERSON:** Thank you. I appreciate that. While we are in the environment portfolio and we have a few minutes to go, I understand the native title barrier, but has there been any active engagement on the part of the ACT government with any of our traditional custodians about plans to access it? I am conscious that we have a challenging budget situation, and \$231½ million of federal funding has been sitting there, for 2023 to 2028, so is this something we are actively pursuing or are we just saying that native title is an issue and we will not be pursuing it?

**Ms Orr:** Mr Emerson, we have two minutes left and there was quite a lot of commentary in that question. I think Mr Burkevics is jumping out of his skin to try to answer because this is an area in which he has been doing a lot of work and he is quite passionate about it.

**MR EMERSON:** That is fantastic. I am not here to give you a hard time. I am saying, “Let’s do it.”

**Ms Orr:** We can provide you with more info if we run out of time.

**Mr Burkevics:** Thanks, Mr Emerson. EPSDD, as a significant land manager of over 70 per cent of the ACT, works very closely with our traditional custodians in relation to land management activities. We have a standing committee, the Dhawura Ngunnawal Caring for Country Committee. That provides a mechanism for engagement on land management matters with the Ngunnawal people. We are undertaking a review of committee arrangements at the moment. We enjoy engagement with communities, including at community event days, where we consult on specific plans or programs. As I mentioned before, we have the Ngunnawal works crew and Ngunnawal cultural advisors that support a range of cultural restoration activities across the ACT. A significant investment and effort is ongoing with our traditional custodians and others with connection to the ACT, to protect, restore and enhance the ACT’s environment.

**MR EMERSON:** Great. Thank you. That is good to hear. Is establishing an IPA part of any of those conversations or will it be in this term of government?

**Ms Orr:** That is something that would potentially fall under my other portfolio. As I said, I am happy to work through those things.

**MR EMERSON:** It sounds like there is a lot of work happening in this portfolio on exactly that.

**Ms Orr:** There is and—

**MR EMERSON:** And there is a committee established for Caring for Country. It feels like this is the place for that question.

**Ms Orr:** There is, but your question is about a different agreement. Let me ask the relevant officials and I can come back to you with the information I can give, as I have already said.

**THE CHAIR:** Would you like to take that on notice, Minister?

**MR EMERSON:** Whether establishing an IPA is part of that Caring for Country Committee. Could that be part of its remit or is it something that has been discussed in that group?

**Ms Orr:** If it is for the Caring for Country Committee—yes.

**MR EMERSON:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** You will take it on notice?

**Ms Orr:** No. The question was under the Caring for Country program specifically, so Mr Burkevics can answer that.

**Mr Burkevics:** My response would be that I think it could be. I would not want to speculate on any future discussions of the committee or, certainly, the members involved.

**MR EMERSON:** Okay. Thank you for your work.

**THE CHAIR:** We have come to the end of our time, unfortunately. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. We have had a few questions taken on notice, so please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*.

**Hearing suspended from 2.00 to 3.50 pm.**

Appearances:

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

Transport Canberra and City Services

Pryce, Mr David, Director-General

Iglesias, Mr Daniel, Executive Branch Manager, City Presentation

**THE CHAIR:** 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. In this session the committee will hear from the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

We are recording and transcribing our proceedings today. If you take a question on notice, please say, "I will take that question on notice." I remind you of the obligations afforded by parliamentary privilege. Witnesses must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. The first time you speak, please confirm that you have read, understand and agree with that statement.

We are not having opening statements, so we will proceed straight to questions. Minister, I want to ask about sports facilities management data. Some of our sports organisations find it a little tricky to work out long term who is using which facility around Canberra. It would be great if they could get easier and simpler access. How should organisations go about getting information about who is using which sports facility?

**Ms Berry:** I am not clear on why—

**THE CHAIR:** Sporting organisations who wish to use sports facilities.

**Ms Berry:** They want to find out when it is available?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. What is the best way for sporting organisations to find out which sports facilities are available and when?

**Ms Berry:** So it is not to find out who is using them; it is about access to fields?

**THE CHAIR:** To find out the availability. It is not to find out private information about other people; it is just to find out when they can access sports facilities.

**Ms Berry:** If you have been contacted by anyone who is confused about some of the process, please put them in touch with us and we can direct them to the right area. I will hand over to Mr Iglesias.

**Mr Iglesias:** I acknowledge the privilege statement.

**Ms Berry:** I am sorry; I did not do that. I acknowledge and understand the privilege statement.

**Mr Iglesias:** Twice a year, we meet with peak bodies—at the beginning of the winter season and at the beginning of the summer season. One of the main purposes of that meeting is to be clear about, generally speaking, which sports use which facilities. There is a long history of some sports using certain sportsgrounds. Generally speaking, we like to honour that. When new sports come into the equation, when sports grow or when some sports wane, there is this requirement to put all cards on the table, look again at the facilities and say, “Okay, who can we accommodate where?”

