



**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

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 19 FEBRUARY 2025

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Secretary to the committee:
Mr J Bunce (Ph: 620 50199)

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 11.15 am.

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
Lewis, Dr Sophie, Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment
Gardner, Mrs Miranda, Director, Complaints and Investigations

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 Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.

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

We are recording and transcribing our proceedings today, and we are also broadcasting and webstreaming live. If you take a question on notice it would be fantastic if you can use the words, "I will take that question on notice," to help our secretariat track down the answers.

I am really happy to welcome Dr Sophie Lewis, Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment, and Mrs Miranda Gardner, Director for Complaints and Investigations. Can you confirm that you have read, understood and agree to abide by the privilege statement?

Dr Lewis: I have read, understand and will comply with the privilege statement.

Mrs Gardner: I have read, understand and will comply with the privilege statement.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I will remind you of those protections and obligations. 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.

We are not doing opening statements, so we will jump in with questions. We have a fairly short session, so we will try and make sure all members get a chance here. I would love to start with a question about the special factors that have a significant impact on the environment. I am referring to page 19 of the annual report. On page 19, you have identified a reluctance by the ACT government to prioritise local environmental considerations in policy. Can you tell me a little bit more about what goes on behind that statement?

Dr Lewis: That statement was really a direct outcome from the government response to the 2023 *State of the environment report*. The *State of the environment report* was tabled in March 2024, and the government response to the recommendations made within the *State of the environment report* largely rejected the consideration for major reform that is required to protect the natural environment of the ACT from further damage, which is outlined in that *State of environment report*.

As I said, there were 30 recommendations made within, and the majority of those were either noted by government or they were agreed in-principle. There were very few that were agreed to in any kind of really substantial way that would see a change in the way that policies and programs are delivered, any legislative reform or any increase in funding for the environment. That is why, in writing the annual report for that financial year, that was considered one of the major impacts and potential harms to the environment.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Do you still have the same concerns from more recent policies and programs? Have you seen any shift in government's approach to the ecological and environmental management?

Dr Lewis: As I noted, some of those recommendations were agreed in-principle.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Dr Lewis: Some of them were tagged as existing government policy, and it was not my understanding, in writing the report, that I would make a recommendation to change existing policy to what I thought was required to address those significant declines in the environment that have been documented through various forms of evidence over many years. I am still hopeful that those recommendations that were agreed in-principle and the ones that were noted, or seen as existing government policy, may make their way through to program delivery.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Dr Lewis: But as to whether I have seen any sort of significant change in that six-to-12-month period, no, I can quite emphatically say I have not seen any particular significant shift in focus that sees an increase in funding for the environment and an increase in prioritising of environmental values over other values in decision-making.

THE CHAIR: I share your concern. We had a hearing last week with the minister for climate change and the environment, and I am paraphrasing and not reading direct from *Hansard* here, but in an answer to a question, the minister gave an answer along the lines of, "We can't protect every area of the environment that needs ecological protection." So it sounded as if decisions were made about what resources government have and what decisions were easy to make, and then choosing what decisions to make for the environment, rather than the other way around. Is it that kind of mindset that, perhaps, you are seeing in policy and programs coming through?

Dr Lewis: I did not specifically see the minister make those comments or what that was directly in reference to. My concern, and the concern of my office, in undertaking the *State of the environment report*, and other statutory reports, is not so much that there is a unwillingness to protect every aspect of our natural environment; it is that we have seen—and this is extending beyond the ACT jurisdiction—year after year after year of environmental decline, more species added to threatened species lists, more ecosystems and ecological communities under threat and the same policies and legislation that is not affording those environments protection being preserved for generations of policy.

It is not about protecting every part of our natural environment. It is that the

environmental outcomes are declining, and we continue to do the same thing through budget measures, through policies, through programs and through legislation and expect different outcomes and then say that we cannot protect our environment. Whereas I think what is documented in the *State of the environment report* is that we can protect the environment better. We can prioritise high value conservation areas, but there has been a decision made time and time again not to.

THE CHAIR: Commissioner, that was extremely well put. I imagine this is why you make the recommendations you make in your *State of the environment report*: as a means of turning that policy direction around and getting a different outcome. I imagine that is why it is disappointing when recommendations are either not agreed or disagreed with and, “Here’s what we are going to do instead.” Is that the concern when recommendations are not followed?

Dr Lewis: I think there are a lot of layers to your question there. The constituting legislation for my role requires that I speak as an independent voice for the environment, and that is my priority, so in that sense, it is frustrating to write the *State of environment report* for 2023, that mirrors a lot of the pressures and trends and *State of the environment* from 2019. There is a frustration in that sense—that the environment is in a state of decline.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Dr Lewis: I suppose that it is also frustrating that—I will leave it at that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. I will see if there are supplementary questions. I will also try and make sure that every member gets a chance to speak, and supplementaries mean fewer substantive questions. A supplementary, Ms Castley?

MS CASTLEY: On one of your recommendations from the *State of the environment report*—

Dr Lewis: Yes.

MS CASTLEY: I wonder—

THE CHAIR: Ms Castley, I wonder if that is a substantive? The original question was actually about local environmental considerations.

MS CASTLEY: I thought because we were talking about the *State of the environment report*—

THE CHAIR: Yes. Is it okay if you hold that for a substantive?

MS CASTLEY: Yes, I will wait.

THE CHAIR: Do we have any other supplementaries? Sorry, I am just trying to make sure everyone gets a chance.

MS CASTLEY: That’s okay.

THE CHAIR: Ms Carrick?

MS CARRICK: My question is about creeks and the Connecting People, Connecting Nature program. For example, I am talking about Yarralumla Creek: we have a creek line, that is concrete; we have green belts that come from the surrounding hills and ridges to it, so it is a good connector of ecological flora and fauna right through there, but it is a concrete drain—storm water. I am just wondering why Yarralumla Creek never seems to be highlighted as a creek that could be naturalised to some extent or even planned? It does provide the opportunity for ecological life

Dr Lewis: I would certainly agree with that—that some blue-green networks of the ACT are hugely important. It is not just protected spaces like our national parks, Canberra Nature Park, or other reserved areas that are really important for nature in the city. The *State of the lakes and waterways of the ACT* report from 2022 speaks to the importance of those waterways in terms of environmental outcomes, amenity, community connection and the importance of re-naturalising those.

As to specifics, we do not have responsibility for delivery of those programs, so I am not sure why there would be a difference in how those creeks are prioritised across the city. Did you have anything, Miranda, on that?

Mrs Gardner: We do not get the opportunity to have an input into those types of decisions.

MS CARRICK: Okay. Because I notice that, I think recommendation 31, in the 2019 *State of the environment report*, was a healthy waterways one. It mentioned a number of different creeks, but it was closed—that item, that recommendation.

Dr Lewis: Sorry, can you remind me which recommendation you are referring to?

MS CARRICK: It was the 2019 one—recommendation 31.

Dr Lewis: Is it specifically from the annual report, where you are noting that this was closed?

MS CARRICK: Yes.

Dr Lewis: Can you please give me a page reference for that?

MS CARRICK: I can get back to the annual report—try page 45.

Dr Lewis: Page 45; excellent, thank you.

MS CARRICK: Recommendation 31.

Dr Lewis: It says: “Provide incentives to increase wastewater recycling and the use of non-potable water by the community.”

MS CARRICK: Yes, so it gets into Lakes Tuggeranong, Burley Griffin, Ginninderra

and Yerrabi Pond.

Dr Lewis: Yes. This was from the 2019 *State of the environment report*. When recommendations are made in the *State of the environment report*, we would usually expect those to be well on their way to being fully implemented within four years. That does not mean that the environmental outcomes will occur within four years.

This one was made, and the government at the time agreed in-principle, and we have closed this recommendation, based on the information that they have provided in indicating that this is being progressed.

MS CARRICK: Yes. I guess there are a number of water recommendations and, perhaps, it is a bit more generic than a particular recommendation about the healthy waterways. I don't know about the advocacy for them to be planned, at least for naturalisation, because to me, from where I sit, Yarralumla Creek just seems to slip through the cracks all the time. There never seems to be any work done on it.

Dr Lewis: That certainly may be the case, but because we do not really undertake those programs, I think that may be a question that is better placed with the Office of Water or some other group within EPSDD.

MS CARRICK: Okay, thank you.

MS TOUGH: My question is about the framework for investigations. The act gives you the power to commence investigations at your discretion against agencies where actions would have a substantial impact on the environment of the ACT. As it is at your discretion, as the commissioner, is there a framework or guideline in your office for when and how agencies should be investigated and what qualifiers must be met?

Dr Lewis: No, we do not have a formal framework as such. The self-initiating of an investigation has occurred twice in the history of the office. That has occurred through two pathways. The first was in regard to air quality and wood heater usage. That occurred after a community member raised a complaint with the office, which saw that investigated. Following the distribution of that non-statutory report—

Mrs Gardner: The complaint report.

Dr Lewis: The complaint report to the relevant directorates, government officials and ministers, about 12 months after that, the office self-initiated an investigation into that because the systemic issues that were identified in investigating that complaint did not seem to have been redressed in any way in the intervening approximately 12-month period.

Mrs Gardner: Yes. Also, the issue was raised with us by a number of other members of the public.

Dr Lewis: Yes.

Mrs Gardner: So it seemed to be a particular concern at that time as well.

Dr Lewis: The most recent one is currently being undertaken; it was self-initiated in March 2024. I advised the then Minister for the Environment, Minister Vassarotti, that my office would be undertaking an investigation into the impact of urban development on the natural environment of the ACT. That one came from several complaints that were raised with the office from community members; it was also because of the outcomes and findings of the *State of the environment report* and the government response to that report.

That investigation, ideally, will be delivered to Minister Orr in April 2025. That is looking at the policy and legislative protections for the environment in the ACT and it is also trying to make a systematic assessment of the impact of urban development over the last 20 years on the natural environment.

MS CARRICK: When you look at the last 20 years, does your report also look, going forward, at the new outcomes-based planning framework and the impact that will have on the environment and the urban environment?

Dr Lewis: We are also taking a forward focus in that investigation in terms of projected expansion, in terms of not only the ACT's population but also the urban footprint, on metrics such as soil carbon loss and various other environmental measures.

Mrs Gardner: Yes. Areas of habitat that will be close to the city is a key one that we are finding—protected areas of critically endangered habitat once the city expands, the amount of those that are within a certain distance of the edge of the city, which will be much bigger, and that has all kinds of effects.

In terms of the planning system, we do not know enough about what the implementation of the new system will look like to have a clear idea to be able to make those projections at this stage. It is certainly something that we are keeping a watching brief on.

Dr Lewis: The biggest focus will be on historical planning legislation, because that is where we can look at the impacts on the environment. We look at several examples in quite a lot of detail, including, for example, development and planning in the Majura Valley.

MR CAIN: The report also says that, despite recent efforts, species such as the gang-gang cockatoo and several grassland species remain listed as threatened. The report notes limited progress in recovery plans, which raises questions about the adequacy of current government measures. Since the report, what steps are you aware of that are being taken to ensure the protection and recovery of species like the gang-gang cockatoo, given the continued listing of threatened species in the ACT?

Dr Lewis: This is from the *State of the environment report*?

MR CAIN: Yes.

Dr Lewis: I am not aware of any significant changes that have occurred in that period since the tabling of the *State of the environment report*. It is important to acknowledge that, when we are talking about threatened species, we are also looking at a much broader context, a federal context for species decline.

Mrs Gardner: Yes. With the gang-gang cockatoo specifically, I believe the population in the ACT is actually increasing. It is the only place in Australia where that is happening. The change in the listing of that particular species was due to federal changes in its status under the EPBC Act. The gang-gang cockatoo is actually a good news story for the ACT.

MR CAIN: That is good to hear. Can you thank the ACT government for that, or the federal government?

Dr Lewis: I do not know whether we have done an attribution of that.

MR CAIN: You can avoid that trap, if you like!

MS CASTLEY: I am keen to understand how the commission balances competing trade-offs with environmental and sustainability policy. You obviously prioritise sustainability. Do you also consider regulatory changes, affordability and efficiency?

Dr Lewis: Not explicitly. We have a lot of clarity under the governing legislation that the office is aiming to enhance ecologically sustainable development, and the public and community understanding of the environment and sustainability. We have that clarity, but, through many of the reports, including the *State of the environment report*, we will see that those different considerations are often well aligned, and that what is good for the environment is often very good for the Canberra community, in terms of their health and wellbeing and their future prosperity.

Something that we also see, with the introduction of the right to a healthy environment in the Human Rights Act, is that those things are often deeply connected. Although we do not, under our legislation, really represent those values, they do come through in a lot of the discussions we see in our reports, particularly around volunteering and community participation and involvement.

MS CASTLEY: I was looking through your recommendations from the *State of the environment report*, and I wondered how much consideration you give to policy effectiveness. One of your recommendations was for a chief heat officer. Do you see your role as one where you promote options that might be effective, or do you rigorously assess the likely effectiveness of an option before you make the recommendation? How is that reported? How do you make those assessments?

Dr Lewis: I know that your question has a lot more nuance than this, so I am not trying to simplify it too much. We certainly look at whether a recommendation is likely to be effective in terms of the outcomes before we make a recommendation. They undergo huge deliberation. We spend a lot of time working out what is the problem, what might the solutions be, how would we write a recommendation, how do we phrase that—do we add targets and time lines? A lot of consideration goes into recommendations. Sometimes we make quite specific ones; at other times we prefer to leave the mechanism to government, because it is really about the intent or solving the issue that has been identified.

In terms of the example that you raised around the chief heat officer, that is an example where we have looked at what has been effective in other jurisdictions. We did quite a significant analysis and policy review of climate change adaptation policy across Australian jurisdictions. It was not uniform, but, for many of the domains that we explored, the ACT came out woefully below other jurisdictions—quite behind, in terms of our climate change adaptation and our response to the impacts of climate change that we are already feeling.

When we looked at what other jurisdictions had done, in terms of readiness and resilience building in communities, the chief heat officer was one of the more effective and easy-to-introduce responses in intervention. That is why we made that recommendation. Unfortunately, that has not been implemented, but in many places across Australia, as well as in Athens and in Florida—various other cities—they have introduced chief heat officers and found them to be quite effective.

MS CASTLEY: With the economic impact of the recommendations, how do you incorporate that into your work?

Dr Lewis: We do not. That is not our responsibility. As I said, we try to make recommendations that we think will be useful, and that work encompasses a lot. Is it going to have environmental outcomes? Is it something that is likely to be implemented because we think it is something that is suitable for the ACT context? We do not do economic analysis, but it would not be prudent or a valuable use of a recommendation to suggest something outlandish regarding any of the other considerations that government might go through.

Mrs Gardner: The intent of the recommendation is to signal that we think this is something that would be worth the government investing in. It is not about identifying the fact that there are already resources available to be spent on that. It is to say that, in planning future expenditure, we think this would be a worthwhile investment.

MR EMERSON: We have had some questions this week about development on the western edge. The government has repeatedly stated that they are exploring that area, and they are not committed to developing it. Often it seems that that ends up as a development. Are you aware of any instances where a development opportunity was in conflict with environmental and conservation opportunity, and conservation won out?

Dr Lewis: In undertaking this investigation, we have spent a lot of time thinking about whether there are any so-called good news stories that we could highlight. We have not been able to find many that we think we could diligently, thoroughly, robustly highlight in the report, beyond some scant examples where community interventions and community advocacy have seen a change in an outcome. I refer, for example, to the north Lawson grasslands. That is a commonwealth issue. We do not need to go into that in detail. There have been some examples where the environment has been reconsidered to some degree after community advocacy.

The short answer is no, I am not aware, really, of any. I think that is where we see this decline in environmental outcomes and values over time.

MR EMERSON: You are not aware of any examples of the government, of its own accord, choosing environment and conservation over development?

Dr Lewis: I could not confidently say that I am aware of any. That is not to say that there are not any that exist, but none have been brought to my attention.

MR EMERSON: I would be looking hard for good news stories. I am not criticising you.

MR CAIN: Can we come to that party, when that happens?

MR EMERSON: Yes; we can celebrate together.

Mrs Gardner: Something that is worth flagging in the recommendations and some of what we have been talking about is that we often find that the environment directorate staff in ACT government—conservation research, parks and conservation and so on—are working really hard to try and protect the environment. It is not a failure in the efforts of the environment team that is the reason for the declines. It is the higher level decision in government as to where their priorities are.

MR EMERSON: You have rangers; you have volunteers working there. It is the overarching planning policy framework.

Dr Lewis: You mentioned the western edge investigation area and the overlays there. One thing that has come up is that this is not specific to one region. It is not specific to the western edge. It is not specific to the southern broadacre area or east Canberra, in the Majura Valley. This is something that we see occurring within the urban footprint and within those fringe areas.

MR EMERSON: Those little pockets of grasslands.

Dr Lewis: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We are at the end of our session. Commissioner and Miranda, thank you so much for your time, your expertise and your work. I do not believe there were any questions taken on notice, which is always a good sign. You were extremely well prepared. The hearing is suspended.

Hearing suspended from 11.45 am to 1.30 pm.

Appearances:

Steel, Mr Chris, Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development,
Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport

Transport Canberra and City Services Directorate

Pryce, Mr David, Director-General

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

Sturman, Ms Judith, Executive Group Manager, Transport Canberra

McGlenn, Mr Ian, Executive Branch Manager, Bus Operations

Infrastructure Canberra

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Director-General

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General

Haraldson, Mr Anthony, Acting Deputy Project Director, Transport and Technical
Development

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the public hearing of the Standing Committee on Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services for its inquiry into annual and financial reports 2023-24. In this session the committee will hear from the Minister for Transport.

We are recording and transcribing the proceedings, and they will be published. We are also being broadcast and webstreamed live. If you take a question on notice, it would be useful if you used the words, "I will take that question on notice." This will help the committee and our witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcript.

I welcome Mr Chris Steel, Minister for Transport, and officials. Thank you for coming in. We have a lot of witnesses. When you first speak, please confirm that you have read, understand and accept 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.

We are not inviting opening statements, so we will proceed to questions. Mr Braddock will ask the first question.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you, Chair. I have some questions in respect of the bus fleet. The number of buses in Transport Canberra's fleet went from 443 in 2023-24 to 430 in 2024-25, according to page 195. What impact has this had on service delivery? How many buses do we have now?

Mr Steel: We have had quite a number delivered in this financial year. I will hand over to Transport Canberra to talk about that. It is part of the contract we have with VDI Australia to supply 90 Yutong E12 electric buses.

Mr McHugh: I acknowledge that I have read, understood and accept the privilege statement. Thank you for the question, Mr Braddock. With the buses in the fleet, the bus fleet number fluctuates weekly, based on delivery of new buses on order and the retirement of old buses from our fleet retirement strategy. Around 456 buses are

currently in service, so there has been quite a jump from where we were in the last financial year.