Often, particular clubs are associated with particular regions, and we accommodate that as best we can. But at any given point in time, there is an open line of communication with peak bodies. If there are concerns around the spread of facilities, where they are going to and when they are going to, we are always open to having a discussion. In my experience, we have been able to accommodate almost everyone.

**THE CHAIR:** That is great to hear, Mr Iglesias. Is there publicly available information anywhere or do people have to lodge a query and find out?

**Mr Iglesias:** I do not believe that we document which ovals are being used by which federations. I would have to double-check, to be totally sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Berry:** They can certainly, when they are booking a sports field, look online at the booking system and identify a sports field or area that might be suitable for them. If it is just the field that they need, they book the field. If they need lights or a pavilion, they book those as well.

**Mr Iglesias:** The minister is absolutely right. We run a booking system which all of the federations have access to. It gives them all the information they need as to availability. It may not reflect back who has it, if it is not available, but it certainly outlines what options they have on any given weekend.

**THE CHAIR:** They go to the government website to book that?

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. We sometimes get queries; I had one recently at the Hawker softball area—

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** You are probably familiar with it—where a couple of sporting groups would like to share the space. They think that they could suitably share the space, but they are having a little bit of trouble getting assistance to make some simple upgrades for that. How can that kind of request be processed? I think in this case it was croquet.

**Ms Berry:** It is softball and croquet. They have been in contact with us, and we are talking with them about the suitability of the site—whether or not it is suitable. There are some challenges with the areas that they want to use. Drainage is one.

**Mr Iglesias:** That is exactly right.

**Ms Berry:** There are probably other things that are wrong, too. We will work with them and find somewhere for them.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that work ongoing at the moment?

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** In that particular case, there are two groups who would love to share the space. It would be excellent if we could land a solution that allows that.

**Ms Berry:** It might not be that space, but, if we can, if that is the site that works for them, we will work with them, as we do with all sports, to try to accommodate them.

**THE CHAIR:** I am certain that, if they are accommodated elsewhere, they would also be happy with that. We do encourage our constituents to come up with solutions where they can. I will hand over to Ms Carrick.

**MS CARRICK:** My question is around toilets and lighting. I have had sporting groups say to me that, if there was more lighting, they could run more training. What is the impediment to having more lighting at the playing fields?

**Ms Berry:** We have been doing a significant program of work to put more lighting—match-play lighting, not just training lighting—across our sports fields. That gives sports the opportunity to utilise the fields for competition at night as well, and maybe not just for training. It also helps with adapting to climate change. As the weather gets warmer, utilising the fields at night can sometimes be a little bit more comfortable for players and spectators. We have just updated the lights at Hawker to lux, so competition play will now be able to be done there. That will make a huge difference. It is much more energy efficient for us as well, as a government, in managing that. It is also better lighting.

Part of our female-friendly upgrades across our pavilions is about improving lighting so that women feel safer playing sports. That is what we were told when we talked to women about what they wanted the government to do to remove barriers for them to be able to play sport. Lighting was one that they raised with us. I might hand over to Mr Iglesias to talk about some of the lighting that we have been doing more recently.

**Mr Iglesias:** Certainly. In the next couple of months we will complete lighting upgrades at Stirling Oval and Waramanga Oval. There is a long history of upgrading lighting at a number of our most highly used ovals. We tend to look at use levels to help us to decide, “How do we invest? Where do we put some lights in?” It is not only about adding new lights; as the minister mentioned, it is about upgrading the intensity of the lighting, which makes it useful not only for practice but for game play.

When groups book their particular oval, they have the option of booking it a little bit before, and specifying, “Lights on, please.” We will also keep the lights on a little bit after training or match play is completed, so that we can assist with safety. We are very

flexible on that.

It is a matter of diverting resources to where we can get the best bang for buck in relation to lighting. We would like to have lights on all ovals, but it is a process of deployment of the upgrades.

**MS CARRICK:** Is there a schedule for the rollout of the upgrades?

**Mr Iglesias:** We have a good feel for the ovals that could do with lighting. Every year we put a couple up for upgrading or for installation of new lights. That is an ongoing process. It is a continual process, because even the lit ovals benefit from upgrades, as well as technology improvements and energy efficiency improvements.

**MS CARRICK:** Do the clubs at the playing fields know? Is there a schedule and they know that it will come up in six months or 12 months?

**Mr Iglesias:** In relation to the upgrades?

**MS CARRICK:** Yes.

**Mr Iglesias:** Not specifically. If the clubs feel strongly about lighting on particular ovals, they will let us know. We will have a discussion and say, "Let's have a look at how this oval is being used." We might say, "Hang on a minute, just next door we already have lights, and that oval is available; think about that." It is one of the things on which we will often engage with clubs, and try to help them, where they have a need for night-time play or night-time training, even if their local oval may not be fitted out.