That has been as a result of two things—us retiring a number of older buses in the previous financial year and receiving a number of the new bus orders that we have at the moment.

MR BRADDOCK: What is the current number of electric buses that we now have in the fleet?

Mr McHugh: We currently have 46 Yutong buses in Canberra; that is, 12 Yutong buses that have been procured through a lease agreement and 34 that have been delivered from our procurement, our purchase of 90. We have four Custom Denning electric buses in the fleet as well. That is a total of 50.

MR BRADDOCK: How are we tracking in terms of the plan to get 110 additional electric buses by 2028?

Mr McHugh: We are in that planning phase at the moment. Obviously, that is a commitment that government has made over this term. We have been working on developing our procurement plans and our fleet growth strategy over the next four years to ensure we can do that.

Mr Steel: The commitment was to purchase, this term, an additional 110 electric buses, on top of the existing electric bus purchase agreements.

MR BRADDOCK: Coming back to the Custom Dennings which were taken off the road due to the range concerns, Custom Denning said that was not the case and reported different issues, like a coolant leak and indicator light flashing. Can you tell me the reasons why they were taken off the road and sent for maintenance?

Mr McHugh: Yes, absolutely. The four Custom Denning buses are procured under a lease agreement, a five-year lease, through a vehicle provider. We commissioned those buses at the end of June last year, and they have been in service effectively since then. Over that period those four buses have triggered 81 faults whilst in service, that have required us to stop that service and have that bus either remediated en route or returned to the depot.

Those faults involve a whole range of things, including what you have just mentioned. A lot of them have related to the high voltage systems attached to the batteries and motors, and alarms that would go off on the bus that would require the driver to stop. Some of those relate to retaining charge, which could be interpreted as not delivering the range that had been identified.

MR BRADDOCK: Why wasn't the team in the ACT able to repair them? Why did they have to be sent interstate for repairs?

Mr McHugh: Under the lease agreement, repairs and maintenance are part of the provision of the vehicle.

MR BRADDOCK: Will the ACT government be able to service the remainder of the electric buses that are coming into the fleet?

Mr McHugh: Yes. The vehicles that we are purchasing will be under our own maintenance regime. Our mechanics have been trained up. Around 12 of our existing mechanics fleet have been trained up in the high voltage systems associated with the buses. We will definitely be maintaining that fleet ourselves.

MS CASTLEY: Going to Mr Braddock's question about the number of electric buses that we have, is that the amount that are driving around every day? Today, do we have 40 or 50; is that correct?

Mr McHugh: Of the 46 Yutongs that are in Canberra at the moment, about 43 of them have been commissioned and are delivering services on a daily basis. With the remaining three, we would have received them over the last week or two, and they will go through our commissioning process before we put them into service.

MS TOUGH: I was just wondering how rapidly we are receiving the new Yutong buses under the contract?

Mr McHugh: At the moment, on average, it is about one per week. Sometimes they come in pairs and sometimes we get more than one. But, on average, over the 34 that we have received from the 90, they have come on average about one a week.

MR CAIN: What is the schedule for delivery and when do we get the last ones? Are you able to provide that to the committee?

Mr McHugh: At the moment our delivery strategy for the remainder of the Yutongs has them all delivered by the end of 2026. Obviously, that is being considered across the further commitments that the government has made for an additional 110 buses as well and when we would need those and where we park those and charge those.

MR CAIN: I am sorry; I did not hear you. At the end of 2026, we will have how many?

Mr McHugh: Should have 106 in the fleet at that point in time.

MS CARRICK: My question is about the access north-south and east-west. What initiatives are planned in the next two years to improve punctuality of services on the main line bus routes between Civic and Woden and between Civic and Weston? That is the north-south. There is a lot of construction and buses are not getting into the city reliably.

Mr Steel: I took the bus this morning, and it was probably the most efficient way to get from Woden into the city because of the existing bus priority measures that are in place that enable the buses to move through the congestion that we are seeing as a result of construction work in the city. There was an extensive period of planning associated with the lead-up to particularly the Raising London Circuit Project, which has been in place for a number of years where we established the Disruption Taskforce. The task force looked extensively at what opportunities there could be for further priority measures on the Civic to Woden route. Some improvements have been made,

particularly the construction of the new intersection that we put in place on Vernon Circle, which provides bus priority for buses from Woden turning into Constitution Avenue, London Circuit and into the city interchange.

Then, of course, further work was done, putting in place new traffic lights on the Coranderrk roundabout, which has improved traffic flow generally. Because buses are travelling in the general traffic network, they are affected by the general volumes of traffic and so forth that we see. So that has had a very substantial benefit to the city in terms of the network flow during this construction period, to the extent that I think it is something we will end up suggesting should remain beyond the period of construction that we see. That would require agreement from the NCA in the future.

There was also work looking at the area around Coronation Drive—the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue there—to look at whether bus priority measures would make a difference. But the reality is that, if you took a lane out for buses, that would result in less lane space available for general traffic, and that would actually cause very significant congestion for private motor vehicles on the traffic network. That could also flow into impacts on buses as well. So we did not make the decision to go ahead with any further bus priority measures in that particular part of the city. It is one of the reasons why we do not think a bus lane on Commonwealth Avenue, all the way from Civic to Woden, is a good idea, because it would have a massive impact on the traffic network. That is one of the reasons why light rail is so important. It will provide additional transport capacity, because it is being built in the median strip and through an extra bridge over Commonwealth Avenue, rather than taking existing lanes of traffic off our major arterial roads in the future.

We think we have appropriate measures in place at the moment. There have obviously been some changes to some of the bus stop locations with the most recent construction work that is happening on stage 2A. There is a lot of monitoring of the traffic network that will be occurring as the construction moves through various phases. There has also been a lot of dialogue with the NCA about their upcoming bridge strengthening works, which will require further lane closures, we think, on Commonwealth Avenue. We will be working with them closely to try to minimise the impacts as much as we can.

In terms of the Civic to Weston route, obviously, we have made one major change in fairly recent times, which was to basically provide a direct slip lane from Cotter Road onto Adelaide Avenue and Northbourne, where a merge was previously required. That is no longer required under the arrangement. That is working really well—

MS CARRICK: It is working well.

Mr Steel: That is based on extensive traffic modelling that had been done that suggested that was a really good thing to do. There is further traffic modelling and planning underway further down Cotter Road, particularly in the section between the Streeton Drive intersection and the Tuggeranong Parkway, which is a major bottleneck in the morning, experienced particularly by residents in the Molonglo Valley but also in Weston Creek, if they are using the Streeton Drive intersection to get onto the Cotter Road and potentially the parkway. Once traffic gets past the parkway on the Cotter Road it is generally pretty good. It is just that bottleneck there.

We are looking at whether there is an opportunity there for future priority measures. That is work that has been funded and is now underway, looking at how we can provide better public transport access but also general traffic flow through that area. What is it that could make a difference? There is room there potentially for another lane—potentially a by-pass lane past the intersection. We need to look at what those options could be to work out what a good solution is.

Of course, work is underway on the broader connections into the Molonglo Valley as well, with three more currently either in planning or construction: one, the Molonglo River Bridge, which is obviously well under construction and will provide a northern access route onto William Hovell Drive; the potential future Bindubi Street connection, which is being planned through the suburbs of Bandler and Sulman; and the work that has been funded in the budget review to continue the design work for the East-West Arterial Road, which is known as the Molonglo Parkway Drive Connector.

MS CARRICK: When the tram eventually does come, will the buses coming out of Molonglo and Weston Creek get their own lane into the city? I think in the past, I have heard you commit that the buses will continue into the city once the tram does come. But will they get their own lane, or will they be stuck in traffic?

Mr Steel: There will still be buses that go into the city from the southside, rapid buses. People will also have the potential opportunity to connect with light rail, including those buses from Weston Creek. We are looking at those opportunities as well. But, yes, we expect them to have the same sort of priority measures that we currently see in place. We will look at what opportunities there are to improve those priorities, because we will still need buses running through Civic, especially for places like Molonglo and Weston Creek.

MS CARRICK: When you say that buses will continue from the south, does that mean the R4 and the R5 will continue running straight through to the city?

Mr Steel: There is further network planning that needs to happen closer to the time that light rail starts operation. That is some years away. Consideration will be given closer to the time about exactly what network changes need to be made to support the integration with light rail. We want to see a really integrated system. That might mean new stops that do not currently exist need to be created to provide access to the R10 and R7 particularly.

There is a great opportunity to potentially create a connection there to the light rail line, closer to the Novar-Kent Street stop, which would really give an opportunity for people who are coming from Weston Creek and Molonglo to then get light rail into the employment precinct in Barton, where they may be working in a government department, for example. At the moment, the only opportunity for them on the bus is to stop at Albert Hall, which can be some kilometres away from where they work.

MS CARRICK: Have you committed to the “dog leg”?

Mr Steel: No. We are about to go out for consultation on the draft environmental impact statement. We will be making an announcement about that soon, where the community will be able to engage with the preferred route for light rail stage 2B, which is currently

Commonwealth Avenue, State Circle, Adelaide Avenue, Yarra Glen and, of course, on Callam Street. That is the preferred route. But we have looked at an alternative, of course, as part of that as well and we have done some engagement on that already. We will be seeking feedback on both.

MS CARRICK: I hope that, in that process, the travel times from the outer areas and the number of changes will be considered.

Mr Steel: Yes, there is a potential difference in travel time there, but there are other impacts that will need to be considered as well. It will be a very extensive document. Infrastructure Canberra has been doing a lot of work on getting the design to a point where we can elicit that feedback. This is a higher level of design than we would usually undertake for an infrastructure project, so that we can basically satisfy the approving agencies, including the National Capital Authority but also the Department of Environment, in this case, that the work has been done to support the project. It will be a very extensive document, showing in quite some detail what is being proposed. This is the first approval. There are further approvals to work through as well.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MS TOUGH: Minister, it was fantastic to see the announcement this week that construction has started on light rail stage 2A over to Commonwealth Park. Can I get an update on the timeline for the construction of this project, please?

Mr Steel: Thank you. As it is contracted with Canberra Metro, I will hand over to Infrastructure Canberra to provide an update on the timeframes. We are expecting basically operations to commence around quarter 1 of 2028. There will be a period of a number of years of construction. We are expecting that construction to wrap up in 2027, to then allow the testing and commissioning of the light rail services to occur, which is an important process to ensure the safety of the line before it commences operations.

Ms Geraghty: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. I do not have anything further to add to what the minister has outlined.

MS TOUGH: That is all right. What is biggest risk to the delivery? You say quarter 1 of 2028, hopefully, for commencement. But what is the biggest risk to any delay in that?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Infrastructure Canberra.

Mr Cahif: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. It is a construction project, and there are significant risks along the alignment. It is very different from stage 1 where we were in the median. We are now along London Circuit, and there are significant utilities in London Circuit. We have done a lot of testing. We have been working very closely with all the utility companies to get a best handle on where they are and what they could do. But that is always a risk that sits.

Ms Geraghty: And I think building the new bridge over Parkes Way is also a significant risk.

MS TOUGH: Yes.

Mr Steel: People do not realise with the project that we are actually building the first bridge as part of light rail stage 2, which is actually a bridge over Parkes Way—not Lake Burley Griffin—on Commonwealth Avenue. This will really ramp up next year in terms of the construction program, where we will see one of Australia’s largest cranes brought in—which will likely be located in the median strip on Parkes Way—which will be lifting girders into place to establish a bridge in between the two existing bridges over Parkes Way.

MS TOUGH: Whereabouts on Parkes Way are we crossing?

Mr Steel: It is where the existing Commonwealth Avenue bridge is. It will be a bridge in between, effectively, that is being created, and light rail will run on that in between. That is a similar arrangement for the much larger crossing over Lake Burley Griffin in the future as well. But, because of the length of this particular bridge, it is a far less complex build.

MS TOUGH: How does stage 2 support more housing to be developed?

Mr Steel: Stage 2A, in its own right, will provide access to not just the commercial precincts that will continue to grow and be created, particularly new commercial mixed-use development along the line, but also some new residential development. We have seen one of the blocks directly on the line recently sold for a potential proposed mixed-use development, which would include some residential dwelling. Also, the Acton Waterfront Precinct will have a new park. It is also intended that that would have housing there. So people will be living there, close to stops that are being created at City South and Commonwealth Park.

Then, of course, as part of stage 2B, there may be opportunities for housing, other commercial precincts and other types of land uses along the line. That is part of a broader planning study that will be looking at bringing land use planning together with transport planning. It is a piece of work that is starting to get underway. It is called the Southern Gateway Planning and Design Framework. That framework will be looking at that integrated transport and land use planning along the line—in a similar way to the way that the joint NCA and EPSDD project was established with the city and northern gateway design framework.

MS CARRICK: Probably on notice, I would think, could you please provide us the whole cost to deliver 2A of raising London Circuit, the availability payments for the contract, the cost of the planning, directorate costs and Infrastructure Canberra’s costs—a holistic breakdown of the cost for 2A?

Ms Geraghty: We will take that on notice.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: Is the Disruption Management Strategy for 2A publicly available?

Ms Geraghty: The business disruption? Sorry, just—

MR BRADDOCK: In the annual report, page 63 makes reference to a Disruption Management Strategy. I just wanted to check if that was a publicly available document.

Mr Pryce: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. I chair the Disruption Taskforce, which is a combination of a whole group of government directorates as well as NCA and the CRA. The Built for CBR is the main website where we provide all the public data and information that people can look at with the disruption with the maps and all that. That is where we provide most of that information to the public—through that website.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

MR CAIN: Regarding the rollout, are there circumstances in which you would consider changing the timeframe—for example, if there was a ratings downgrade or a further blowout with the health budget?

Mr Steel: Stage 2A has been contracted as per the timeframe. So we are expecting that to be delivered by Canberra Metro within the timeframes.

MR CAIN: None of those circumstances, for example, would cause you to review that?

Mr Steel: This has been already built into the budget. We expect Canberra Metro to deliver what they have been required to do under the contract.

MS CASTLEY: I would like to revisit a couple of questions that I asked about MyWay+ in the last sitting week that I feel were not answered. I am wondering if you can tell us what date MyWay+ will be fully functional.

Mr Steel: Well MyWay+ is functional.

MS CASTLEY: Fully functional.

Mr Steel: The same answer applies as to the answer that I gave in the sittings. There are some improvements that will be made based on user feedback that we have received. There are also planned upgrades to the system that were always meant to start beyond the November start date for MyWay+. I will hand over to Judith Sturman to provide an update on where we are with some of those planned upgrades.

Ms Sturman: I have read, understand and accept the privilege statement. As the minister has said, the MyWay+ system went live in November as a working system. We have had a lot of people taking up and using the system. Just coming down here today on light rail, it is full of people that are actively using their cards on the system. We have some data, which we can provide, about the numbers of people that have been utilising it. I might hand to Ben to list that data.

Mr McHugh: To answer your question around improvements.

MS CASTLEY: Yes, fully functional.

Mr McHugh: The rollout program for MyWay+ always sequentially added functionality to the system. The go-live system was a fully functional account-based ticketing system that allowed us to replace the old MyWay system. The additional functionality that is in the contract and being delivered was over and above those existing functions that we had in the old MyWay system. They are due to be delivered within, I would say, the next two months, which is at the point when the contract moves from the delivery phase to the operations and maintenance phase—which, combined, add up to a 10-year total contract with NEC.

MS CASTLEY: Will the QR codes ever be fully functional and wholly reliable out of the app?

Mr McHugh: The QR codes at the moment are fully functional. They are not as easy to use as the other payment methods—and that is an absolute acknowledgement. They will be required within the system for the purposes of people who will be purchasing paper tickets or downloading tickets and printing them out online. So there will be a purpose for them for the life of the system. But we are at the moment investigating with NEC alternatives to a QR code—which people may choose to use as an alternative to a QR code—that functions similarly to a digital card in your wallet. Some of those investigations are subject to agreements with major technology providers who manage the wallet systems in your phone. We are negotiating with them at the moment on what those alternatives could be.

MS CASTLEY: Are there any other jurisdictions that use a QR code like the one we have with MyWay+?

Mr McHugh: There are other jurisdictions. I am not aware of any in Australia, but NEC use this technology in some of their systems that operate around the world.

Mr Steel: Adelaide was using them.

MS CASTLEY: I know you have talked about this often, but do you believe that it was a mistake to launch on the 27th? Wouldn't it have been prudent to wait a little bit longer—people have faced lots of issues—to give it a bit more time to be ready?

Mr Steel: I was certainly provided with advice that there was confidence of a viable function at launch. It has been functioning to deliver what was intended in terms of the availability of payments using debit and credit cards. Just under 50 per cent of people have taken up those very seamless options. I was on the bus today and people were successfully tapping on and off with their debit and credit cards—not a problem. It was the same with the MyWay+ travel cards, which was the traditional travel card that was available under MyWay; in fact, it was the only method of payment available under the old MyWay system. So it is delivering what was intended: that extra functionality.

There are improvements that we can make to the system, and updates are being made on a regular basis. The improvements that are to be made are around user experience type improvements, and we are receiving feedback from members of the community all the time around that. We are collecting that feedback and then jobs are logged with NEC to make those improvements. They are obviously triaged, depending on the priority of those working with Transport Canberra.

Mr McHugh: Minister, I am happy to answer that question as well. Obviously, hindsight provides us with a particular perspective. If we had anticipated that amount of frustration in the first couple of days of the system, we potentially would have delayed it. But, from all of the work that we had done—all of the investigations until that point and all the testing—we did not anticipate that level of frustration, which is why we made the recommendation. The system did work very much as it was designed to. There was always going to be a period of change for customers and our drivers as we went from the old system to no system and then to a new system. Regrettably, some of those frustrations occurred in the first few days. We have been focused on correcting those things.

MS CASTLEY: How much revenue have you forgone as a result of the launch and the way it occurred?

Mr Steel: We will get a better understanding of that at the end of the financial year or closer to the end of the financial year, but obviously—

MS CASTLEY: You do not track monthly figures? That was the second question.

Mr Steel: There was a period that had been budgeted for, which was the shutdown period between the old MyWay system and the new MyWay+ system. That was anticipated as part of the transition. There was always going to be no fare collection during that period. At the moment, one of the impacts that we have, which we will need to look at more closely, is the impact of the penalty fares not being in place presently. This is a penalty that always existed under the old MyWay system, for not tapping off. That has not been in place, because we recognise that we are in a transition period where Transport Canberra customers are getting used to using the new MyWay+ system and tapping off. Transport Canberra has been doing a lot of work on education, making sure people are still aware that they need to tap off, regardless of whether they use a credit card and so forth, using the same method of payment that they tapped on with. That is important. Once we have gone through that transition period, Transport Canberra will prepare to start talking about the return of the penalty fare for not tapping off. That may have some impact on revenue.