**MS CARRICK:** With those same playing fields, we spoke about the upgrades to the toilets and the female change rooms. Is there a schedule for that rollout? Some of them are pretty old and pretty—

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes, you can say that. Our intention is to work through all of our pavilions to upgrade them. Over time, we will get there. We have made really good progress. Over 30 have been upgraded. We will continue to go through—

**MS CARRICK:** Do you know how many you have to do? Thirty out of how many?

**Mr Iglesias:** I could not tell you off the top of my head. I would have to take that question on notice.

**MS TOUGH:** Last month, as part of routine maintenance work, Gordon Oval was treated with topsoil that was contaminated with hazardous materials, including bits of glass, metal and wood. Since then, the oval has been remediated and reopened. Can you explain what happened and what remediation works have been undertaken?

**Mr Iglesias:** As part of our normal maintenance program, Gordon Oval was scheduled to have some compost spread over the surface. We find that, from time to time, when we deploy compost, the sportsground loves it. It responds positively, and we get better grass growth.



This particular delivery was contaminated with all sorts of foreign materials, such as rocks. We discovered it really quickly and we got hold of the contractor pretty quickly. Quite obviously, there was a failure in their industrial process, because we did not order rocks, glass and all sorts of stuff like that. It was something to do with the way the material was sorted and sieved through their system. In any case, we were able to quickly close the oval, initially, and think creatively, by deploying a street sweeper machine, which was able to go over the oval without damaging the oval, and pick up all the foreign material.

The interesting thing is that, with all the rain that we have been having, the more rain we get, it exposes a little bit more of the foreign material. You can imagine that the compost has dirt over it. We cannot see any more foreign material. We think we have cleaned it, but when it rains, it seeps the good stuff into the soil and exposes the foreign material.

As recently as this week, we have been working onsite and, if we can get a dry spell, in order to deploy the machine, we will go over it again. We are optimistic that we will be close to remediating it. We may need to do a couple of deployments, to make sure that everything comes off. The risk to the user is far less than it was. We have got most of the material. There still might be some tiny fragments in there. We are advising people to wear footwear and we are diverting match play until we can be sure that we have it all off.

**MS TOUGH:** Who is responsible for the cost of the remediation works?

**Mr Iglesias:** We had a discussion with the supplier. They have been very sympathetic to our plight, and they will meet the cost of the majority of the remediation.

**MS TOUGH:** Have any other sites been affected?

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes. In November, we also deployed exactly the same material, from exactly the same supplier, at Mawson. We heard nothing and noticed nothing. With an abundance of caution, we checked, and we have found that it is a different story at Mawson. There is some foreign material, but it is nowhere near what it was at Gordon. It is not a concern for us. By deploying lime, we were able to dissolve the foreign material. Believe it or not, it was oyster shells—tiny fragments of the stuff. By deploying lime, we dissolved it, and the soil got a feed of lime.

**MS TOUGH:** Do you know whether the contractors are putting anything in place so that this does not happen with further deliveries across Canberra?

**Mr Iglesias:** I believe that, in discussions with WorkSafe, that came up. I imagine that would have been a consideration that would have been discussed. It has not been specifically discussed with our team.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In the last session, with CMTEDD sports and recreation, we discussed long-term facilities management planning for sports and recreation in the ACT. They mentioned a facilities audit, and that is pretty exciting. Can you please tell me a little bit more about the audit?

**Mr Iglesias:** As you can imagine, with well over 100 sports fields, and many more ovals—444 hectares of ovals under management—we have lots of assets. It is not just the ovals; if you think of your normal neighbourhood oval, you can think of all sorts of ancillary assets that form a part of the local neighbourhood oval. Whilst we have a good inventory, it is timely for us to go back, oval by oval, and undertake a complete audit of what is there.

That will do a number of things for us. For starters, it will give us a better hold of our assets. It also gives an indication of the age and condition of a lot of our assets. It will identify any risks that we might have to deal with. Whilst we have a good handle on risk, this audit will give us yet another level of check, if you like.

It will also put us in a better position to engage with the clubs and have a discussion around options for investment in the future. It is not just government investment; often clubs will come to us with dollars that they are willing to invest, and it puts us in a better position to be able intelligently to propose upgrades and options that they might be able to make use of.

We are committed to doing that in the first half of this year. Literally, it will take one, possibly two, of our staff going out to every oval and eyeballing each oval. We have some staff members that have been around for a long time and know the ovals really well. We think we will be in a much better position once we have done that audit.

**MISS NUTTALL:** That is encouraging to hear. When you are visiting ovals, will you also be chatting with the community groups that use each oval, as you go through?

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes. Once we have undertaken the audit—and potentially prior to—we would engage with the peak groups and make them aware that we have this in mind. There may be instances where particular groups might want to meet our staff onsite. That can be accommodated.

**MISS NUTTALL:** That is great to hear. Is this audit just for ovals and ancillary things like pavilions on the ovals?

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes.

**MISS NUTTALL:** What about the ACT government's indoor facilities and the ones that they totally operate? Will they be getting audited any time soon?

**Mr Iglesias:** Our responsibility is just for the sportsgrounds. Gungahlin enclosed oval, for example, would fall within the scope, as would Greenway enclosed oval. But, for example, the basketball centre—

**Ms Berry:** We do not own that. Property Group might own some facilities that have sports activities in them. I do not think we have anything else, other than—

**MISS NUTTALL:** It probably paints a good picture for outdoor sports. But, yes, I would be interested to hear if there is anything happening.

Can you anticipate that, once the oval or the information is complete, it might perhaps

factor into a hypothetical sports facilities management plan? Or is that too hard to tackle? It is okay if it is.

**Mr Iglesias:** We have an urban open space land management plan. From pages 38 to 41, you can learn all about sportsgrounds, and it stipulates the key strategic outcomes we want out of the sportsgrounds. What we tend to find works really well is that, on a year-by-year basis, our team produces yearly plans for what they are going to deliver, which is consistent with the strategic plan. So, while we might not have a management plan just for sportsgrounds, we do have a management plan already that articulates the guiding principles for sportsgrounds: what we want to get out of them; what sorts of uses we think are appropriate; what can happen; what cannot happen; and why they are located where they are located. It is the sort of stuff that you would expect in a management plan.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Beautiful. I suppose the other part of that is the indicative need from sporting groups. Is that being assessed at the same time and compared? Forgive me for not having read the strategy. I am going to look it up after this.

**Mr Iglesias:** Sorry; what was the question?

**MISS NUTTALL:** Indicative need from sporting groups—like assessing the facilities you have, whether there is growing need in particular sports and things like that.

**Mr Iglesias:** I believe that might be—

**Ms Berry:** It might have been for the last session. The sportsgrounds team are very closely tied to the user groups. There are regular conversations with individuals within groups on sportsgrounds by the Sportsgrounds and Fields Management Team. For example, a club might say, for example, “We have some divots; can we have a pile of soil and we can fix it ourselves after each game?” During this audit, we will be able to identify some of the clubs that might not have that who could use it and were not aware of it.

**Mr Iglesias:** That sort of working relationship, oval by oval, has been built over a number of years. Just as a shout-out to our sportsgrounds staff: they are incredibly dedicated, and they take a lot of pride in maintaining sportsgrounds in a region where it is really hard to maintain sportsgrounds. Part of that is the fact that they have been able to make the connections that the minister is describing with the local clubs.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Yes, I have heard good feedback.

**MR EMERSON:** Did we get a timeline on the audit? Did you say this year?

**Mr Iglesias:** The first half of this year.

**MR EMERSON:** I suppose part of Miss Nuttall’s question was whether that information will then be handed over to Sport and Recreation as part of broader forward planning for sufficiency of sport facilities in the ACT. Will that be part of the audit, or is it just for you to be aware of what is available for your purposes?

**Ms Berry:** Everybody will be working together on that. While the maintenance teams will have a document, I suppose, Sport and Rec will be working with the maintenance team to understand that, as well, across the board.

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes, we will definitely share it with Bec's team.

**MR EMERSON:** I have one more follow-up on that. I do not imagine that dryland fields are included in that audit. It has been raised with me by a couple of different community organisations who are keen to partner in reactivating some dryland fields and would be happy to basically fund a whole bunch of development to use those fields. Is there any separate work going on? You said you have a strategy. You already know about where the fields are, but is that a piece of work that is a possibility of pursuing?

**Ms Berry:** We did do some work in the last couple of years on understanding our dryland ovals—many of which were switched off during the drought in 2003—

**Mr Iglesias:** Even in the late 90s.

**Ms Berry:** and then looking at them and seeing whether or not they meet the needs of Sport and Rec as a new sports field and sports pavilion et cetera; whether they were connected or owned by education and part of a school; or whether, as a dryland oval, they were more suitable in keeping as a more informal space but which could allow itself for opportunities for the community to engage in upgrading in a different kind of way that would not lead to formal sport. We have had that sort of work done at Florey, where the school has some more outdoor space on part of the dryland oval. That could be the case for other fields as well.

**MR EMERSON:** Okay.

**Ms Berry:** I do not know whether we have that. I will take on advice, because I think it would be useful for the committee to see that information on which fields are earmarked, I guess—

**MR EMERSON:** If they have been kind of categorised.

**Ms Berry:** For example, if you have a dryland oval that is only very small, it just does not lead to a very good, sustainable, viable outcome to put one little oval on it for formal sport, but it might lend itself to other things, like some outdoor rec park things. But a bigger space might lend itself in the future, when the need arises, to a double sports field that can hold a pavilion and actually cater to a bigger group of people. That is all identified. So I will get that to the committee as well. I am happy to share that. That will be useful for you, I think.