But, generally speaking, there has been, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, quite a long period of time where there has been an impact on revenue, because fewer people have been using public transport. That is a national and international trend. We have seen patronage starting to come back, which is really welcome, but it has taken a long time with that trend. There is a broader trend going on, and the challenge is about working out what is related specifically to the transition to the new ticketing system—what is related to that broader trend in terms of patronage on public transport.

MS CASTLEY: I understand. I will get the figures. We are getting into information that I did not ask about. How much extra has it cost the government to sort out the problems with MyWay+? Can you give me an estimate of the current cost for the MyWay system, including the NEC contract?

Mr Steel: The contract is for \$64 million over 10 years. As Mr McHugh mentioned, we are working with them through the implementation period, and then it will move into

more of a business-as-usual stage of the project.

MS CASTLEY: There have been no extra charges—

Mr Steel: We are still in the contract with NEC. Regarding any additional functionality that is not in the contract that may be considered in the future, we would need to consider that, but no decision has been made on that at the moment.

MR BRADDOCK: When you say the QR code on the MyWay+ app is fully functional, do you mean it is as good now as it is ever going to be?

Mr Steel: No. What we are talking about is a minimum viable product for launch, which is terminology that is reasonably well understood in terms of project management, particularly with ICT projects. There will be improvements that we can make to the system over time. NEC is currently working on a range. Around 300 improvements and suggestions have been made. We have been working on those and triaging them. There are things like changes to the user experience and the design of the app and portal, for example, if people think a tweak could make it easier for them to use those things. Then there are planned updates that we are working through at the moment. There is currently some user testing going on in relation to the group account functionality, which was always a planned later stage improvement to the MyWay+ system. This will enable a parent, for example, to manage their children's individual accounts. That is currently in testing and will be rolled out later. There is also—

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, sorry to interrupt you. The question was very specifically about the QR code. That is the element I am interested in. Are there any planned improvements to that functionality?

Mr Steel: There have been some improvements to that already. Reducing the size of the QR code itself to make it easier to scan was one of the immediate changes that was made. I will hand over to Transport Canberra to add anything further.

Mr McHugh: Thanks, Minister. We are continually looking at how we can speed up the time of the read and the transaction. I think that is the biggest frustration for people at the moment: the time it takes for the validator to detect and then process that transaction compared to tap and go and how quick that is for everything else. NEC are looking at that and have already made some improvements to the speed. People have definitely seen the benefits of that over the last few weeks. They are constantly looking at ways to try to speed up that process, because, when you are waiting on the bus and you see everyone tapping off and you are using a QR code that takes a second longer, it feels like a lifetime. Improving that function is definitely a focus for us.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you. Page 402 of the annual report has customer satisfaction with bus services. For 2023-24, the result was 74 per cent, which is much less than the target of 85 per cent and also a decrease from last year's result of 78 per cent. In saying this is due to ongoing community need for more buses, increased frequency and better connectivity of buses, do we have a realistic plan to bring customer satisfaction up to a suitable level?

Mr Steel: Yes. This is a commitment that we brought to the election, to increase the

frequency of services, both rapid and route bus services—standard services—including frequency on weekends, which is something that we hear about quite a bit from Canberrans, and to add additional services as well. We have not had a budget yet to be able to consider the implementation of those, but, as I indicated to the Assembly in the last sitting week, work is underway around a new term 2 timetable and network. We are looking at responding to some of that community feedback through that, at least initially, and there is a yearly process that Transport Canberra undertakes to assess feedback from the community. The transport plan is then used to inform potential upgrades to the network and timetable. Some of the changes relate to school bell times, which change from time to time. With new schools coming online, we will need to adjust some of the school routes, and there will be broader network improvements as well.

MR BRADDOCK: Why have we gone backwards in the last 12 months?

Mr McHugh: I think the minister touched on it, Mr Braddock. The community are asking for more and more services. Where additional services have come online, we have seen those taken up quite dramatically. With the additional weekend uplift that we provided in April last year, we saw about a 20 per cent increase in patronage on those services. Our read of the survey data and the responses is that there is continued demand for more access to public transport, and the government is committed to delivering that. We are in the process of planning how we will roll that out.

MR BRADDOCK: What is the time frame for implementing greater frequency so we can bring up that customer satisfaction?

Mr Steel: That will be subject to government decision-making and the budget.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I was pleased to see the annual report stating ongoing community need for more buses, increased frequency and better connectivity of bus services. The government has acknowledged that we need all those. That is quite a recent acknowledgement. When did government decide that there was ongoing community need for more buses, increased frequency and connectivity of bus services? I do not think I have seen that in previous annual reports.

Mr Steel: There has been ongoing dialogue about more frequency on the network for some time. This is where the data that is produced through ticketing systems is so valuable. We are seeing increased need on some of the buses that are quite full in your electorate, Ms Clay, particularly in Ginninderry and the R2 service. That is why some specific commitments have been made by the Labor Party to increase frequency on that route, as well as the R10 route, noting that there is a growing community in Molonglo as time goes on. We have certainly known about the growing need in those areas; it is just about making sure that we are stepping up the services at the right time to support that, and the bus data gives us a good sense of when we need to do that.

MS CARRICK: In addition to more buses, increased frequency and better connectivity being identified in the annual report, do you ever look at the loss of coverage of services due to a reduction in the number of bus stops? Constituents tell me that their walk to a

bus stop now is so long that it really impacts on their travel time, particularly if they need to make a change somewhere. If they have to change in Erindale or Calwell, it adds to the time. It is not convenient when they have to walk too far and then change. Do you look at those matters?

Mr Steel: There is always a balance to be struck in transport planning between coverage and frequency. In getting the balance right, we know that frequency drives transport patronage. The introduction of 10 rapid routes, including light rail, with potentially more to come based on our commitments, has made a massive difference in people's patronage on public transport. We have also provided much better connections between services, because those rapid routes are connected to the local bus services that are typically more focused on the coverage of suburbs. Those coverage services are typically long and meandering. It takes them longer to get to their destination, but they cover more stops along the way. The biggest change was six years ago with—

MS CARRICK: Network 19.

Mr Steel: Network 19. I think that is what you are referring to in terms of changes.

MS CARRICK: Yes; that is what I am referring to.

Mr Steel: Since then, we have seen a bedding down of the network and real support for those rapid services. Some people who previously lived right next to a stop now have to do something different in terms of accessing public transport. That might mean walking 150 meters down the road from Marr Street in Pearce to Athllon Drive, for example, which is one change that I am aware of with the network 19 change, but Athllon Drive now has double the number of rapid routes running on it that people can catch every few minutes.

MS CARRICK: They might be called rapids.

Mr Steel: For those with mobility issues, the network is generally planned to have bus stops within around 800 metres of someone's home. We have the best coverage of any city in Australia in terms of a bus stop being within 400 metres of someone's home. But, for people who cannot walk those 400 metres or 800 metres down the road to a stop, the flexible bus service provides a good option for them. That is targeted at people with mobility issues. It picks them up from their house and takes them to a local shopping centre, a GP or a hospital appointment.

At the moment, we are working on a project to improve the booking system for that service to make it a bit more of an on-demand type system. We hope that will roll out soon to enable the service to be taken up. I really encourage people who are struggling to use the route buses because of their mobility issues to actually try it out. I know that is a big change for some people, but they could just give Transport Canberra a call and make an appointment for the bus to come. It is a really good service.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, I would like to explore issues relating to works that are impacting the businesses on London Circuit. I understand that you have ruled out providing any financial assistance, even when the commercial impacts are clearly a result of policy decisions taken by government. Is this fair?

Mr Steel: We have been similar to other governments around Australia when we are undertaking major infrastructure projects. We would not typically provide financial support to businesses, unless there was work required on someone's land. That would trigger a requirement for some sort of payment. But, in this case, the works are happening in the public realm; they are happening on government land, on the roadway, particularly London Circuit. We have been engaging through a very clear business partnership plan about what the government will do to support businesses that will be impacted during the construction, as well as the rest of the community in terms of disruption during the construction of the project. I will hand over to Infrastructure Canberra to talk a little bit about what that support looks like.

MS CASTLEY: I am absolutely happy to chat a bit more about that, but my question to you was: is it fair? I want to chat a bit more with you, Minister, about the precedent for the government to provide support to small businesses. We saw it in COVID. As a result of a health policy, there was support for business. I am wondering why there would be from a health perspective but not from a transport perspective.

Mr Steel: I think the two are quite different. We are not stopping those businesses from operating, as per the health directions that were in place during the pandemic. We are doing what we can to support them through non-financial means—to make sure that the community understands, for example, that those businesses continue to operate, they are open for business, and that people can use those services. We can assist them in terms of wayfinding—

MS CASTLEY: Businesses had to push for the signage that was promised. I am wondering whether you have personally met the business owners.

Mr Steel: We have been engaging through Infrastructure Canberra for a period of years with those business owners. We have had stakeholder reference groups. I have been out there for about five years, saying that there is going to be major disruption in the city and that businesses and the broader community needed to prepare and adjust to those circumstances. As part of the lessons learnt from stage 1, we need to engage with businesses really early, and that is what we have done through this project. We have engaged really early to make sure that they could start preparing for this period of disruption and change. Some of those businesses, including businesses that set up during the period since I announced that the disruption would be occurring, have pivoted their business models to do some different things to respond to this time.

What we would provide in support is clearly outlined in the business partnership plan. Of course, if businesses have issues during the construction phase that they want to raise with Infrastructure Canberra, we are very happy to hear about that. We have relationship managers that are employed specifically for that purpose, to hear from businesses about the issues, and then we will see how we can engage and manage those specific issues. It could be about access for trucks or deliveries to their business, for example—

MS CASTLEY: Or a promised footpath from a car park that did not occur.

Mr Steel: Those sorts of things. There may be some minor improvements to

infrastructure that can be made to accommodate them, depending on what it is.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, to clarify, my question was: have you personally met with these businesses? I understand that, for years, you have been saying that this will happen. That is different to consultation. I am wondering whether you personally have met with these businesses—yes or no?

Mr Steel: It is not different. It is one government. We are engaging directly with the businesses—

MS CASTLEY: You, as the minister: have you—

Mr Steel: and that has been achieved through literally door-knocking them for a long period in advance to engage, but also through established stakeholder reference groups. I have met with some of the stakeholder reference groups. A wide variety of affected groups participate in those. So—

MS CASTLEY: Minister, you are not answering my question.

Mr Steel: I think I have answered the question. Thanks, Chair.

MS CASTLEY: Have you personally met with the businesses on London Circuit and—

Mr Steel: Through the stakeholder groups.

MS CASTLEY: You personally. Have you met with them?

Mr Steel: I have met with the affected organisations, and they have had an ability to have their say through consultation in relation to the development application for the project and the other consultations that have been available as well.

MS CASTLEY: I understand that, on the corner of Northbourne, where the bus interchange is, there also needs to be work undertaken on the footpath area. I would like to understand that. I believe the understanding is that two weeks of work needs to occur in that spot and it will be cordoned off for two years. Is that correct information?

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Infrastructure Canberra to talk a bit about the program, but the initial phase is really focusing on some of the early works, utilities, relocations and removals.

Ms Geraghty: Ms Castley, can you give me the exact location you are talking about?

MS CASTLEY: Yes. Off Northbourne Avenue, into the bus interchange. I do not know the name of that street.

Mr Haraldson: I have read and understand the privilege statement. The works that are being undertaken are at the corner of East Row and London Circuit. There is also work between East Row, Theatre Lane and Northbourne Avenue. That work will take around two years to complete. What we are seeing is the removal of street furniture. You will see trees being removed. You will see the footpath outside the Sydney Building being

raised to the level under the colonnades. A great deal of work needs to occur in that area, as well as the median areas that mirror the work that is happening on the western side of London Circuit.

MS CASTLEY: It will not just be cordoned off for a couple of weeks worth of work; it will be for two years, so there is lots of work to be done. That will not take two full years, but it will be blocked off for two years?

Mr Haraldson: There will be fences in place for the two years. The actual, exact areas from time to time may move, especially around the colonnades. Where they need access to the footpaths or—

MS CASTLEY: Or the services underneath.

Mr Haraldson: Or services and utilities, there will be access there. There will also be some landscaping and hardscaping improvements to the area. That work will take two years. Those fences will move in and out periodically through that time.

Mr Steel: That is part of the communication with businesses. As the construction program changes, in different phases, there will be regular communication about when those changes will be made, so that businesses understand what is occurring. But it has been very clear, through the development application process, what the footprint of the project is, which includes a major redevelopment of the intersection of Northbourne Avenue and London Circuit—both sides.

It includes construction of new pedestrian infrastructure, as part of a safe intersection design. That will support light rail and pedestrian access, and that includes that area that you mentioned; that will be part of the construction project. It is not an ancillary, temporary section. It is part of the stage 2A project, and there will be substantial works occurring there, as there will be on the western side of London Circuit.

Mr Haraldson: The other thing—and this goes back to the minister's point on the business partnership plan and the relationship manager—is that the project will work with the businesses to ensure that there is no shutdown of any area if it is not needed. Depending on how the works get scoped, if there is the ability to remove fences early, that is what will be done.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I want to have a chat about planning for future stages of light rail. The light rail stage 2B environmental impact statement was due to be submitted to the federal environment department by 31 December 2024. That is from the budget statements. According to one of your statements earlier this month, that draft is pending consultation. Has the government fallen behind schedule in submitting that EIS as part of the EPBC approval process?

Mr Steel: It was submitted, as per the time frames that you mentioned. I will not pre-empt an announcement on the consultation, but it will be very soon, and it is consistent with the broader time frames that we have for the project.

THE CHAIR: So it was submitted in December last year, or before?

Mr Steel: Yes. Obviously, there is back and forth with the commonwealth that has to occur.

Ms Geraghty: It was submitted for a completeness check; that is part of the process. It was also submitted to the planning authority at the same time. We have now received those comments back, and we are now updating the document so that it can be formally submitted. That is the usual process.

Mr Steel: It is not public at the moment.

THE CHAIR: It was submitted for a completeness check, but it was not actually submitted for consideration?

Mr Steel: No, it was submitted, but before it can go on public exhibition, as part of the consultation process, the completeness check has to be agreed. It has been submitted, but there are a few tweaks that need to be made to the EIS before it can go on public exhibition. Minor formatting issues were raised.

THE CHAIR: That sounds—

Mr Steel: It is a 1,000-page document that we are talking about here, so it is extensive.

THE CHAIR: Do you have any time frame for when it would go on exhibition? Do you have any time frame for what happens now?

Mr Steel: That is what will be announced. I will not make that announcement today, if that is okay.

THE CHAIR: You will be announcing that at another time—what the time frame is?

Mr Steel: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Excellent; that is good to hear. Out in Belconnen, we are quite interested in stage 3. As you know, we have a lot of development going on in Woden town centre, UC, out at Ginninderry and with the north side hospital. From previous experience with the Belco busway, a lot of people understand the need to do long-term route planning—maybe not contracts, procurement and construction, but route planning. At what stage in this term will that route planning commence for stage 3 so that developers and the community know where light rail stage 3 will be going?

Mr Steel: We have set that out already through work that has been undertaken, with Transport Canberra and City Services providing input into the development of district strategies, including the district strategy for the inner north and the city, as well as Belconnen. The future light rail line is articulated in those documents so that, from a planning perspective, people understand what is proposed in the future in terms of the future network for light rail and a possible stage 3 route.

The priority at this stage is stage 2. There will not be extensive further work undertaken on the development of stage 3 while we are focused on building stage 2A of light rail, and then progressing with stage 2B, through the design and planning process and

business case development.

That is the priority. That is where all the resourcing is going on at the moment. Of course, we have done that futureproofing work in terms of the planning work for stage 3. At a later time there may be an opportunity to continue some further planning for stage 3, but, at the moment, the priority is stage 2.

THE CHAIR: We know where it is going, from the district strategies, and there is no doubt about that. There will not be a kind of Barton dogleg; we do not have any doubt about what the plan is?

Mr Steel: There is more detailed work to be done on the exact alignment.

THE CHAIR: When would that detailed work on the alignment be done?

Mr Steel: Once we are not focusing on delivering stage 2, which is the priority at the moment.

THE CHAIR: You will start planning stage 3 when you complete stage 2?

Mr Steel: No. There may be an opportunity to plan for stage 3 concurrent with the construction of stage 2, but, at the moment, during this term, the focus is on planning and design of stage 2B and construction of stage 2A.

THE CHAIR: I understand that there is a limited workforce, but the same skills would not be working on it. When you are preparing EISs, and doing planning work and feasibility studies, different people will be working on that, as opposed to people who will be working on construction and contract management. Is it the same workforce doing both those sets of work?

Mr Steel: There will be different skills required at different stages of the project. Different skills and trades will be required at different phases. The idea that you could somehow have every single person that is working on stage 2 simply roll into stage 3 is probably highly unlikely. Given that the design work is happening now on stage 2, it will probably not be a neat segue into designing stage 3. There will be a significant gap, because the budget reality is that we can only afford to deliver one stage of light rail per decade, which is what the government has clearly outlined. At the moment the priority is delivering stage 2.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Are you delivering 2A plus 2B per decade?

Mr Steel: Yes, 2A and 2B.

THE CHAIR: Within one decade?

Mr Steel: They are both funded.

THE CHAIR: Yes, and they will both be delivered in one decade?

Mr Steel: We are talking about one stage being delivered a decade, so we have had—

THE CHAIR: I am trying to work out whether you consider 2A as one stage or whether you consider 2A and 2B as one stage.

Mr Steel: It is as per the time frames that the government has set out for 2A and 2B.

THE CHAIR: Is that a question that you can answer? Can you tell me what is one stage of light rail per decade?

Mr Steel: You are pre-empting future budget decisions that would have to be made about the time frames for stage 3.

THE CHAIR: No. You have said that you deliver one stage per decade.

Mr Steel: We have set out clearly in the Assembly the time frames for 2A, which are as per the contract that we have with Canberra Metro. We discussed that earlier, and the time frame for 2B has also been set out to the Assembly.

THE CHAIR: We have a time frame of one stage per decade. Does that mean we will take 20 years to build stage 2 and 3, or does that mean we will take 30 years to build stage 2 and 3?

Mr Steel: Future decisions would have to be made by government about the timing of stage 3. I am not in a place to be able to give you a time on stage 3. At the moment our commitment is to deliver stage 2.

THE CHAIR: Within one decade or two decades?

Mr Steel: Within the time frames that we have set out to the Assembly, which have not changed.

MS CARRICK: Minister, I am interested in the Belco busway. Is the light rail alignment to Belconnen the same alignment as the Belco busway?