**MR EMERSON:** That would be great. I think some of the community organisations would love to see that, to be able to come forward and say, "This is something we want to contribute to?" Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I might just ask a supplementary on that. Minister, I was pleased last term when the Assembly passed my motion on exactly this, on dryland ovals, and agreed that government would consult with the community on all 31 dryland ovals,

beginning with Florey.

**Ms Berry:** No; we would consult if there was going to be a change to the dryland oval use from a dryland oval.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not believe that was the commitment. I believe the commitment was that the government would consult with the community on what to do with the dryland ovals and how to revitalise them—not turn back on the water, but how to refresh them and turn them into something useable again—beginning with Florey. Florey has now been completed. I think I have got some questions on notice, lodged. Can you bring back to the committee the update for the 31 dryland ovals?

**Ms Berry:** I do not think there is an update.

**Mr Iglesias:** It is the document you are thinking—

**Ms Berry:** Yes, that is it.

**THE CHAIR:** Excellent. Is the government still committed to do that work for all 31 dryland ovals? Mr Iglesias, might recognise the work I am talking about.

**Mr Iglesias:** The minister is right: there are three categories of dryland ovals. There are those dryland ovals that are potentially reactivated in the future and that are strategically important to be sportsgrounds in the future. There is a second category that is related to ovals that might be associated with schools. Then there is a third category, which I think might lend itself to what you are describing, where there is the capacity for, on the minister's okay, to repurpose for rewilding—in fact, for any number of community uses that might come up. Again, in the Urban Open Space Management Plan there is a commitment to look at those ovals and to be clear about which ones are candidates for repurposing. The reason all 31 are not on the table is that some of them might be reactivated in the future for sportsgrounds.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am sure you would be aware that a community campaign has emerged in opposition to the location of the new playing fields at Mount Stromlo. Has the government considered any other sites for the playing fields for the Molonglo community?

**Ms Berry:** That is probably the last session, too, but I can say that that site was selected a long time ago and consultation has occurred over a long period of time. I think it was 2014, but that is a long time ago. I accept that the community has not been involved in conversations more recently, but the team has committed to go out and consult again with the community about the site and the plan forward. We are very hopeful that we can bring the community on this journey with us and that they will be more supportive once we have gone back out and talked with, I guess, newer members of the community who were not involved in those initial conversations. But, initially, it was very positively received. We worked through some challenges on the site and with the bike track through Stromlo. But we understand that that has been a conversation that happened a while ago, so we are going to be doing those again.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Beautiful. Did you, at that point in 2014, or more recently now that the community has concerns, consider any other sites for playing fields in the Molonglo community?

**Ms Berry:** Not in that part, but certainly in our conversations with the Molonglo Valley development there have been active conversations around sports fields for that area. Stromlo was identified as an area where we were lacking facilities and that there was a real need there to be able to have formal sportsgrounds for people to be able to play on it. I was not sports minister in 2014. I think it was actually Shane. I have just been told that that is when it started. If I am wrong, we will correct that for the committee.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Is the current proposed site convenient for the community or for the University of Canberra?

**Ms Berry:** I think it is convenient for the community. I am not sure what the University of Canberra has to do with it. Did you say Stromlo?

**MISS NUTTALL:** Yes.

**Ms Berry:** It was identified well before the University of Canberra took over the management of Stromlo Park.

**MS CARRICK:** I have a supplementary on Forrest Park. Should it go ahead—whether or not it does, because there is a pool and the downhill bike tracks—will public transport be going to these facilities?

**Ms Berry:** You will have to ask the transport minister on the bus routes and things; sorry.

**MS CARRICK:** Fair enough. When we are planning where we put these things, assumedly they are accessible to people that do not have cars.

**Ms Berry:** You are asking for an opinion. But if you are asking me if there is a plan, you are best to ask—

**MS CARRICK:** Are you liaising with the transport directorate to have better accessibility to your playing fields?

**Mr Pryce:** It would be best that we do take it up with Minister Steel in the transport session. But, yes, we are connected as a directorate and we definitely think for our planning, particularly transport planning, to ensure accessibility to community and other facilities so that our community has greater amenity and can get to the places it needs to go and use the facilities we create for them.

**MS CARRICK:** Can you talk me through the synthetic—because, for this, it has a modified AFL synthetic. I have seen soccer or football being played on synthetic. Can you talk me through the benefits of this? Obviously, it is lower maintenance but, as far as a playing field, doesn't it get hot?

**Mr Iglesias:** It can get a little hot, but the players do not mind because they are playing football and they are playing on it because the grassed fields are all waterlogged—and they are happy. The key issue is that it is an all-weather surface. So it allows play when we cannot have play on the turfed surface. From time to time, we will close the turfed surfaces after rain. But, when we do that, we leave the synthetic surfaces open, and that allows training and play to continue.