Mr Steel: We think it is likely to be. There is further work to be done on the Belconnen transitway. That work is underway now, looking at updating some feasibility work that had been undertaken on the Belconnen busway and bus priority measures in the corridor, particularly looking at Haydon Drive, as well as Belconnen Way. I will hand over to Ben McHugh to provide some further information.

Mr McHugh: Thanks for the question, Ms Carrick. We have recently finalised the procurement of a consultant to progress the work that the minister has just talked about. The first stage of that work is to look at the provision of a future alignment for light rail, and that will allow for probably a couple of minor adjustments, but generally along Haydon Drive and College Street, and potentially interacting with the university.

The reason we need to do that planning work first is so that, when we make recommendations for more immediate bus priority improvements along the corridor, they take into consideration future construction of light rail, mitigation of redundant works and other things. There will be some thinking done in that—

MS CARRICK: The busway will be changed from a busway to a light rail alignment?

Mr McHugh: No. Predominantly, the busway exists along College Street into the town centre and picks up again on Belconnen Way. There is a bit of a gap on Haydon Drive. The work that comes out of this report will focus on bus priority along Haydon Drive and around the hospital, and it will take into consideration the future light rail alignment, so that we do not build one on top of the other and we have to close a busway for a construction phase of light rail in the future. We can maintain priority of public transport through both of those phases.

MS CARRICK: When it is all done, at the end, coming out of Belco you will have a light rail alignment and a busway?

Mr Steel: They are future decisions that have not yet been made by government. We are considering at the moment whether there could be, in the short term, some bus priority improvements to the existing corridor.

MS CARRICK: Yes, I appreciate that.

Mr Steel: And with a view to making sure that it is futureproofed for light rail in the future. If a future government makes a decision to build light rail stage 3 through the same corridor, we would like to not undertake as much abortive work as possible. There may be buses that still need to run through the corridor, as Mr McHugh has been talking about, even when light rail potentially moves through the corridor. It is about futureproofing for that, so that when we make an investment in bus priority measures, we get the best outcome.

MS CARRICK: Is it because the corridor is wide enough there that you can have in the corridor a light rail alignment and a bus lane?

Mr Steel: It is possible.

MS CARRICK: But for south siders, you cannot have a light rail alignment and a bus lane; so whoever is on the bus from the south side will be caught in traffic.

Mr Steel: Not necessarily. I do not think that is the right assumption at all with stage 2B. We could talk a little bit about the design. We do know that there are constraints along the Civic to Woden corridor, particularly on Capital Circle, and the proposal by the opposition to remove a lane on that would cause traffic chaos, which is what you would do if you put a bus lane in. We are not proposing to do that. We want to run light rail on State Circle, so that you avoid taking out any room on Capital Circle for the general traffic network, and so that you do not cause that traffic chaos as a result, and you are adding to the capacity of the transport network, not taking it away.

MS CASTLEY: I am a bit confused about the timeframe, going to Ms Clay's question. Will 2A and 2B be completed within a decade? I know you said you have given the timeframe—

Mr Steel: Yes, we have. I am happy to take that on notice and provide that again.

MS CASTLEY: Can you table it for the committee?

Mr Steel: Yes, I am happy to. It has been tabled in the Assembly. I think there have been about five different motions in the Assembly over the last term.

MS CASTLEY: Of course, there have; I just think it would be great to have it for the committee.

Mr Steel: We have tabled that and, I think, retabled it. We are happy to table it again.

MS CASTLEY: I appreciate that. Thank you, Minister.

MR PARTON: Minister, I want to follow up on Ms Clay's questioning. The government has committed to building a stage of light rail per decade, and the very clear question from Ms Clay was: will stage 2A and stage 2B be considered as separate stages, so that they would be a decade each, or will stage 2B be considered as a stage that would be completed in a decade?

Mr Steel: No. The timeframes for stage 2A are clearly set out in the contract, and 2B has already been tabled in the Assembly. It is the timeframe that we have set out. If you have an alternative to that, which I understand is not delivering it—

MR PARTON: Minister, that is not the question.

Mr Steel: and that is not delivering any stage for a decade.

MR PARTON: That is not the question.

Mr Steel: It is not delivering anything at all for the community.

MR PARTON: Minister, the question that Ms Clay and I are asking is this: given that the government has committed to deliver a stage of light rail every decade, are we considering stage 2A as one stage and stage 2B as another stage or are they, indeed, one stage, being stage 2?

Mr Steel: The commitment is to deliver stage 2 of light rail. That is the commitment, and we have set out the time frames for those stages. People can have their views on that. Some people do not want to build it at all; some people do. But the time frames are as they are set out. The more detailed time frames for stage 2B will be when we actually contract for the project. We have contracted for stage 2A, so that is very clear—the requirements of Canberra Metro in terms of when it will be delivered.

We are yet to go through that procurement for stage 2B at this point. That is likely to be something that occurs in the next term, because the commitment at this stage is to do planning and design this term and consider a business case. The procurement end of that is likely to occur in the next term. It will be a decision of government in the future around those things, but we have set out the time frame that we expect for stage 2B. It has been well ventilated in the community and tabled on several occasions, and I am happy to table that again.

MR PARTON: Given it appears that the government is considering stage 2A and stage 2B as separate stages, and you have a commitment to do a stage per decade, what would be in the way of stopping the government saying, “Okay, stage 3 is going to be to Belconnen. We’re going to break it up into stage 3A, stage 3B and stage 3C,” and still deliver each of those stages per decade?

Mr Steel: I reject the premise of the question.

MR PARTON: The premise of the question is happening right now. It is happening out there right now.

Mr Steel: It is a hypothetical question. Decisions by future governments will have to be made about future stages. That is not a decision that we are making right now because our focus is on delivering stage 2, which is the commitment that we have made.

MR CAIN: Minister, describe in time terms what is the decade in which stage 2 will be completed? When did that decade start and when will it complete?

Mr Steel: We have set out that—

MR CAIN: Just tell us the dates.

Mr Steel: I have already taken—

MR CAIN: Tell us the dates.

Mr Steel: I have already taken that on notice. That has a proposed completion date in the 2030s. I am happy to re-table that. We have taken that on notice.

MS CARRICK: Given that light rail will take a long time and will cost a lot of money, I am interested in bus services now. Will you improve the bus services from the west of Molonglo and Weston Creek to the east, where the jobs are—Parkes, Fyshwick and the city?

Mr Steel: We are continuing to look at improving the network. There are some specific commitments that Labor took to the election around improvements to specific bus services, particularly the rapids. We will be looking at how we can implement those.

MS CARRICK: Will you provide a service from Weston Creek through Woden to Fyshwick? There is no east-west service from Woden to Fyshwick, or indeed from Weston Creek or Molonglo.

Mr Steel: I do not think that is quite true, actually. Do you want to provide some further information on the network? There is a service to Fyshwick.

MS CARRICK: Can somebody tell me what number it is, from the Woden bus interchange, the town centre, to Fyshwick?

Mr Steel: The 902 service currently goes to Fyshwick.

MS CARRICK: From Woden?

Mr Steel: Yes.

MS CARRICK: Thank you.

Mr Steel: There may be further opportunities to improve services to that area in the future. Obviously, it only serves part of Fyshwick, and there are opportunities to connect with other buses, including the rapid.

MS CARRICK: Thank you; I will look that up.

MS TOUGH: Minister, I was wondering if you could give us an update on the delivery of the Woden Bus Depot.

Mr Steel: I will hand over to Ben McHugh, but I understand it is in the handover phase. We are looking forward to that bus depot starting to be utilised, particularly by electric buses. It will be one of the largest electric bus depots in Australasia, purpose-built for charging electric buses. So we are really excited about it. But it needs to be built into the network to be fully utilised. So, in the interim, it may be used for lay—over. It actually needs a network change to integrate the depot into the routes. That is likely to occur in the term 2 network and timetable change.

Mr McHugh: Thanks, Minister, and thanks for the question, Ms Tough. The Woden Bus Depot project is a two-phase handover. The first handover phase has already occurred, and Transport Canberra are in possession of the depot and the depot site. We are undertaking our commissioning phase. So we are bringing in all of our workshop equipment and tools, familiarising our staff with the facility, getting the administration building ready and getting all our IT and everything set up.

The second handover phase is for the bus sheds. Those bus sheds include charging infrastructure for up to 104 battery-electric buses, and they are in their final commissioning and testing phase at the moment. So we will be running electric buses through there and testing those out over a few weeks to make sure the charging infrastructure works. That will be over the coming few weeks in readiness for bringing the drivers, the bus operators and all of our support servicing staff—cleaners, fuellers and the like—in when the service begins out of that depot.

As the minister said, we will require effectively a network change to activate that function at the Woden Bus Depot. All of our drivers pick a shift of work for a period of time, and that shift starts and ends at a particular depot. So there will be a range of new shifts that we will be starting out at Woden, and we are in that planning phase with the workforce at the moment. That is the current status of the project.

MS TOUGH: Wonderful. What does it mean for the other depots? Does it just mean that there will be a new depot with new shifts starting from there?

Mr McHugh: Effectively, a lot of our staff follow the buses. We have a system where we base our resourcing on the number of vehicles that they are servicing. So we will

need to move some buses from our existing depots into the Woden depot. At the moment, our Tuggeranong and Belconnen bus depots have been operating at or above capacity from a design perspective. We will be able to bring those back to their design capacity, take some staff and buses but also build in the capacity to bring in fleet growth through the procurement processes that we have got in place. Hopefully, that answers your question.

MS TOUGH: Yes, that does. What are the key benefits overall of the new depot? I think you kind of covered that, but what are the key benefits?

Mr Steel: It is pretty significant in terms of the design for the electrical infrastructure. There was a lot of work to actually drag the high-voltage cable through from the Wanniasa substation through to both the Tuggeranong depot and the Woden depot—because we are doing electrification of both. Tuggeranong is a retrofit, but Woden is obviously purpose-built and it has some interesting features.

Mr McHugh: Yes, absolutely. There is a whole range of benefits. As we all know, Canberra is quite a geographically-spread city. At the moment, we run, effectively, a north and south side depot and buses start and end their runs in various parts of the city at any point in time. By bringing in what is almost a centralised depot, there are some efficiencies that we will gain from being able to start some of those other services closer to the home depot. So it helps from a network planning perspective. It also absolutely helps us to deliver on our Zero-emission Transition Plan objectives around reducing the emissions created by public transport across the system.

We will build in the capacity to charge, as I said, 104 electric buses out of there from day one. At day one, that will be the largest single electric bus depot in the country. There are some others being built at the moment that will beat us in a year or two, but we will hold that mantle for a little while, which we are very proud of. It also offers a range of other benefits from a workforce perspective. We are targeting some more diversity in our workforce in our Woden depot. We have managed to employ a female depot manager for, I think, the first time in Transport Canberra's history, and some female starters who will play senior roles in the management team down there. We are looking at every opportunity we can get out of this new facility. It will be a brand new and state of the art. Our staff will take advantage of those benefits as well.

MS TOUGH: Awesome. Thank you.

MR BRADDOCK: The original completion date for the Woden depot was meant to be June 2019, and we are now in 2025. It also doubled in cost from \$26 million to \$56 million. Have those delays driven those costs overrun? Is that \$56 million a final figure?

Mr Steel: As previously discussed at this committee, there were deliberate decisions made about the scope of the project. Originally, this project was proposed as basically a diesel bus depot. But, when I became transport minister in 2019, I made the decision to seek agreement from government to be able to expand the scope to be an electric bus depot. I think that was the right decision. It was made at a critical time when we were developing a new zero-emission transition plan for Transport Canberra, to transition our fleet to zero emissions by 2040. We got the outcome. It did delay the process and

increase the budget, but it was a deliberate decision around scope to be able to deliver on the ambition that we had to have a zero-emissions fleet. I think it has now proven to be the right decision in terms of giving us the capacity to charge an extra 100 buses and enable us to grow the fleet at a critical time and also to support that transition.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you

MS CARRICK: Since the change in the bus interchange in Woden from the old one to the new one, it has expanded. It is now taking up a layover at Phillip Oval and a layover on Easty Street. It has grown. Will the new bus depot provide layover facilities so that we can take back some of the land that has now become bus layovers and use it for other purposes that are so desperately needed close to the interchange?

Mr Steel: To some extent, there will be some layovers there that were not possible before the depot was opened. But we will still need those layover spaces in Woden that have been built as part of the broader Woden bus interchange project. I do not know whether officers want to comment further.

MS CARRICK: There was never really planning for such a massive interchange that takes so much of our town centre.

Mr Steel: The interchange project has moved the interchange to free up space to actually build a significant community facility in the CIT Woden. Yes, it has moved the infrastructure but it has actually freed up space where we can return it back to the community in terms of a new western plaza, which will have landscaping and bring more canopy cover to the town centre—a brand new community facility in the Woden CIT, which is going to provide a fantastic benefit from a skills point of view. The decision was really made to try to not just build a new CIT but also regenerate and renew what was an old and, quite frankly, unsafe interchange and build something new that would provide that broader benefit to the community and also future proof for light rail which, of course, is being delivered through the project with a new light rail stop being constructed as part of that on Callam Street.

MS CARRICK: I am not allowed to speak to this now, so I will not. But there is no activation around the CIT or very little. That is another matter that we could talk of.

Mr Steel: Ben has some further detail about the layover arrangements from an operational point of view.

Mr McHugh: There are some temporary layover facilities in place because of the displacement of buses whilst construction has taken up a large footprint in the area. So there will be an opportunity to consolidate. For example, the bus layover that used to exist adjacent to Callam Street, Bowes and Matilda—just on that street—will no longer be required. That is obviously being taken up by a future development opportunity. The Launceston Street layover is the permanent replacement for that. That is effectively giving some land back here and then utilising some land at the end of Launceston Street. The east district is the area that is currently temporarily layover space that we will be looking to repurpose.

The depot serves a different function as layovers. They are generally short, 10- to

15-minute stops, and then a short lunch break. So we do need them close to the interchanges because that is where we start and end a lot of our services as well. I think to answer your question, there is a lot more footprint on the ground now but, due to temporary arrangements, that will be consolidated.

Mr Steel: On the Bowes Street carpark, which Mr McHugh was referring to, prior to the construction of the temporary interchange which is there at the moment, there was quite a significant section of that car park that was cordoned off with concrete barriers just for bus layover to support the old bus interchange. That no longer will be required following the new interchange being built.

MS CARRICK: If we can eliminate some of the layovers to free them up, that would be good. Just one thing: 902 does not go into Fyshwick proper; it goes to the markets and the CIT but it does not go into Fyshwick.

Mr Steel: Which is in Fyshwick, yes. I noted that, and there are connection opportunities.

MS CARRICK: Pragmatically, it does not go into, for example, Newcastle Street and parts of Fyshwick where one would consider—

Mr Steel: There are connection opportunities through the R2 and other services that can go into the broader Fyshwick. But that is not to say that there are not further improvements that can be made in the future based on demand and interest from the community. That would be considered by transport planners.

THE CHAIR: We have heard of a number of delays and long timeframes for delivering these major public transport networks and projects. We are in a climate crisis. Transport is our largest section of our carbon inventory, and it is growing as a proportion. Is Transport Canberra or Infrastructure Canberra looking at any climate impacts for these delays? It is okay if this is a yes or no question.

Mr Steel: You would have to be more specific about which project you are talking about.

THE CHAIR: The Woden bus interchange delays and the long time that it is taking to delivering light rail. Does Infrastructure Canberra or Transport Canberra do any climate carbon modelling when you are looking at these projects? Mr McHugh?

Mr McHugh: We do not specifically model that, no.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for that answer. Infrastructure Canberra?

Ms Geraghty: We do. We do when we do the modelling around design and business case development. But I am not sure of your question in relation to the delays. That is the bit I did not understand.

THE CHAIR: I might lodge something on notice, so we do not take up too long.

Mr Steel: We have discussed one project, which is the Woden Bus Depot, where a

deliberate decision was made based on trying to get a zero-emissions outcome. But changing the scope of the project therefore resulted in a delay to the project to deliver that increased scope. That directly considered a climate outcome in terms of delivering not a diesel bus depot where fossil fuels are burnt but having one that is fit for purpose for electrical vehicles.

THE CHAIR: I will lodge something on notice for light rail. Thank you.

Mr Cahif: I might add on the public transport interchange that, because there is a temporary arrangement there, the time for the public transport interchange to get to its final state is still operating as an interchange on a temporary basis.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, one of the long-running issues with a number of ACT government projects are questions about value for money—and, by that I mean, the projects benefits are greater than their costs. To begin, could you walk us through how the government assesses whether a proposed project will provide value for money and how these assessments interact, about decisions on whether to proceed with a transport infrastructure project?

Mr Steel: Well, I am sorry, but value for money is defined under the Government Procurement Act. I appreciate that you have your own definition about what that means, but, when it comes to procuring infrastructure projects, they are procured in alignment with government procurement law and policy. As part of that, with every infrastructure project that is put forward to the budget, a business case is required. Of course, as part of that, for infrastructure projects, typically—and particularly for the larger infrastructure projects, there would be a benefit-cost analysis undertaken, which would examine those benefits and costs. Then a decision would be taken by government as to how the project should be implemented and whether this is a project that we want to continue to fund and make an investment decision on.

MS CASTLEY: What discount rate does the government use for the business cases for infrastructure projects?

Mr Steel: It is the Infrastructure Australia guided discount rate.

MS CASTLEY: Do you know what that is?

Mr Steel: I think it is seven per cent.

Mr Cahif: We do some sensitivity analysis around four per cent and seven per cent.

Mr Steel: We provide a sensitivity analysis to provide a range as well as the Infrastructure Australia guided rate, for transparency's sake, to provide a range of different outcomes depending on which discount rate you apply.

MS CASTLEY: Is a proposal automatically disqualified with government if it fails to demonstrate that it is providing value for money?

Mr Steel: You cannot procure something unless it is value for money, under law. I do not know how many times I have to say this. I have said it in the Assembly multiple times. Just refer to the Government Procurement Act.

MS CASTLEY: I am new to the portfolio, Minister.

Mr Steel: Refer to the Government Procurement Act.

MS CASTLEY: Has the government ever publicly committed to a project and then decided not to proceed because the economics did not stack up?

Mr Steel: I am responsible for light rail in this hearing. I am not sure that that—

MS CASTLEY: Light rail.

Mr Steel: And the bus depot and a couple of other projects. By far most of the infrastructure projects fit outside of my portfolio; so I would not want to comment across government.

MS CASTLEY: It could be yes or no.

THE CHAIR: Minister, if you could—

Mr Steel: No, I cannot take it on notice if it is not in my portfolio.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I am sorry, I am just interjecting as chair. If you could pause for a moment. I was just trying to hit pause. I am just going to remind everybody on all sides of the table to speak one at a time for Hansard and to model excellent behaviour. I am so sorry. But, if I interject like that, it is because I am acting in my capacity as chair. I do not mean to interrupt you, but I do need you to stop talking so that I can run the hearing. Ms Castley, did you need to restate your question and start the answer again or do you think you know where we are at?

MS CASTLEY: I think the minister tried to deflect out of this portfolio. I am particularly asking about infrastructure within the transport policy.

Mr Steel: Okay; great. Thank you for that clarification. I can comment in relation to light rail. In relation to light rail, we are doing what you do with infrastructure projects, which is that you undertake the planning and design work; you move through that work; you go through the approvals processes; you understand the scope of the project that you are trying to deliver; and then we will consider a business case. Stage 2 is what I am particularly referring to. The business case will look at how the project should be delivered based on the scope that we have approval for.

We have been very clear that there are significant planning risks in this particular project and so it has proceeded slightly differently compared to stage 1, for example, where we do want to move through those planning processes before we undertake the business case development. That ensures the business case is actually contemporary, particularly around costs with the current market conditions at the point that we make an investment decision and then go out for procurement and out to market for the project

and that we can understand the scope of the project which will be determined through those approvals processes, because they are delivered by third parties—the NCA and commonwealth environment department being two of those entities. There may be conditions that they put on the approval that will then need to be factored into the scope. That will be considered as part of the approvals and then feed into the business case development for the project.

We have been clear that we support and are committed to the construction of stage 2 down to Woden. We have signed a contract on stage 2A. We have undertaken the work on raising London Circuit and now we are doing what we need to do with stage 2B, as we should do with all infrastructure projects, which is moving through planning and design and then through into a business case process.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, I am confused why you can only talk about light rail, yet you have the entire transport portfolio.

Mr Steel: I do not have roads in my portfolio or active travel.

MS CASTLEY: You have MyWay. You have all sorts of projects that you undertake—infrastructure as well as digital.

Mr Steel: Sure. The finance minister appeared on Monday to talk about procurement, and I am not sure that you raised those questions there. Infrastructure Canberra may be able to answer your questions in relation to some of the infrastructure when they appear with the Chief Minister.

MR CAIN: Point of order, Chair: the minister seems intent on lecturing the members as to how and what questions they ask. It is bordering on contempt of this Assembly committee.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cain, do you wish to call a hold to the hearings so the committee can have an in-camera discussion of this or can we proceed with questions, noting that if we call a hold, we have the minister for another 30 minutes and we will not be able to ask him questions for that time.

Mr Steel: If you have a question that you would like me to take on notice where I am not the responsible minister, I might be able to seek advice from the other minister and provide an answer back, if that helps the committee to get the questions answered, rather than doing a callback. But callback may be another option as well for another minister.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Ms Castley, you said you had two supps. Is there anything that you are certain is for this session that you would like to ask right this second?

MS CASTLEY: Yes. Section 8 of the Government Procurement Act requires projects to provide value for money. Does this mean that any project proposal in which the costs exceed the benefits would be unlawful? Can you explain that to us with your transport hat on?

Mr Steel: No, and I think that has just proven, in terms of providing an answer to your previous question, that the Government Procurement Act provides the definition of

value for money. Of course, we would seek advice from Infrastructure Canberra in terms of an infrastructure project, when it comes to procurement, as to whether something is value for money. There are governance structures in place, particularly for the major projects, where we have project boards that are also there providing government with advice as to whether a project would achieve value for money.

In terms of one project—which goes to your earlier question about one project within my portfolio where we have made a decision and the government has made a decision not to go ahead with a project because it was not value for money, the answer is: the first procurement on the new next generation ticketing system. We were criticised by the opposition for not entering into a contract on that first procurement. The advice that had come through from the tender evaluation panel was that it was not going to be value for money. So we did not then go into contract with a delivery partner for that project. Instead, we pursued other options, eventually leading to a second tender process where we went out based on a slightly different scope and then were able to go into contract with NEC Australia. So there has been an example of a project where we have actually said, “No, this is not value for money; we are not going ahead.” That was based on advice by the department. I think it was appropriate and consistent with the Government Procurement Act.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. Ms Castley, how would you like to proceed from here, noting that I have members with two supplementaries on this line?

MS CASTLEY: Look, I just feel that the minister is obligated to answer a number of questions, and he has not. I am wondering if it is worth reminding the minister of standing order 264A. We may need to call the minister back to answer some questions if he is refusing to answer them today.

THE CHAIR: Again, I have options, and I will have to ask my committee colleagues. We may have to call an in-camera. I have had initial advice that, actually, the minister does not need to answer procurement questions in this session. I am so sorry to tell you that. I suspect that will be—

MS CASTLEY: It is not just procurement, but I take your advice.

THE CHAIR: Yes, it is probably not. It is probably in order, but if any committee member would like us to stop the hearing, I will have to do that, if my committee members ask me to stop the hearing. The other thing you can do is lodge on notice and ask for a call-back. I do not know how those options will play out for you, but they are options.

MS CASTLEY: Thank you. I understand.

Mr Steel: I have just been informed—I was not aware but, I think, the Chief Minister appeared with Infrastructure Canberra to talk about the entire agency. If it is something outside of my portfolio that relates to other infrastructure projects, there may be an opportunity for a call-back of that particular agency.

THE CHAIR: Excellent, thank you.

Mr Steel: But the other option applies, which is, that if you would like to ask a question on notice that is not directly in my portfolio, I can seek advice from that minister and provide that on their behalf, if that helps.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I am going to go to the supplementaries, which are Ms Carrick and Mr Cain. Ms Carrick?

MS CARRICK: My question is about the business case, off the back of Ms Castley's questioning. I assume that you will be seeking funding from the commonwealth government. You do talk about that, so I assume you will be submitting the business case to Infrastructure Australia for assessment of the merits of the proposal.

Mr Steel: Yes.

Ms Geraghty: For stage 2B, do you mean?

MS CARRICK: Yes.

Ms Geraghty: Yes, we would, once that is underway.

MS CARRICK: I assume, then, that you will follow the processes of Infrastructure Australia, whereby they will look at the different stages in the business case. So, the first stage will be looking at the problem, what are the objectives and what are the options. It is usually a multi-criteria analysis that looks at the criteria that we are trying to address and then looks at all the different options. Will you be going through the Infrastructure Australia stages to submit that business case?

Mr Cahif: We will be working very closely with Infrastructure Australia and working through the Capital Framework for our decisions and business cases and align them—so, yes.

MS CARRICK: And will that consider all options, including non-light-rail options?

Mr Cahif: Yes, there is—

Ms Geraghty: We are required to do so.

MS CARRICK: Okay, thank you.

MR CAIN: Minister, I believe you said a bit earlier, during a previous question, that both 2A and 2B had been budgeted for. What is the amount budgeted for stage 2B?

Mr Steel: It is the planning and design work for this term, so it has been half funded by the Commonwealth—\$100 million.

MR CAIN: That is the Commonwealth's contribution?

Mr Steel: That is a combined contribution.

Ms Geraghty: Combined.

MR CAIN: So when you said that stage 2B had been budgeted for, to what were you specifically referring?

Mr Steel: Over the forward estimates.

MR CAIN: For what activity, though?

Mr Steel: For the planning and design.

MR CAIN: Only planning and design?

Mr Steel: That is the phase that we are in at the moment. We have not made the investment decision yet. That will occur after a business case is developed. We need to go through that process first, which is why the commitment—

MR CAIN: Just clarifying your statement, thank you.

Mr Steel: that we took to the election was to undertake that planning and design work first and to consider a business case.

MR CAIN: Thank you, Chair; I have got enough.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. I will remind everyone once again: no interrupting.

MR BRADDOCK: I have a question about buses running early, which can have a greater customer impact than buses running late. I am trying to understand why on earth we allow buses to actually run early.

Mr Steel: There are a range of reasons, but in terms of treating the symptom, there has recently been an update, over the last couple of days, where we have improved the data feed coming through, with the real-time data being displayed both in the MyWay app and through other sources to provide much better information about buses running earlier so that, if there is a bus running earlier, a customer can see that on the app and be able to take that into account when they are planning their journey. That will help, but, certainly, in terms of the operational issue that your question goes to, I will hand over to Transport Canberra.

Mr McHugh: I might just touch on it lightly and, potentially, Ian McGlenn, who runs our bus operations, might have a more detailed answer. As you have stated, buses running early can be more problematic than buses running late for customers, so getting the information out there is our primary objective.

Drivers are also trained to run to time and to timetable, and the new driver console that has been introduced as part of the new MyWay+ system helps identify how they are travelling against the time, the timetable and the frequencies. They are trained to pause at particular stops to ensure that they do not get too far ahead. Sometimes, if you have got a long break between stops and traffic is flowing, the timetable might have allowed for some congestion, and then you can get ahead of time. Typically, we would train our drivers to try and hold at stops, align again with the timetable and continue.

MR BRADDOCK: I will use an example. I look up at the Legislative Assembly bus stop right now, and there are quite a number of buses running a significant time ahead, up to 12 minutes ahead. Obviously, they are not stopping, for whatever reason, to ensure they are keeping to the network timetable.

Mr McHugh: Yes, it might be that the interchange would be the best opportunity for them to pause. There are places in the network where we have lots of buses running through stops that might not be ideal safe places for a bus to pause and wait for the timetable.

Again, in the work we do in planning the network, we allow for congestion in the network. Every time we update the network, we review the run times, and we use all that data that you are talking about to refine those run times and get them as close as possible to the actuals. Then we, obviously, have to manage the variances in the network on a daily basis. Sometimes you have busy days; sometimes you do not. We just need to work through that. But, yes, I take that point.

Mr Steel: If you are referring to the live, real-time data feed, I think one of the points we had been discussing earlier in the week was that the earlier a bus is within its run—and that data is provided in relation to a future stop—and the longer between stops, the greater variance there is likely to be; but as it gets closer to the stop where it is meant to pick up a passenger, it might come down quite significantly. It is about providing some guidance to the community about how to read that information, so they might want to read it once the bus is coming a little bit closer to get a better understanding about how early it is running.

Mr McHugh: And for that particular point, Mr Braddock, we are looking at introducing additional timing points in the system to provide more accurate information. At the moment, most of those are aligned with bus stops, physical stop locations, but we are looking to add, potentially, some more timing points to make that information that is shared on the app more accurate.

MR BRADDOCK: Minister, I am glad to hear that, but, for example, there is a bus which is literally arriving now, which is listed as 15 minutes early, so obviously it has not had that narrowing impact.

Mr Steel: And it is at the stop? Is it showing it at the stop?

MR BRADDOCK: It is saying that now, at the moment—let me pull it up—it is just one block away from the stop, so pity the poor customer—

Mr Steel: But it might be a case, if it is one block away from the stop, which is effectively the Civic interchange vis-a-vis the Legislative Assembly stop, that it may pause in the interchange for a number of minutes.

MR BRADDOCK: Actually, it has just turned into London Circuit, and it is, literally, 100 metres away. Also, I have noticed there are instances where the bus is scheduled and it is saying that it is coming, yet it might be a few minutes down the road beyond the stop, which of course is another issue.

Mr Steel: Similar to—

THE CHAIR: Minister, please just wait for the question to finish.

MR BRADDOCK: I have finished, Chair.

Mr Steel: Thanks. Similar to apps like Uber, there is a slight lag, and when you actually see the icon of the bus moving, it gets updated. I think there are a number of seconds—

Mr McHugh: Yes, every three seconds, and then it is updated again at the timing point, so at each stop, it resets to now. Sorry, was your question that the bus has already left the stop, even though it says it is there now?

MR BRADDOCK: It has already left the stop and is several minutes down the road, according to what the app is telling me. I suppose what all this comes back to is: how can the average user—who you seem to indicate needs a bit more education—actually read the information in order to be able to utilise the public transport service system? Is that the best system?

Mr McHugh: I am not sure of the question.

Mr Steel: I think the view is that we want to provide as much information as possible to people that they might find useful in planning their trip. So, yes, we could have made the decision not to provide any information on early running. For the early stage of MyWay+ that was the case; we did not provide that information to people. We have worked through the data-feed to be able to provide that information for people, but there may be a need to provide some extra information so that people can understand what it actually means. I will hand over to Ms Sturman.

Ms Sturman: Thanks, Minister. I think there is also the point, which I think Ian might be able to touch on, that the time that was built into the timetable predicting delays with infrastructure works, both at Woden and London Circuit, has inadvertently caused longer journey times and has caused this impact, which is actually not really to do with the system and more to do with the timetable that we run to.

MR BRADDOCK: Can I just clarify: is this more about the driver guidelines, training and compliance in order to be able to effectively keep to the timeframe, if they can, and not run early?

Ms Sturman: I might hand to Ian to provide that.

Mr McGlenn: Good afternoon. I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement—tick. In relation to driver behaviours, at Transport Canberra, we have always had a philosophy, for many years, of one minute early to four minutes late is on time.

As Ms Sturman just referred to, we have built in some additional travel time into the city precinct due to what were foreseen as additional construction times for travel. On certain days and at certain times, that time is not required, but I cannot take it out of the timetable. It is not a flexible timetable. I cannot make it change every day. Some days

you will come into the city precinct, and you will take all that time up; other times it will go through.

Yes, we do actually ask the drivers to wait in the city interchange, but our transport officers in the city interchange, as well, will ascertain where—let's say it was a northbound route 2, how far the next route 2 is behind it—to keep that journey moving, because it is very frustrating for our customers that are actually on the bus then to have sit in the city and wait for 12 minutes, as per your example.

The reason we cannot change and have a flexible timetable is that a network is a big brick wall, and every brick in that wall is a journey with that journey time. If I needed extra time, I cannot take that brick out and make it longer or make the journey longer, because that bus has got something else to go and do, so then I would need to then go and put that journey somewhere else. To do that, the easiest way is to collapse the wall or collapse the whole network and build a new network, which I am undertaking at the present time. We have some new, realistic run times based on the data that we have been able to achieve, and you do not need as much time to come through the city precinct. Through the Parliamentary Triangle, Parkes and Barton, at different times of the day, it takes a little bit longer—due to it being 4.51 pm, when everybody knocks-off in that precinct, it becomes quite congested and it takes a little bit longer, so we have more realistic run times. Therefore, you are deriving savings. Using the existing bus fleet, we have been able to invest in more services.

MR BRADDOCK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: You have mentioned the timing points and guidelines. Are timing points and guidelines something you can take on notice to provide to the committee?

Mr McGlinn: Yes. They certainly can be. I note that the stop at the front of the Assembly is not a timing point. It has a timetable on it, but it is actually at the city interchange.

THE CHAIR: That is all right. We would love to see them. Thank you, Mr McGlinn.

Mr McGlinn: No problem.

MS CASTLEY: Minister, does Transport Canberra currently have enough bus drivers?

Mr Steel: We are constantly recruiting for more bus drivers because there is turnover in terms of attrition in the workforce. There is an aging workforce in Transport Canberra, and so, as we see bus operators retire, there is a need to constantly replace them. Also, we have ambitions to grow the network. There has been a lot of focus on this. I think the latest round is getting underway, with an opportunity for a tryout—actually driving a bus and getting a sense about what it means to be a driver. I will hand over to Ian to talk through that.

Mr McGlinn: If you are looking for a new job on Saturday, come and try during a day out at Sutton Road. It is very popular. Yesterday we had two information sessions: one during the day at Dickson and one at the Ainslie Football Club, attended by around 110 prospective people, which was good. Do I currently have enough drivers? Yes; I do. I

am on establishments, but, with each new network design, the establishments can change. Last year, I lost 60 people—five a month—due to retirement and other reasons. I have 1,050 drivers, and 200 are casual. The rest are permanent part-time and permanent full-time. Average years of service are 8.08, which is quite good for a big organisation.

I have people who have just received certificates, signed by the minister, for in excess of 40 years of service. I have new people. Last year, they asked about a reward and recognition issue and asked us to pursue that, and that is one of the things we do. We make sure that anybody with over 30 years of service gets a certificate signed by the minister. We also now have some medallions that are dedicated to years of service—every five years—and we have some of those for 50 years. We have some employees in the workshop who have worked over 50 years. But I have sufficient driver numbers.

MS CASTLEY: If there are days when you do not have enough, are services impacted? Are people called back or is that when you use your casual workforce?

Mr McGlinn: That is when we use the casual workforce. Also, we can divide the work. We refer to it as cutting up the block. We might ask people to volunteer and give them an extra run, noting that we have to stay within the national driving hours, so they cannot drive every day.

MS CASTLEY: You said you have 250 casuals?

Mr McGlinn: Two hundred.

MS CASTLEY: Is that because of the choice of bus drivers or is it just important for you to have a casual network?

Mr McGlinn: The casual drivers are predominantly to substantiate Saturdays and Sundays, to provide that regular service. But, if we have work available during the week, there are certain casuals. They are normally retired bus drivers who prefer to only work from Monday to Friday; they do not want to impact their weekend. So, if I have work and I cannot give it to my normal staff as additional hours, I will offer it to casuals.

MS CASTLEY: The annual report says there were 932 bus operators as at 30 June 2024. At Labor's election—you touched on this with regard to the tryout day—they had a policy of hiring 350 new bus drivers, noting attrition of 60 per year. This suggests that approximately six per cent of the drivers are leaving. Can you confirm that this is accurate? I know you said a lot are retiring. For those who are not retiring, why are they leaving Transport Canberra?

Mr McGlinn: There is obviously a variety of reasons. Some people have health issues, unfortunately.

MS CASTLEY: Do you do exit interviews and do you have the data on this?

Mr McGlinn: We certainly have a lot of data on it. Yes; we do exit interviews. Most of the people are retiring. Most of my workforce are people in their later years of work. A gentleman, Al Boscarato, at the information night, recently joined, probably in the

last eight months. He had worked in the public service and then at construction sites. He said it is the best thing he has done and that this job will see him through to his retirement.

MS CASTLEY: Do you have data around morale, culture and things like that that you also report on?

Mr McGlinn: We do undertake employee surveys. It is hard to do. We actually have to do it on a paper based system. The reason is that all drivers do not have computers in their vehicles, so they cannot do it electronically.

MR BRADDOCK: You said you have a sufficient workforce, but what about in terms of having a sufficient workforce available on the weekends in order to improve bus frequency? When do you think you will be in a position to do that?

Mr McGlinn: The minister might want to answer that one.