It is very soft. It is almost like walking on cotton wool, really. It does allow for some degree of impact when falling and I have fallen on them myself and had a graze.

**Ms Berry:** The technology around it has changed over the years. It is a much better surface to play on. Last year and the year before, it was so wet that I do not know how many times we had to close fields because they would get damaged. People get very frustrated when we close fields and they cannot play on them. Having a little bit more of the synthetic—I was going to call it astroturf.

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes, it is the same thing.

**Ms Berry:** The synthetic fields give a little more flexibility, particularly on those wet days, for sports to be able to play. Sometimes, with finals and things like that, it means they do not have to throw out their whole season in order to access a field to play on. The technology is changing all the time; synthetic fields are much better than they used to be. It is not like falling on concrete.

**MS CARRICK:** Is Phillip Oval in your portfolio?

**Mr Iglesias:** Phillip Oval is, yes.

**MS CARRICK:** What are the development plans for it, for the future? Some seating was put in, in recent years, but there is a very small amount of seating. What are the plans for it in the future?

**Mr Iglesias:** For the playing surface?

**MS CARRICK:** The surface and the amenity around it. As I say, there were some seats put in, but not a great deal. It is not like a stand, really.

**Mr Iglesias:** Our colleagues in sport and recreation policy in CMTEED are currently delivering a major upgrade to the facilities around the playing surface at Phillip. I believe it involves some upgrades to the irrigation, as well as to the grandstand. As far as the playing surface goes, we will keep an ongoing watch on the quality, on the performance of the field.

The deployment of the compost, for example, is a case in point. That is generally what we will do. We will trial all sorts of substrates that we can add to the surface to improve it. We have also tried coconut fibre, which has been successful, because it holds moisture really well. There may be some works that are required as a result of the works that are being undertaken currently at Phillip, regarding the quality of the playing surface, and that will be prioritised. On an ongoing basis, it is very much on an as-needs basis.

**MS CARRICK:** With the cricket nets, I understand that, because of the towers, they are overshadowed now, and that is impacting on the cricket surface. Are you aware of that?

**Mr Iglesias:** I am not aware of it. It is often a challenge in some locations to fit everything in. The fact that we have the cricket nets is great. To shift them or to move them around is not often an option. It depends on the site. With the particular issue that you are describing, I am happy to make some inquiries and get back to you, if we can do something about that. I will take that on notice.

**MS CARRICK:** I do not know whether you can move the towers there!

**Mr Iglesias:** Probably not, but we might be able to do something.

**MS CARRICK:** Maybe you can shine some light off them and it might rebound.

**Mr Iglesias:** Generally, the cricket nets use a synthetic surface. If it is not concrete, it is a synthetic surface and shading should not impact it. If they are very old cricket nets, maybe—

**MS CARRICK:** No, I do not think these ones are old.

**Mr Iglesias:** I can look into it.

**MS CARRICK:** That would be good; thank you.

**Ms Berry:** Are you talking about the ones at Phillip enclosed oval?

**MS CARRICK:** Yes.

**MS TOUGH:** You mentioned earlier that lighting was one of the things being used to make sporting pavilions more female friendly, to encourage more women and girls to participate in organised sport. Are there any other upgrades in train to encourage more women and girls to use our playing fields and to get into sport?

**Ms Berry:** Those are the things that we are doing across our pavilion upgrades. I have just had it confirmed that there were 56 pavilions where we were doing work on making them more inclusive and female friendly, and there are 20 left to go. So 36 have been upgraded so far. There is a guide for female-friendly upgrades to pavilions on the sport and rec website, which goes to not only the lighting but also removing the troughs, and improving the amenity—putting doors on toilets, which is also something we have been told about. We are also providing, in some spaces, additional change rooms so that there can be change rooms for female and male sports participants.

We have been using some new facilities; we are changing shipping containers into pavilions, change rooms and toilets. They are working really well. We have worked with the local community on where those are needed. We have also worked with Kristie Peters, a Wiradjuri artist, who has put some amazing art on the ones at Hawker. They look beautiful. Sports that do not play at Hawker came down to have a look, because



they are interested in having those kinds of facilities on their fields as well. When you say “shipping container”, people think of something that has been tagged a thousand times, but these things are beautiful.

**Mr Iglesias:** You would not know they are shipping containers.

**Ms Berry:** You would not know, no. The lights are automatic. We have had instances in the past where people have left lights and heating on, which means that we are paying excessive electricity bills over winter, when nobody is using it for three months. They are all motion-detecting lights. It has a locking system that can be accessed from the field; you do not need to get the key from the sportsground manager.

**Mr Iglesias:** Some of them have access to power points; there is basic shelving and they have mirrors inside. It is all about making them more usable by all genders, and they have been really well received.