Mr Steel: We have a commitment to uplift frequency on the weekends, particularly on Sundays. That is a decision that we will have the opportunity to consider as part of the budget process. It is not just about recruitment; it is also a funding question. That will be future funding decision that will be made. I have always been of the view that we need to prioritise reliability of the system, so we need to be absolutely sure that we can deliver those services with the workforce that we have before we deliver that uplift. We made a decision to uplift services on Saturdays last year, which was referenced earlier. I think it was in April 2024. I think it was the right approach to incrementally increase it and get an understanding about how those services are being delivered, and whether there are any driver availability issues. We need to work through that and then look at the next stage of uplift. That is what we are looking at later this year, but it needs some further decisions to be made.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: When I walked in, I think Mr McHugh was describing the impact of the new Woden bus depot. I have a question about the public interchange at Woden more generally, which my son is starting to use quite regularly. What was the expected impact of that piece of infrastructure on the transport network?

Mr Steel: I am happy for either Infrastructure Canberra or Transport Canberra to respond.

Mr McHugh: Thanks for the question. Ms Carrick would be very familiar with conversations about the benefits of replacing the old Woden bus interchange with a new fit-for-purpose facility for the community and integrating that into other functions of the town centre, including a new CIT building, but also making it of today's expected quality and standard from a user's perspective. If you are familiar with the quality of the light rail interchanges or the new bus facilities we have built around the city and the uplift attracted from that investment, in terms of the quality of the public realm and the usage from the community, that is what you can expect as a benefit from replacing the old Woden bus interchange, which in its time was fantastic.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Nightmares from the nineties!

Mr McHugh: We have all had different experiences. If you think about the broader social benefits that will come from a brand-new integrated facility, with a new CIT building, and bringing that back into the town centre, that is what we are focused on.

Mr Steel: It is about leveraging the benefit that it will provide in terms of planning as well. A future Woden community centre is proposed to be built directly next to the new interchange to provide really good access to the community facility on Callam Street. The CIT has been mentioned, but also some private development will be occurring along there that will hopefully further activate it and make it a safer place to be. There is better solar access on Callam Street, so it will not be as dark and hidden away as the previous interchange. It will be open. There will still be shelter. We have responded through the design of the CIT building in particular but also through the shelter design, which takes some of its design inspiration from the existing light rail stop, which has been quite successful, to try to deliver multiple benefits to the community.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Is work being undertaken with the Transport Canberra workforce to prepare them? Does preparation need to be done for the workforce on how to use it effectively, how to—

Mr McHugh: For the interchange itself?

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Yes.

Mr McHugh: Absolutely. It will require our drivers to navigate a different route to start and end their journeys. At the moment, with all of the temporary things in place, it is quite circuitous and confusing for not just our customers but also our drivers to navigate. When complete, there will be a range of simple logical benefits of the public transport route through the town centre. It will be nice and linear, and ease of interchange from platform to platform will improve significantly. Our drivers will need to familiarise themselves with that before we move into operation.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: I have not heard this talked about, even while I was here. Is the light rail that is coming into Woden, into the public transport interchange, futureproof, for want of a better word? Is it going to be feasible to bring it in?

Mr Steel: Yes. It is incorporated in the design, but, in the interim, buses will actually use the station infrastructure as a bus stop. The rapid buses in particular, as I understand it, will be using that. I do not know who can provide information around the design. Probably Infrastructure Canberra.

THE CHAIR: Mr Werner-Gibbings, are you after specific information?

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: I wanted to know whether it is futureproofed, and that has been answered.

Mr Steel: With the way it is designed, the layout provides that.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Thank you.

MS CARRICK: My question is also about futureproofing. Regarding buses coming

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from the south or from Weston Creek, or from anywhere around the area, have you allowed for more buses in the future? For example, if you are coming from Fadden or Chisholm, at the moment your bus would take you to Erindale and you would change onto the pink rapid. You would get to Woden and you would change onto the tram. You have multiple interchanges to go in one direction, to the city. Have you allowed enough room for the buses to come out of Tuggeranong into Woden in one movement, like they used to pre Network 19, to avoid multiple interchanges to get to the city?

Mr McHugh: The very short answer is yes. In the design of the interchange, we considered how many buses would be operating in future networks and how much interchange or stop space we would need to accommodate each of those so that they could interchange with a light rail operation. So the short answer is yes, that has been visited.

Mr Steel: The extra stops provided, as part of the design to futureproof, provide extra capacity for expansion.

MS CARRICK: So we might see the buses from Tuggeranong having one movement back into Woden like they used to?

Mr Steel: This is about the design of the bus station. Future network decisions are yet to be made around some of those things. We will need to consider what the best options are.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, team. Well done. We got there. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. If you have taken questions on notice—I think a number were—please provide your answers to our hardworking committee secretariat within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof.

The committee suspended from 3.30 to 3.45 pm.

Appearances:

Steel, Mr Chris, Treasurer, Minister for Planning and Sustainable Development,
Minister for Heritage and Minister for Transport

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate

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

Ponton, Mr Ben, Director-General

Russell, Ms Meaghan, Director, Approvals and Advice, ACT Heritage

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

Swete Kelly, Dr Mary Clare, Senior Director, ACT Heritage

THE CHAIR: I welcome back Mr Chris Steel MLA, in his capacity as Minister for Heritage, and welcome to all our officials. Thank you for coming. The proceedings are being recorded and transcribed, and we will publish the transcript. We are also broadcasting and webstreaming live. If you take a question on notice, please state, “I will take that question on notice,” which helps the secretary when he is chasing down the answers.

When witnesses first speak, please state that you have read, understand and agree with the privilege statement. I will remind you now of the obligations in 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.

We are not having opening statements, so we will proceed straight to questions. I want to talk about submissions on places nominated for heritage listing. The Heritage Council receive submissions from people who want to place places and objects on our Heritage Register, and it also receives submissions on places that the Heritage Council itself has nominated for listing. Submissions received on development applications and zoning changes are made available publicly. Why are none of the submissions on heritage matters made available for public access?

Mr Burkevics: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. Thank you for the question. Can you clarify the question? It was a rather long one. Was it about DAs being notified, whereas items for nomination are not?

THE CHAIR: Yes. Heritage items do not seem to be publicly listed. Can you tell me whether or not they are publicly listed and, if they are not publicly listed, why that is the case?

Mr Burkevics: I will invite my colleague the Senior Director of ACT Heritage, Dr Swete Kelly, to answer the question.

Dr Swete Kelly: I have read and agree to the privilege statement. The information on nominations, once the council decides to accept the nomination, is available on the ACT Heritage Register, which has an internet website and is publicly available. Those nominations will all be listed there. Also, the area is available. That information is available through ACTmapi.

THE CHAIR: Are the details of the submissions also made public?

Dr Swete Kelly: Not the full detail of the submissions. Sometimes they are submitted in confidence, but the claims against statements of significance and why they are claiming that the place has heritage significance are included in those listings.

THE CHAIR: It is like a summary of what was in the submission. I understand exactly what you are saying. I am wondering why there is a difference. With DAs, people's submissions are put up on the DA register, I understand. They are public. I am wondering why, for heritage, it is different, and people's submissions are not put up. Why do you just put up a summary? Is there some policy reason to do that differently?

Mr Ponton: I have read and understood the privilege statement. There is no particular policy reason, Ms Clay. It just comes down to the legislation. The Planning Act is a more modern piece of legislation. It has been a little while since the Heritage Act was reviewed. Certainly, it is something that would be open to the Assembly to consider should it wish to. There is no particular policy reason. I suspect it is because the Planning Act is a more modern piece of legislation, in terms of that transparency.

Mr Burkevics: Ms Clay, further to Mr Ponton's advice, one of the provisions of the Heritage Act is, of course, that it does require the Heritage Council to accept a nomination. Whilst a nomination may be made, the Heritage Council is required to accept the nomination. Until, perhaps, such time that the nomination is indeed accepted, and then continues through the statutory process, it has to pass that first checkpoint of being accepted.

THE CHAIR: That makes perfect sense to me—that piece of the puzzle. Have you had any queries from members of the public or have you had any criticism about lack of transparency?

Mr Burkevics: I have not received any. I will look to my colleagues.

Dr Swete Kelly: None that I know of recently. Over time, we have had questions for further clarification of particular entries on the Heritage Register. I will say that the Heritage Register has a wide variation in the quality of that nomination information. Some of it was submitted more than 20 years ago. Sometimes we just do not have the information related to the nomination. Recently, there have been much more stringent requirements on what will be accepted as part of a submission for heritage nomination, and that makes for a bigger quantity of data.

Mr Ponton: Chair, if I understand correctly, it is not so much about the nomination at that early point that you are concerned about; it is once it is advertised and seeking community views. It is those community views not being made readily available.

THE CHAIR: That was it.

Mr Ponton: I am sure that, if the committee were to make recommendations around that being looked at, given that it happens elsewhere, I cannot see any major issues with that. Obviously, we would need to do some policy thinking and advise the minister, but

if those submissions were sought under FOI, they are the types of things that we would seek to release as a matter of course.

THE CHAIR: I reassure you that I do not have any FOIs coming your way on this line, in case you were worried!

Mr Steel: There is also a practical piece of work being done at the moment looking at the design of a new heritage database; that might potentially provide opportunities for that, in terms of the actual publication of future material. We can certainly consider whether, as part of that design, that might be incorporated into the heritage database and its link to any websites.

MS CARRICK: My question is about the ACT Heritage Jurisdictional Review. It says that the government will actively work with the ACT Heritage Council in 2024-25 to plan the approach, resources required and priorities to implement key recommendations. I note one of the first-order issues is the relationship between heritage and planning. What progress has been made on working through those issues with heritage and planning? I would specifically like to raise Callam Offices. I know that it is more in a residential sense, probably, that it comes up.

Mr Burkevics: One of the areas of focus for council and for planning has certainly been to have very effective relationships in council meetings. One of the areas of focus has been having either the Chief Planner or a delegate of the Chief Planner attend council meetings, which are scheduled every few months, and to allow that conversation to occur on a great range of issues that council are interested in.

That has been a really good outcome, and it is a continuation of building—particularly with a new council, and new membership—new opportunities for relationships. We have seen a growing and increased focus on strong relationships between council, not only with the Chief Planner but with the other ex officio members. Certainly, in terms of council, there is a big focus there.

In terms of Callam Offices, particularly, noting that it is an existing heritage-listed site, unless that was particularly brought to council's attention as an area of focus, it may not come up in discussion. Is there a particular area in which it might come up?

MS CARRICK: I am curious, as it is such a significant building, why it would be sold.

Mr Steel: I do not think any decision has been made on that at this point. There is further consideration going on, but that is a matter to ask the finance minister, who is responsible for ACT government property.

MS CARRICK: It also comes back to planning—the interface between heritage and planning. The town centre is undergoing a lot of change and there is this amazing building right in the middle of it. What about the maintenance of these amazing heritage buildings?

Mr Burkevics: My colleagues could certainly talk further about the obligations of any owner of a heritage-registered property. Of course, there are conservation management plans and requirements under the act for any owner, which are regulated, but the

obligation is on the owner of that heritage-listed property to maintain it in accordance with cultural management plans. Of course, any decisions around the ownership or future ownership of any heritage-listed item flows through to the new owner.

MS CARRICK: If the facade and the basics of a building do not change, can you do things like change a lift to make it more usable?

Dr Swete Kelly: Yes, basically. The degree to which you can change or develop a building will depend on the significance criteria defined under the act by which it is listed. The criteria may list something like the facade as the significant heritage feature, so impacts on that would be more heavily scrutinised by the Heritage Council when making a decision about the appropriateness of whatever development was proposed in the future. Impacts to non-heritage-identified items will be considered in relation to their potential to impact upon those heritage-significant items. With putting in a lift, as long as it does not impact that heritage—

MS CARRICK: Making it more usable does not impact on why it is a heritage building?

Dr Swete Kelly: Yes.

Mr Steel: Nothing is proposed in relation to that particular building at this point, so it would be hypothetical. Because there is an external part of the lift, if there is a heritage listing—and I am just assuming that; I have not actually read the detail of the heritage listing for that particular property—and if it was about the facade, that possibly could include the lift, because it is externally facing.

MS CARRICK: I appreciate that, but it is such an awesome building and there are such opportunities to use it in the community—have it retained in public ownership and used in the community.

Mr Steel: I am not sure that the Heritage Act goes to public ownership. Certainly, in terms of the general principles around heritage, the council told me that they understand that there is a need for adaptability of heritage buildings. The intent of the Heritage Act is not to stop refurbishment or reuse and adaption of buildings; it is to maintain the values of the building that enable it to be used in a variety of different ways. That will be very much based on what is proposed at the particular point in time. Since nothing has been proposed for the Callam Offices at this point in time, it would be hypothetical to speculate.

MR CAIN: Minister, Coggan's Bakery is a significant part of Canberra's history, yet its condition has deteriorated, with little visible progress on restoration, despite DA approval in 2023, I believe. Under the Heritage Act, the ACT government has a duty to protect and preserve heritage sites like this. A lack of updates and action raises serious concerns about enforcement, transparency and the government's commitment to heritage protection. Why has the ACT Heritage Council not issued a heritage direction under section 62 of the Heritage Act, despite the obvious deterioration of this bakery?

Mr Steel: There is a level of independence there in relation to the council and its functions under the act. I have written to you on this matter and explained the answer,

but I am happy to provide it again, through Bren.

Mr Burkevics: Thanks, Minister. I will pass to Ms Russell in a moment. As the minister has indicated, there has been a lot of work done between ACT Heritage and the owner of Coggan's Bakery with regard to future requirements and their responsibilities under the Heritage Act. It is pretty much as simple as that.

Ms Russell: I have read and agree with the privilege statement. Certainly, as Mr Burkevics has mentioned, there is a long history of heritage advice about Coggan's Bakery—working with the owner to ensure that necessary conservation works are undertaken. That development approval that you cited included a range of conservation works to the building, but I think we can all observe that they have not yet commenced. In recent times, council advice has been provided to the owner about the need for urgent repair and conservation works in the short term, before delivery of that larger program of conservation works to secure the building, to manage issues like broken windows.

Mr Steel: I understand that there has been a change of ownership in relatively recent times as well. Access Canberra has also been engaged directly with the new owner, and they also have separate enforcement powers to the powers under the Heritage Act. There has been engagement and meetings with government about remedying those issues.

MR CAIN: What is the hold-up? What is the issue?

Mr Steel: The first point to address the issue would be through engagement, and that is the point we are at, at the moment; meetings have been held in relation to that.

MR CAIN: Are you suggesting that the owner is not cooperating with the Heritage Council?

Mr Steel: No, but I think the meetings have only just happened, where that first stage of engagement has been happening.

MR CAIN: When was the change of ownership?

Mr Steel: I cannot answer that question, but we might be able to take it on notice. It will probably be in the land titles. That was my understanding.

THE CHAIR: Was that taken on notice?

Mr Steel: Yes.

MR CAIN: Are you able to identify the owners of heritage properties?

Ms Russell: Yes. We have gone through that process recently, where we write to the Commissioner for Revenue. There is a process under the Heritage Act where we can seek current owner details.

MR CAIN: Are you able to provide that information to this committee?

Ms Russell: I will seek advice on that, but I would anticipate that the Information Privacy Act provisions may potentially—

MR CAIN: You can take that on notice; thank you.

Mr Ponton: Potentially, we can provide it to the committee. The committee can ask for all sorts of information; it is about what the committee does with it, of course. If there are some privacy considerations in providing that, we would probably note that to the committee. We have done that in the past.

THE CHAIR: We will be happy to have the question taken on notice; you can answer in whichever form, and we will take it on further from there, if we need to do so. That is probably the simplest way.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: The ACT Heritage Festival 2025, I believe, kicks off in April. How is the mission for that festival being updated based on feedback from what went through in 2024? What is its new approach to celebrating Canberra's history?

Mr Burkevics: At the end of each Heritage Festival, an after-action review is done. Certainly, one of the key items of feedback that ACT Heritage received last year after the festival was: more of it—longer. This festival has actually been extended to allow all of the event organisers greater opportunity to spread out the events, so that members of the public are able to better attend all the events.

The feedback from last year was that, due to the timetable, members of the public could not get to all of them. There were some scheduled at the same time. One of the areas that has been in development is to expand the festival to allow the schedule to be better organised and allow members of the public to attend a greater variety, and some of those which are no longer in conflict. Dr Swete Kelly, are there any other key developments?

Dr Swete Kelly: I would back up Bren on that one about increasing the time period of the festival. I would note that last year it was entirely within the school holidays, and now we have spread it out a little bit, which allows for more direct engagement with schools and other areas of the community outside that time period.

This year, it will open on World Heritage Day. Nationwide, the other heritage festivals held by the National Trust are opening on that day. It increases the profile of that, because there is attention on world heritage. This year, we have more events than we have ever had before. We have 140 registered events for the Heritage Festival, with a really wide breadth of coverage.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: I completely missed the existence of this festival, and heritage is something that I am particularly interested in. You talked about events. They are not all ACT government created, sponsored, built, bought and delivered events.

Dr Swete Kelly: No.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: Are there community organisations? Who does the heritage events? How are they delivered?

Dr Swete Kelly: ACT Heritage, on behalf of the ACT government as a whole, is the facilitator for the festival. Basically, we do the promotion for the festival and we bring the events together, but all the events are held by heritage community groups and organisations.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: I do not want to put words in your mouth. Is the key initiative, in terms of improving community engagement and the ability of community organisations to be a part of the festival, the extension of the timeframe for the festival? Do you think that is the key point?

Mr Burkevics: Definitely there are a range of measures that ACT Heritage undertake to provide support to the community organisations to organise events. There is an induction process and a registration process that commences a year before, to provide support and advice for community organisations that may have an interest in organising events. We have also been working to improve, enhance and strengthen the governance of some of the individual events—for example, paperwork risk assessments and so on. Templates have been another initiative, to minimise the amount of administrative burden that is required for groups to participate.

Of course, the skill set and the resources of the directorate are also used to promote the events. A very attractive booklet, some great communications websites and social media presence are all used to promote the event organisers as well. They have direct and daily contact with the festival manager, who provides a very one-on-one service during the festival, close to 24 hours a day, I would say, in supporting the event organisers to deliver a successful event.

Mr Rutledge: I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. The role that ACT Heritage plays is that coordinating role, but there are other parts of the ACT government that either provide the backdrop or host it. For example, our Parks and Conservation team will do some events in Tidbinbilla. Often the Heritage Library will run events during that time. The ACT government, last year—and it will happen again this year—supported events for First Nations language workshops and the like.

Different parts of government are the minority partner, but they provide support in those ways. We provide a platform for community groups to bring forward their own events. Some of that might be as a result of a heritage grant. We have a competitive grants round every year, and that might support heritage signage or a heritage booklet to be done, and that group will maybe launch that during Heritage Week.

Every year we do a debrief with the organisers, the community organisations, to get their feedback. At each individual event we often have a QR code, whereby people can register whether they enjoyed the event or how to make the event better. When we get the organisers together at the end, we say, “This is the feedback that we got from the visitors,” and that provides them with feedback on what to do next year.