**MS TOUGH:** You said that is at Hawker and a few other places?

**Mr Iglesias:** It is an ongoing process. Aranda is soon to be completed, this year.

**Ms Berry:** This is just the upgrades.

**Mr Iglesias:** This is just the upgrades, yes.

**MS TOUGH:** There is a whole list; don't worry about reading all of them.

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes, there is a whole list.

**MS TOUGH:** It was interesting to hear about the shipping containers. That sounds pretty cool.

**Ms Berry:** We used those temporarily at Gordon, when the pavilion burnt down. We did the upgraded pavilion because of the two fires, unfortunately. That included upgrading it to make it more inclusive. In the meantime, we used shipping containers for a canteen, some mobile toilet facilities and things like that. The whole team at TCCS have been working really well at looking outside the square and seeing what is possible for sportsgrounds to use. The shipping containers are more affordable and more mobile. As that capacity grows, because it is a relatively new space for us and for the shipping container people that were used in the ACT, and as we convince sports clubs that they are really schmick, we will be using more of them.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In the ACT Women's Plan, action item 2.8 was improved access to and suitability of amenities for women and girls at ACT government sportsgrounds. What percentage has been upgraded, as of right now?

**Ms Berry:** It is 36 of 56 pavilions. In addition to that, Mr Iglesias talked about the lighting that we put in. We can keep it on, turn it on early or leave it on later because a lot of the lighting is now adjusted and can be done remotely. We can keep it on a bit later, so that people can clear out, pack up and feel safe. They are pretty big, open, dark spaces when there is no lighting, but we can do that. With the required use time, we can

leave it on a bit later for that pack-down, which makes it much more inviting for everybody, but particularly for women, who might be feeling fearful.

**MISS NUTTALL:** That is fantastic. It is above 50 per cent, I am assuming, which is awesome. The plan gives the metric of success as a percentage of sports amenities that meet the guidelines. Given that we are doing quite well with these targets, are there plans to expand on the current percentage of female-friendly amenities?

**Ms Berry:** Each one is different and unique. They were built in a different time. Some will need relatively minor upgrades and some will need more significant upgrades because they are not in a very good condition. We will be basing it, obviously, on the budget each year and on how much money we have to spread across doing that work.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I do not want to pre-empt government policy, but is there an ambition to set that target to 100 per cent of facilities?

**Ms Berry:** We definitely want to get them all done. That is the plan. I do not know how long it has taken to do the 36.

**Mr Iglesias:** 2017 sticks in my mind—2017-18.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, that is when I think we started.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I have here that the ACT has 92 sporting facilities.

**Mr Iglesias:** It depends on how you count them because there are lots of sportsgrounds that have multiple ovals. It is best to focus on the hectares. There are 444 hectares; it then gets broken down into the various constituents. There are a lot.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Am I right in assuming that, if you were to get to the full 56, that would service all of the ovals across—

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes. Sometimes one pavilion services three, four or five ovals.

**Ms Berry:** But we might put in additional facilities, like what we have done at Hawker, where we have put in additional change rooms, referee or coaching rooms, and toilets. We have put in some additional facilities there. The lights are different. I think that nearly all of our sports fields now have some form of lighting.

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes, we are getting up there.

**Ms Berry:** The lighting program is almost complete. That is one part of it, and the pavilion upgrades are another part of it.

**MS CARRICK:** You used the language “pavilions”. For example, at Mawson there is a pavilion, but, as you head towards Beasley Street, there is a toilet block that is pretty average. Will that toilet block be upgraded in this process?

**Mr Iglesias:** This comes to the point that the minister was making. We have a long history, when it comes to facilities. Some of them are very old; some of them are very

new. Initially, it was about toilets; then, “We want change rooms as well.” Some facilities have toilets and change rooms; some just have the change rooms, separately. It is a matter of us understanding where the high use is and where the priority for upgrade is, whether it be toilets, change rooms, canteens or storerooms. They are all part of that mix and could potentially be covered by what a pavilion is.

**MS CARRICK:** I am not suggesting that where there is a pavilion, a toilet block that is further away but is still in the playing fields would need to have change rooms as well, but they need to be upgraded because they are so old.

**Mr Iglesias:** Certainly, there are some homages to—what do you call them?

**MS CARRICK:** The 70s.

**Ms Berry:** Probably before that, even.

**Mr Iglesias:** We know where they are and, as long as they are functional, they are operating and they are safe, we will keep them. They might not look too good, but they will do the job.

**THE CHAIR:** I have had a few constituents ask me a question. I know the answer because I have asked about it, but I want to put the issue to you again. Particularly for women but also for older people and people with disability, access to a toilet is really useful. We asked whether the toilets that are already available at sportsgrounds and which are locked could be made open to the public all the time or for broader hours, because that makes the whole area a lot more usable for the public. The answer came back that, no, they cannot, because of vandalism. Have you had a think about whether, with these upgrades or for any other reason, we can make those facilities open outside of hours?

**Mr Iglesias:** I remember when that came through, and I agonised over the response because it is an asset that is there. It is potentially available for public use. With the amount of vandalism that happens in unattended areas, if you think of some of our sportsgrounds, when they are not in use, there is very little surveillance, passive surveillance, and they are dark. If you are going to get up to no good and you want to be a vandal, they would be ready-made locations, and the cost becomes prohibitive for us.

**THE CHAIR:** We do have public toilets in other areas that are open all the time. How is it that we can keep those in reasonably good maintenance?

**Mr Iglesias:** Often those areas have good lighting, passive surveillance, and they tend to be in areas with high traffic flow. You can think of the Dickson shops or some of the other shops where there are public toilets. Even some of those are closed at certain times. Some of them are not, but some of them are. It is really a question of us being able to maintain them and keep them in operating order. That is why we are motivated to do that.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for explaining it. You have explained it really well, twice now. I am still uncomfortable with the answer, but I understand the balances.

**MS CARRICK:** I want to ask about toilets. We are discussing sportsground management, but do you have responsibility for public toilets at the shops?

**Mr Pryce:** That is not in Minister Berry's portfolio.

**MISS NUTTALL:** When teams, for example, come from interstate to play in ACT-based competitions, does TCCS give precedence or preferential treatment to local teams using facilities over teams travelling from outside the ACT?

**Mr Iglesias:** I do not think it is either-or. When I think of the Kanga Cup, for example, which is one of the biggest soccer competitions for young people in Australia, there is really strong support from the local clubs. A lot of them are participants, so they see the value in promoting Canberra, getting people into Canberra and using our facilities. Even in the middle of July, people comment on how good our facilities are.

**Ms Berry:** And how cold it is!

**Mr Iglesias:** I cannot think of a situation where we have had to disappoint a local club because an interstate group was using a particular facility.

**MISS NUTTALL:** That is very encouraging to hear.

**MS CARRICK:** Do you do the athletics track at Phillip?

**Mr Iglesias:** I believe we do. Do you mean the enclosed athletics track? Yes.

**MS CARRICK:** It is a great facility. I drove past it. It looks fantastic. But I do get representations about the lack of parking.

**Mr Iglesias:** Yes, that is one of the sites where space is at a premium. I believe we have in the past made an effort to activate a particular site for overflow parking, but I wonder whether that particular site is just restricted by its geography. I do not know for sure, so I will investigate that and take it on notice.

**MS CARRICK:** Not the site north of it, because I have other ideas for that.

**Mr Iglesias:** I can look into it and give you a fulsome answer. I will take it on notice.

**MS CARRICK:** The cemetery is there but I know we cannot use that.

**Ms Berry:** I think that would be frightfully unpopular.

**MS CARRICK:** I know that would be frightfully unpopular. On that topic, one day maybe we could talk about the cemetery. Other cities do things with their cemeteries that are in the suburbs. It will always be a cemetery, but there could be some discussions about its future and how to make it better integrated with the surrounding amenity.

**Ms Berry:** If you have any ideas, or if anyone else has any ideas, I am sure they could be considered.

**MS CARRICK:** I will see whether I can find anybody that can come up with some.

**Ms Berry:** And if they cost no money, even better.

**MS CARRICK:** As far as sportsgrounds go, I hope our ones along Yarra Glen are not under threat, with the densification of the Yarra Glen and Adelaide Avenue corridor—the Mint ovals and the Deakin ovals.

**Mr Iglesias:** All of our sports fields are characterised under a particular part of the Territory Plan. If there were to be a change in land use, that would trigger a particular process, and that would be a public process. I am not aware of any proposal along those lines.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I have a question about the Woden track. To the best of my knowledge, bus access to that particular oval involves a little bit of a walk. Has there been any scoping done to see whether we could alleviate some pressure on the parking around that space by encouraging public transport to be slightly closer? I appreciate that sometimes it is hard to wrangle a bunch of kids after a Little Athletics session, but has that been considered?

**Ms Berry:** That might be a question for Minister Steel.

**Mr Pryce:** We will try to answer when we are appearing with Minister Steel, around our public transport planning. We are always looking at the network and seeing how we can optimise it, for connectedness, accessibility and in order to relieve congestion or other issues that are created through transport.

**Ms Berry:** Ms Carrick, with respect to your question on Mawson, the pavilions and toilets are part of ACT Labor's election commitment, so they will be included in our forward program.

**THE CHAIR:** There being no further questions, thank you very much for an excellent session of good and straightforward answers. We very much appreciate it. On behalf of the committee, we thank you for your attendance today. I think there were a few questions taken on notice. If we could get the answers back within five days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*, that will assist our committee. I thank our witnesses who have assisted us. We would like to thank broadcasting and Hansard. If any member wants to lodge a question on notice, upload it to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible, and no later than five business days from today. We are now adjourned.

**The committee adjourned at 4.46 pm.**