With the Heritage Festival, unlike, say, the Multicultural Festival, where it all happens on one day, these are very small events that happen across the city. But the number of events is growing, so we needed to broaden the length of time and have it, as Dr Swete Kelly said, both within the school holidays and outside the school holidays.

Also, the theme of this year's festival will be "unearthed", because we are looking for the untold heritage stories of Canberra, so we are challenging our community groups to think of how they can make their offering new and tell a different story of Canberra.

MR WERNER-GIBBINGS: I was going to ask for a list of events and their organisers. I suspect I can find that on the internet.

THE CHAIR: You can probably find that on the website.

Mr Steel: It has not been announced yet.

Mr Burkevics: Soon to be published.

Dr Swete Kelly: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I would love to get a quick update on some timelines, if I could. I am wondering when the improvements to the heritage database will be finalised.

Mr Steel: There are still some decisions that have to be made through the budget process on that, in terms of funding, so there will be something further to announce on that.

THE CHAIR: There was funding provided last year.

Mr Steel: There was some funding provided.

THE CHAIR: What has been delivered under the funding that was provided last year?

Mr Rutledge: We have done the business rules. We have certainly cleansed a lot of data—our data holdings—and we have done a lot of business process reviews. Now we have a good handle on what a business system could be. The potential funding of that is a matter for discussion, but the funding so far has been used to examine our business processes and what a new business system could look like.

THE CHAIR: A bit of scoping? What would I call that? Scoping work?

Mr Rutledge: Yes. Scoping, feasibility and what is available in the market. That has included visiting other jurisdictions to see what their capabilities are and testing those. We have spent a lot of time getting the thinking right before we go to market for a system.

THE CHAIR: I will not fault your logic, given some of our procurements at the moment. I know these things are a bit linked: what is the average wait time we are getting for a response from the ACT Heritage Unit, when somebody lodges something?

Mr Burkevics: It depends on the item, Ms Clay. It depends on the referral that is made to ACT Heritage. Ms Russell will be able to speak about the stats of the individual items.

THE CHAIR: I would love to hear that. Answer it in any useful way. I do not mind whether you tell me the longest, the shortest and the average, or talk me through it. In whatever way you can answer that question, it will be useful.

Ms Russell: Absolutely. We have been able to demonstrate some improvements in heritage advice timeframes in the past year, with additional resources and support to the team. The impact of timelines on private owners has been of particular concern from the outset. Many private owners seek exempt council advice, and there are no statutory timeframes for those.

Currently, the council advises applicants to allow at least six months for advice in that category, but I am pleased to say that, in the last financial year, 47 per cent of all advice was issued within eight weeks, and performance of advice being issued in that three- to six-month period has lifted from 81 per cent to 89 per cent. Certainly, there is still space where there is significant demand for heritage advice, but we are able to improve those timeframes.

THE CHAIR: Where we do have statutory timeframes, are we meeting those statutory timeframes?

Ms Russell: Advice on development application referrals is one of those key categories. We are currently performing at 79 per cent in terms of delivery of heritage advice within those timeframes. That is a significant increase from 64 per cent in 2021-22, so there certainly is an improvement there.

THE CHAIR: Thank you; that was genuinely useful. We are now at the end of our hearing. On behalf of our committee, thank you very much for coming along. Thank you for your time and expertise. I think we did have a question taken on notice. The secretary will be chasing you within five business days of when you receive the uncorrected proof *Hansard*.

Short suspension.

Appearances:

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Davey, Mr Adam, Chief Executive Officer, Suburban Land Agency

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

Ramsay, Ms Jennifer, Acting Executive Group Manager, Enabling Operations, City Renewal Authority

Wilson, Ms Lucy, Acting Executive Group Manager, Urbanisation and Renewal, City Renewal Authority

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to the public hearings of the Standing Committee on the Environment, Planning, Transport and City Services for its inquiry into annual financial reports 2023-24. In this session, we will hear from Mr Andrew Barr MLA, Chief Minister, and officials. Thank you for joining us.

The proceedings will be recorded and transcribed by Hansard, and we will be publishing those transcripts. We are also being broadcast and webstreamed. When you take a question on notice, please say the words, “I will take that question on notice.”. That helps Mr Bunce chase down the answers.

Welcome, Mr Andrew Barr, Chief Minister, and officials. We have a lot of witnesses for this session. I remind witnesses of the protections and obligations provided 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. When you first speak, please state that you have read and agree with the privilege statement. We are not doing opening statements. We will now start with the first question from Ms Carrick.

MS CARRICK: Thank you, Chair. My question is to the Chief Minister. In 2016, in your Statement of Ambition, you said:

Cities don't succeed by accident or by leaving things to chance—they require design, good governance and great collaboration.

I expect that the CRA provides that design, good governance and great collaboration. Your first function was to carry out urban renewal. My question is: if you are not in the CRA precinct, you are covered by the SLA, and its first function is to buy and sell land on behalf of the territory. There is nothing to do with great governance or planning; it is buying and selling land. Why are there two different organisations to look after Canberra?

Mr Barr: I feel like we have had this discussion previously. But, for the record, I will repeat that the establishment of the two institutions was a legislative decision of the Assembly in that period as a result of the stage 1 light rail project—that being the biggest infrastructure project in the territory's history. It was a transport-oriented development and land value capture opportunity. So the CRA was established with the

principal focus on the stage 1 route, and that is largely its precinct. But it does also extend to the stage 2A route.

In relation to urban renewal precincts outside of the CRA precinct, the Suburban Land Agency does indeed undertake that work. That is, I guess, a legacy of the former Land Development Agency as well. CRA has a particular focus, largely aligned with stage 1 light rail, and now stage 2A. But, of course, the city centre is the oldest part of the ACT, and Civic is first amongst equals in our town centre structure.

MS CARRICK: If it is first amongst equals, why with stage 2 of the light rail, will you not declare Woden as an urban renewal precinct so that it can have the design, good governance and great collaboration, too?

Mr Barr: That could well be a decision that we take in the future. But, at the moment, the focus is on stage 1 and stage 2A.

MS CARRICK: Okay. I will remember that, and I will keep—

MR RATTENBURY: I am sure she will.

MS CARRICK: I will keep asking about that, because the planning is underway now and we are selling off blocks of land and we do not have enough community facilities for our area, which services such a large catchment. So, to sell off the land before we have a plan and the great governance and the collaboration is really disappointing.

Mr Barr: We obviously have our National Capital Plan, the Territory Plan and the Southern Gateway Framework Strategy. That is all in the planning sphere. The role of these agencies is more in the development space, rather than the planning space. So, in time, that will undoubtedly be a focus.

MS CARRICK: In which decade? The city is the core, and we understand that. It is the top of the hierarchy in the urban structure. Why then does the CRA, now that light rail is built, go to Dickson? Why north of Haig Park? Why not Lyneham? Why is Dickson in there?

Mr Barr: The Dickson town centre is probably the middle point, the major stop in the light rail route outside of the Gungahlin town centre and the Alinga Street stop. The City Renewal Authority Precinct covers the light rail area up until Exhibition Park, effectively. But the boundaries have changed. I did increase it by a couple of blocks to reflect an area that was a development opportunity. So they are pursuing that.

MS CARRICK: It is very interesting language that you use to call Dickson a town centre because it is the—

Mr Barr: No; I said in the centre of the light rail. It is a group centre, but it is in the centre stop—

MS CARRICK: It is a group centre with employment and flexihubs and—

Mr Barr: The third-busiest light rail stop is Dickson.

MS TOUGH: My question is for the Suburban Land Agency. What are Build-to-Rent projects and how are they being implemented in city's town centres, particularly in Tuggeranong?

Mr Barr: Thank you. I will throw to the team in a moment. But, clearly, we are working with development partners in each of the town centres, particularly Tuggeranong but also Gungahlin, Woden and Belconnen. There are opportunities through government land release or Build-to-Rent projects on privately held land in each of the town centres. It is an emerging opportunity to add to the housing supply. The types of Build-to-Rent products will vary, depending on the location and the level of government involvement in those projects. A number of them present opportunities for Housing Australia Future Fund funding, associated with a community housing provider, being the Build-to-Rent manager effectively.

Across the SLA's urban renewal areas, there are a number of projects and opportunities, some of which are more developed and others will be part of future Indicative Land Release Programs. Tuggeranong is one such example, as we have opened a dialogue with Leader Holdings, who operate the South.Point Shopping Centre, just as we have with the Scentre Group, who operate Westfield in Woden and Westfield in Belconnen. That is the summary. Is there anything else you guys want to add?

Mr Davey: I have read and understand the privilege statement. Perhaps a good example is the Build-to-Rent development in Turner, which we exchanged contracts with the developer on in July last year. That development will provide a range of solutions for people but is built as a Build-to-Rent development, with at least 270 dwellings. At least 15 per cent of that Build-to-Rent arrangement will be affordable housing and, as I think was discussed last week, will be for the 15-year period. That site is close to light rail. So it has good amenity and good transport options, and I think is a very good example of Build-to-Rent and how that might benefit Canberra. We do have plans in the Gungahlin town centre underway to release a site for Build-to-Rent there. As the Chief Minister said, that is something we will see across the various parts of Canberra that SLA is involved in releasing the land.

MS TOUGH: Wonderful. Thank you.

MR CAIN: Chief Minister, I refer to the recent closure of the western section of London Circuit—you must be expecting questions on this—between Northbourne Avenue and Edinburgh Avenue for light rail stage 2A. The road is not planned to reopen until late 2026, is my understanding. That is two years of inaccessibility for businesses located along that section. Chief Minister, what support is the CRA providing to affected businesses operating along that section of London Circuit?

Mr Barr: Obviously, the lead in the business liaison is being undertaken by Infrastructure Canberra, but CRA will also play a role. Mr Gillman will talk a little about that.

Mr Gillman: I have read and understand the privilege statement. One of the things that we do through our place experience and marketing is exactly that—place experience and marketing. That is events and marketing of city businesses. We do offers with

business partners in the city. Particularly around Christmas, for example, we had a range of offers in that space. We are planning next year's work on that now—so the next financial year—and the city west will definitely be part of that consideration. How we deploy that marketing expenditure, that marketing focus and that captivation focus to support city west will be a key input into that.

MR CAIN: Despite that prospect, how many businesses does the authority expect will close because of this road closure?

Mr Barr: I do not know that there would be an expectation of any closure. The authority certainly would not be a forecasting entity in that context.

MR CAIN: Will affected businesses operating along the closed section of London Circuit be exempted from paying the City Centre Marketing and Improvements Levy for the period of closure?

Mr Barr: Probably not. The property owners would make that contribution under the current arrangements. But, of course, there is a difference often between the property owner and a business operator.

MR CAIN: Probably not. Why would they pay the levy when their operational capacity has been drastically impacted?

Mr Barr: That may not be the case, depending on the property owner and levy payer.

MR CAIN: And if they are the same person or entity?

Mr Barr: Generally they are not. But, in that context, if there were a particular levy payer who had a particular issue and wanted to raise that with the CRA, around how that marketing money could be best spent in a precinct, the CRA would engage positively on that question. There is no doubting that.

MR CAIN: Would you consider exempting any with particular circumstances or particular challenges?

Mr Barr: The legislation would not enable that. But we would certainly look favourably upon opportunities to support those precincts through the levy.

MR CAIN: The Financial Management Act allows for a waiver of a tax otherwise due and, obviously, there is the option of act-of-grace payments. Would you consider the possibility that circumstances may appear where someone warrants or deserves such a waiver or act of grace?

Mr Barr: That is a matter for the Treasurer, under the Financial Management Act.

Mr Gillman: Just to confirm: the City Renewal Authority does not have the authority to waive rates or the levy.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about the Dickson Shops upgrade that is being planned. It has obviously been in the budget, and the like. I understand there were quite

a few comments received when you went out to consultation. Can you give us an update on those comments and whether they have had an impact on the plans in line of that feedback?

Mr Gillman: Yes. I will ask Lucy Wilson to address that question.

Ms Wilson: The current consultation that is underway is in relation to the streetscapes, not the shops.

MR RATTENBURY: Sorry; yes.

Ms Wilson: No, that is okay. The consultation in relation to the Dickson Shops was very positively received. The majority of the feedback related to our role in government was around making sure that there was an infrastructure upgrade to support the residents of Dickson. People were looking for things like increased shade and better accessibility—so dealing with some of the issues in the paving. But they were really keen. One of the key priorities was keeping and retaining the character of the Dickson Shops—so not sterilising that environment. Some of the things we have done to respond to that community feedback include increasing the canopy cover further, increasing opportunity for seating and extending some of the areas of paving to make sure that we are addressing all of those issues with the ageing infrastructure.

MR RATTENBURY: One of the concerns I have heard from some of the shopkeepers is obviously one of disruption, as is the nature of these projects. People have talked about whether you will have capacity to stage works. So, rather than the whole precinct being torn up for six months, bits will be torn up for shorter periods of time. Is that part of your plans for the site?

Ms Wilson: We are currently undertaking consultation with the individual businesses to talk through what they need to see from the construction upgrade. Things we are considering, but it is not finalised yet—the future contractor will determine some of this—include working through room by room, rather than a mass disruption.

MR RATTENBURY: What does that consultation with the business owners look like? Is that individual meetings or—

Ms Wilson: I think it starts this week. We still have a little bit of time before we go out to engage a contractor. But, yes, one-on-one meetings with business owners. That is a continuation of previous consultation that has occurred with business owners.

MR RATTENBURY: Do you have an anticipated construction start date at this point?

Ms Wilson: The current anticipated start date is midyear—around July-August.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. Chief Minister, perhaps more in your remit: we have also had feedback that, aside from the physical issues with Dickson Shops, there are some social issues around Dickson Shops, which sits outside CRA's formal remit. It obviously goes to how the precinct is operating. What sort of whole-of-government response are you considering in the context of the letter I wrote to you about this?

Mr Barr: Obviously, CRA has been involved. Part of the upgrade work will also look at improved lighting and, I guess, sight lines in the area—so there is more visibility from different spaces so that people feel a little more comfortable, particularly at times of the year and times of the day when it is darker. There is also capacity for CCTV installation to be part of this as well.

Then, from a service delivery and, I guess, wraparound perspective, there has been a whole-of-government response involving police, the social welfare services and community sector organisations who provide a range of support, together with the CRA seeking to find some solutions to some of the issues that have emerged. There are examples where people have had physical altercations with others, and then there are other examples where, if you like, it has been more verbal—but still not comfortable for many people. That has been expressed. So we certainly are aware of that. There was a similar challenge at Watson Shops—

MR RATTENBURY: Not so long ago.

Mr Barr: and there was a collective response in that regard. Similar approaches are being utilised at Dickson.

MR RATTENBURY: Okay. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, can you give me an update on the Bruce Sports, Health, and Education Precinct?

Mr Barr: Yes. The commonwealth, through the Infrastructure Department, are effectively the lead coordinating agency on the commonwealth side, supporting the Sports Commission. From our side, SLA are leading. But there are obviously other ACT government agencies involved—Planning and Economic Development being the two more significant ones. There has been at least one higher-level officials meeting, kicking off that process within the Sports Commission land holdings—which, shorthand, is the AIS precinct. They are obviously progressing. They have been granted about \$250 million from the commonwealth and they have a series of projects that they are undertaking. We are mostly engaged at the point of interface where ACT land is either on the other side of the road or adjoins the Sports Commission lease. It is early days, but the objective is to see a mix of new sports, education, health, housing, commercial and accommodation opportunities in that precinct.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. Do you have any indication of timing on this?

Mr Barr: For the AIS work, I understand, actual construction is in the next few years. They need to get that done sooner rather than later, ahead of the Brisbane Olympics. From our perspective, any sorts of substantive changes would be several years away.

THE CHAIR: It is sounding like a next term kind of thing.

Mr Barr: I imagine if there were to be any planning or zoning changes, we would want that to happen in this parliamentary term. But, in terms of construction, I would say that is towards the end of this decade on our land. On the commonwealth land, there will be more happening in the short term.

THE CHAIR: We had a pretty entertaining public transport session earlier today. We spoke a little bit about the future-proofing for stage 3. Can you tell me how you are future-proofing this?

Mr Barr: Our expectation is that the infrastructure that will be in this precinct will add significantly to demand for public transport from the north-side hospital, to a new stadium, to the housing, to proceed to the tertiary education facilities, as well as the other sports infrastructure that the AIS will be responsible for delivering.

MS CARRICK: I saw a media release where you suggested you might declare this area the “health, education and sports precinct—an urban renewal precinct”. Will you be doing that?

Mr Barr: We will continue our work with the commonwealth before making a declaration. I cannot make a declaration on commonwealth land. It is largely a question of the areas that interface with that. I said we would consider it, but we will make an announcement once we have considered the relevant issues.

MR EMERSON: What is the timeline for completing the master plan?

Mr Barr: I would like that to be done in this parliamentary term.

MR EMERSON: Is the \$10 million of federal funding over four years or a one-off?

Mr Barr: It is certainly over a number of years. I think their expectation is that they would want an outcome on that from us in this term of government as well.

MR EMERSON: Okay; thank you.

MS CARRICK: Where in the financial statements does it make it clear where the levy is and how much comes in, because I know that—

Mr Gillman: Approximately \$2.5 million a year comes in through collection of the levy.

MS CARRICK: The appropriation is about \$23 million?

Mr Gillman: Yes.

MS CARRICK: And that appropriation is used for events and marketing as well?

Mr Gillman: Yes. I will hand to Jennifer Ramsay in a minute, but, to talk about our Place Experience and Marketing program, it is partially funded by the CCMIL levy. There is an appropriation component of that as well which beefs it up. It also enables us to do things outside of the CCMIL levy zone, such as Lunar New Year in Dickson. Strictly speaking, CCMIL is for the levy collection zone, which is the city and the core part of Braddon, but we contribute as part of that as well.

MS CARRICK: I understand there are events in Hyde Park and that Pedal Power gets

grants to run. Pedal Power does not run any events on the south side. In the Suburban Land Agency, what equivalent thing might you do in Woden or Weston Creek as far as events and marketing go?

Mr Davey: We have supported and developed active developments for a number of years through our community engagement program, which we call Mingle. As part of that program, we have done activities involving Pedal Power, for example, and that has been more recently in the Gungahlin area. At the moment, we do not have any developments running in Woden, for example. In Whitlam, in Molonglo, we do. We have a hub there. It is very active in terms of supporting the community to do a range of activities and engaging with community groups to use the facilities we have there and to organise events. We do things on the weekends. It is similar community engagement and activation. But, in Woden town centre right now, we do not have anything happening because we do not have any current development there.

MS CARRICK: No; there is nothing happening there. Why is it that there is such an imbalance in social and economic infrastructure across Canberra? Many southsiders are very aware of the amount of infrastructure that is in what I call the golden triangle, between Bruce, Dickson and the Lake. There is a significant amount there and a lot of activity. When will there be plans to spread it around Canberra more?

Mr Barr: I do not think I would accept the way you have categorised parts of Canberra, but—

MS CARRICK: I could reel off the assets there.

Mr Barr: Indeed. Part of it might be that it was the first part of Canberra. Our city is now 110 years old and the bit that you have identified would be the original part of Canberra.

MS CARRICK: Woden was there before Bruce.

Mr Barr: There would not be much difference—the 1960s for both. As we discussed in an earlier hearing, the agencies will undertake community development and will support community events in areas where they are active. When they become active in other areas—and there would be reason to think that there will be future government land releases in the Woden town centre—they will be active in that context.

MS CARRICK: But CRA marketing and events are not just about land release; they are also about community engagement and—

Mr Barr: They collect a levy, so, if you would like to advocate that there be a levy in Woden to support this sort of activity, it would be an interesting recommendation from the committee to that effect.

MS CARRICK: We just established that the appropriation is used for that sort of activity outside of the—

Mr Barr: Sure, and we have the ACT Event Fund to support activity, as we discussed in the hearing last week. There are appropriated funds for events and activities

everywhere, but, if you want something dedicated for Woden, far be it for me to give recommendations to the committee on what your recommendations could be, but you may want to consider—

MS CARRICK: I think it comes back to your Statement of Ambition in 2016, which said:

Cities don't succeed by ... chance—they require design, good governance and great collaboration.

The CRA has staff that do it. There are no staff to do it; there are just volunteers where we are. It is just different, that is all.

MS TOUGH: I am interested in an update on the works happening in Garema Place.

Mr Gillman: Our contractor started in earnest in the middle to late January. They did some early work, such as the removal of the artworks and some trenching to identify services, in the latter part of last year. Key to that is how we support businesses. Mr Rattenbury's question was in relation to that. We have a policy of: before, during and after. That is how we work. I might pass to Lucy to talk about some specifics of that, but, as an example, we have a guide to assist businesses in how they can operate during the construction.

We have worked across government to put together outdoor dining guidelines. Outdoor dining structures will need to be removed progressively to allow the works; but, to enable them to get back as quickly as possible, we have put out a design guide and worked with Access Canberra and TCCS to fast-track an approvals process. If you hit the requirements of the design guide, we have all agreed that it will be a really quick process, and that will enable the outdoor dining to go back as quickly as possible after construction has concluded in that area.

Ms Wilson: In addition, there are currently fortnightly doorknocks by our community link partner. The contractor is on site regularly to engage with any business owners immediately impacted or disrupted on a daily basis. Generally, there is an approach of trying to work with the business owners in a collaborative way to get through the construction process as quickly as possible.

Mr Gillman: All businesses are different. The comic shop has an Australia Day event that is really important to them. The pre-Christmas trade, interestingly, was far less important to them. It was really about that long weekend and their event. The Charming Devils Barbershop, upstairs near Redpath, is quite happy with the construction because it has more tradies coming in for a haircut. Businesses are impacted differently and deal with it differently. We have really tried to tailor our program around those businesses.

MS TOUGH: What is the projected timeline for the whole of Garema Place?

Mr Gillman: We think the works will take approximately 12 months, and we hope to be finished late this calendar year.

MS CARRICK: Then they will start again and keep investing in it.

MR RATTENBURY: On that point, can you tell us a bit about the coordination between your project and the development of the hotel right next door, and how those two fit together?

Mr Gillman: Yes. They are closely coordinated. In fact, because the hotel has a footprint for its site that comes well into Garema Place, their contribution to the Garema Place upgrades is essentially that footprint. They are doing all in front of the hotel, but they are also doing what we refer to as Gus's Lane in the final stages of work. They have our designs and our materials palette, and they are going to tie in to our works, to our plan, and deliver that on our behalf, as part of their development.

MR RATTENBURY: Thank you.

MR CAIN: Just for the record, what are the upgrades to Garema Place? Are they about more than just refreshing the paving?

Mr Gillman: Lucy, do you want to talk to the scope?

Ms Wilson: Yes. The paving will be redone, but, in addition to that, we are creating one level surface to enable flexibility for events, so that, when we want to put on events in the city, it is an easy space to access. There is also improvement with new lighting, we are planting more trees and more greenery underneath the trees, and we are installing new seating. Crudely, we are removing everything we have and then putting it back properly in a modern and exciting city centre.

MR CAIN: Thank you. Chief Minister, I refer you to the recent sale of Block 1 Section 121 City to the Capital Property Group for a reported \$66 million through a public tender. The site, as you would be aware, will feature six buildings, including over 500 units, 76 affordable units, offices, a hotel and a park, and will create around 800 jobs. Chief Minister, what is the timeline for completion of the development at this parcel of land, and how is the staged rollout expected to work?

Mr Barr: I understand it stretches into the early 2030s, from what the developer said. Yes; it is staged. Mr Gillman may have some more information.

Mr Gillman: They are looking at commencing construction in parallel with light rail. The last time we discussed it with them, they were hopeful that stage 1 would be well into construction and hopefully complete in 2028, and then there are subsequent stages, which are really a matter of timing for the developer.

MR CAIN: Is consideration being given to making this a territory priority project?

Mr Barr: They have not requested it.

Mr Gillman: That has not come up in any of our—

Mr Barr: Not that I am aware of—no.

MR CAIN: Who else, other than the Capital Property Group, made submissions to the

public tender process for the site?

Mr Gillman: That is still a matter of confidentiality. We are still finalising that process, including notifying and briefing those who were unsuccessful.

Mr Barr: We will take what we can on notice and provide some information, but there may be a time delay as to when we can do that. There certainly were a number of proponents who put forward propositions.

MR CAIN: What is the trigger for when you can actually say who else tendered for this?

Mr Gillman: When we complete all of the debriefs and receive probity clearance that it is okay to release those.

MR CAIN: The property is actually in the hands of Capital Property Group, isn't it?

Mr Gillman: No.

MR CAIN: The sale is not yet completed?

Mr Gillman: The contract has been exchanged. The contract is signed. Settlement is dependent on vacant possession, and it is currently being used as a site staging compound for light rail. Because we have been so focused on achieving a quality outcome—and that is built form, environment and affordability—the settlement does not occur until there is works approval from the National Capital Authority. We get to endorse their works approval submission prior to it going in.

Mr Barr: That would be another reason it could not really be a territory priority project, because there is a National Capital Authority approval process.

MR CAIN: When do you expect that information to be available? What is the timeframe usually for this sort of debriefing process?

Mr Gillman: We are undertaking those now, but it is also subject to probity advice.

Mr Barr: I can assist the committee. If that is not able to be provided—a direct answer to the question, in terms of all the names—we will advise, in the answer, when we believe we could, and we will subsequently provide that information.

MR CAIN: Are you also at liberty to provide the amounts offered by the other tenderers?

Mr Gillman: No; that would be commercially sensitive information, both to them and to the territory.

MR CAIN: That is never made available?

Mr Gillman: Not the unsuccessful.

MR CAIN: Nor the amounts.

Mr Gillman: No.

MR RATTENBURY: Mr Cain referenced the supply of affordable housing on the site. What is the definition or requirement for affordable housing on that site?

Mr Barr: It is 74.9 per cent of market rent through a community housing provider, which I understand to be Community Housing Canberra, having met with Community Housing Canberra this week.

MR RATTENBURY: I am interested in how that works. I understand the 74.9 per cent. At the premium prices in the city, the market rent is going to be quite high. How do you anticipate that being available to people in the second income quintile, for example?

Mr Barr: It will depend a bit on the size of the dwellings. I imagine they will be more in the one- and two-bedroom space rather than the three-bedroom space or penthouses. The land value would be higher, but not significantly higher than elsewhere along Northbourne Avenue, for example. There will be a premium to that site, but we will be able to see an appreciable difference in the rent for those properties. The requirement through the community housing provider for allocation will be to those who would not be able to access the private rental market. I suspect that there would be a particular take-up around retail and hospitality workers in that precinct. They would probably be at the upper end of that second income quintile, rather than at the lower end, but the location and their capacity to be able to walk to where they work would mean that they may pay a teeny bit more in rent, but their transport costs would be lower, for example.

MR RATTENBURY: I want to ask about the University of New South Wales Canberra City campus. I want to ask where it is up to and how it is going against the deadlines that were put in place as part of the agreement with the University of New South Wales.

Mr Barr: Most of that has been managed by Economic Development, but CRA will have some insights, I am sure.

Mr Gillman: We have endorsed their stage 1 development proposal, which has gone to the National Capital Authority for their consideration. Once they have considered their compliance, they will put it out for public consultation. That is stage 1.

Mr Barr: They also have an existing presence in, I think, block J of the CIT Reid campus at the moment. They will progressively expand into those existing buildings, once the CIT moves to the new Woden town centre facility.

MR RATTENBURY: Is the university currently meeting the milestones in the agreement signed with the ACT government?

Mr Gillman: I might hand over to Ms Ramsay.

Ms Ramsay: I have read and understood the privilege statement. Yes, they are meeting

the milestones with the deed. It is currently in stage 1. They have submitted their works approval after our approval of the development proposal, which was in September. They submitted their works approval in December. If and when that comes through, they are required to have a holding lease through the territory, and that is on track at the moment.

MR EMERSON: I have a question about the Canberra railway precinct. I am curious to know how this fits in with longer term plans regarding the Canberra to Sydney rail line, the extent of the investment onsite and whether consideration has been given to investing instead in a railway station at a different location that will better serve in the longer term.

Mr Barr: A final decision on that has not been made yet, given the ownership of the existing station sits with the New South Wales government's transport asset holding entity. Our engagement with New South Wales has been positive. One potential option is a redevelopment quite proximate to where the current station is. You would develop above the station, so it would look a lot like a city station in Sydney, for example. The New South Wales government have a dozen or more of those sorts of transit-oriented developments underway.

Any development would need to be consistent with the East Lake Territory Plan change and the National Capital Plan. I note that, adjacent to it, directly across the road, the Hume Circle precinct is soon to undergo a quite significant change. It will look very different from the low-rise that is there now.

The ACT government owns all of the land around the existing rail station. Without absolutely pre-empting a final decision, my preference at this point would be not to relocate the station out to, say, Fyshwick or somewhere like that, but to keep it in that precinct and, logically, connect light rail to it in time. An example in another city of what that could look like would be the Newcastle transport interchange, where the heavy rail stops and connects neatly on essentially the same platform as Newcastle's light rail.

Given the density that will occur in that East Lake precinct, what is already happening at Dairy Road and the Hume Circle precinct, it makes sense to have the rail come in, and not really change that much. But there will need to be an economic analysis of that. I do not want to suggest that rail will be pushed even further away from where people live. I think it should be closer.

MR EMERSON: Do you have any concerns about that plan? If, eventually, one of the many studies from multiple levels of government regarding high-speed rail comes about, that plan might keep that from happening. It would be hard to have high-speed rail travelling directly into Kingston compared to somewhere like Fyshwick or the airport.

Mr Barr: Those projects have always been separate from the rail line, anyway. It has been talked about since I was in primary school. I do not want to be too much of a cynic here, but, to be honest, I am focused on what I would currently describe as a 19th century rail service and, for a relatively modest investment, turning it into a 20th century rail service. It would make a big difference for a fraction of the cost. There are some

quite legitimate questions around whether, given the distances between major Australian cities and the development economics of high-speed rail, it will ever happen.

I do not want to be the one who says it never will. Undoubtedly, people will keep working on it. It is a great vision, but it is very expensive and we could all get very old waiting for it to happen. The here and now says: let us get this underway.

MR EMERSON: Are you aware of the Eastwick Greenline concept—that plan? Are you personally across that? Basically, they propose decommissioning the heavy rail line and eventually using it for light rail, and redeveloping. There is quite a lot of land on either side of the heavy rail line, and it is a large line. As you said, it is a fantastic location.

Mr Barr: Essentially, that is what Newcastle did with a section; they cut about three or four kilometres of heavy rail—maybe it was two kilometres—and pushed it back. It really depends on how much the heavy rail line effectively alienates the land and makes it unusable. But it is a pretty narrow corridor, whereas with the Newcastle one there were a number of tracks and there was quite a divide between their CBD and the waterfront. I think it is a slightly different circumstance.

As I say, with respect to any final decisions on this, I am certain of two things. One is that we can get some progress on the Canberra-Sydney rail corridor for a relatively low cost with new trains, better signalisation and some minor track work, and perhaps some express services. The other is that, with the Canberra railway station, as it currently stands, even though it is not our asset, there are country railway stations that are better. I think the national capital can do better, and that is the project we want to engage in.

THE CHAIR: We are also not holding our breath for fast rail, but we are quite keen on moderately hasty rail.

Mr Barr: Faster rail, maybe.

THE CHAIR: Slightly faster. The comms team is not quite sure what to call it. We were very excited when there was a Labor government in the ACT, New South Wales and the commonwealth, because that looked like the window in which to deliver this. Do we have any timelines on when we are getting delivery of that slightly faster rail?

Mr Barr: Yes. There is work underway now. This came up in an earlier committee hearing last week. We are looking at progressive improvements. Initially, we want to get comfortably under four hours, then closer to 3½ from Canberra to Central. Part of that will be a difficult conversation about how many stops there are between Canberra and Central. I suspect the New South Wales government would, for legitimate reasons, want Goulburn and somewhere in the Southern Highlands, as a minimum. I think we can have some services that do not stop at every single stop.

THE CHAIR: An express. The question was probably more about the time line for delivery. Did you cover that in the earlier hearing?

Mr Barr: We are talking about progressive improvements over the next three or four years that will shave minutes off at each point. The thing that will get it to 3½ hours is

an express service, with track work improvement and signalisation improvement. You then hit a scheduling question, because the train has to hit the Sydney suburban network at a point that enables it to get a pretty clear path through to Central Station to get that time frame. Otherwise it will run up the back of the Sydney suburban trains that are also in that.

There is that level of finesse, in terms of when it departs Canberra, and when it reaches Campbelltown and gets into that suburban network.

THE CHAIR: I am interested in the City Hill ideas exhibition—the festival of ideas about how we use that for people rather than rabbits. Have we got a report back from that yet?

Mr Barr: Yes, we did release some information there. We can provide that for the committee. It is a bit comprehensive, so perhaps, in the interests of time it might be easier—

THE CHAIR: Is the report published?

Mr Barr: Yes.

Ms Wilson: Yes, it is.

THE CHAIR: Excellent. In that report, what were the key constraints to using that space that you found?

Ms Wilson: Key feedback from the community included connections to City Hill, as in physically how to get there. Other questions and queries that came from the community were around the lack of shade on the hill, accessibility—the ability to walk around or over the hill—and, finally, there was a lot of feedback and correspondence in relation to opportunities to use City Hill for looking at views around Canberra and actually seeing the city centre.

THE CHAIR: That sounds great; and that is online?

Ms Wilson: Yes.

MS CARRICK: Is it possible to work with the Suburban Land Agency to leverage the CIT to facilitate social and economic development and do place plans around the core of the Woden town centre?

Mr Barr: It would be. Whether it would be SLA or another area of government would depend on available staff, workload priorities and the like. Certainly, both the CIT opening and the public transport interchange will present opportunities for activation and community events. Let me consider what might be the best part of government to lead that work.

MR CAIN: Section 40 block 100 city, the site on the corner of Northbourne and London Circuit—currently, it is the car park opposite the Melbourne Building—sold to Capital Property Group in November 2023 for, I think, \$53 million. Can you please

provide an update on how work is progressing on this development and at what stage of the planning approval process it currently sits?

Mr Gillman: One of the critical things for that site is its coordination with light rail. It is good to have a concurrent disruption rather than sequential, but it does create an interface challenge between the light rail and the building. To deal with that, they have fast tracked or prioritised their site establishment DA, for works approval. That enables them to get in and pile the key feature wall of their basement to allow light rail to progress in parallel. Those interfaces are being carefully managed, and that stage 1 site establishment works approval is under consideration.

MR CAIN: You are hoping to fast track that for that site?

Mr Gillman: It is not for us to fast track. Certainly, the coordination is critical with Infrastructure Canberra and the light rail, and they are doing that.

MR CAIN: Do you have any approximate timeline?

Mr Barr: We will get some information, if we can, from the developer around what their thinking is there and provide that to the committee.

MR CAIN: How will this future development impact accessibility for both vehicles and pedestrians in the ACT law court precinct?

Mr Gillman: That is addressed in a deed that is accompanying the sale. Access—particularly even basement access—is provided for in that deed. There is the requirement for Knowles Place; so that is carefully managed through the deed, which is with the planning department, EPSDD.

MR CAIN: We discussed the stage of the sale of block 1 section 121 city in a previous question. Has this been a fully settled sale?

Mr Gillman: Yes, this one is fully settled, and it was the key cause of our unbudgeted revenue last year and our increase in profit.

MR EMERSON: We touched earlier on Dickson shops. Is there a full-time Dickson manager within the CRA or does that sit somewhere else?

Mr Gillman: We do employ a place manager.

Ms Ramsay: As part of our place experience and marketing program, we have a place manager who works across the precinct and spends some time in Dickson as well.

Mr Gillman: But not full time.

MR EMERSON: It is across the entire—

Ms Ramsay: Yes.

MR EMERSON: The golden triangle. Are there other similar roles in different areas

of government, or is that a question for someone else—managing different group centres and that sort of thing?

Mr Barr: SLA in their new estates will have that role, yes. Largely, with a major infrastructure project and significant development, which has been part of the plan for Northbourne Avenue and this precinct since Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Mahony Griffin established it and reserved the corridor more than a century ago—it took 100 years and this government to get it done, but we are doing that—the level of investment that that transport infrastructure project has leveraged is in the billions of dollars. There is a need for some place management, obviously. As infrastructure development on that scale moves around the city, whether it is developing the Molonglo town centre in the Murrumbidgee electorate or the Gungahlin east town centre in the Yerrabi electorate, the SLA plays a role there.

As we discussed earlier, once the planning framework and the rest are resolved in Minister Steel's area and with the National Capital Authority around that southern gateway framework, once we get into the development phase, there will be a role for development management and place-making. That is when agencies like these will become more involved.

MR EMERSON: Just to clarify, is there someone working full time on the entire part of my electorate, which I really love? I am supportive of the work that is happening in the electorate.

Ms Ramsay: We do have a place manager. They work throughout the precinct. They spent more time in Dickson during Lunar New Year, working with local businesses there to set up that activity. It fluctuates through the year, as to where they spend most of their time.

Mr Gillman: Yes, there is a full-time resource devoted to that.

MS CARRICK: Do the Dickson businesses pay the levy?

Ms Ramsay: That is not funded by the levy—that component of the plan.

MS CARRICK: The Dickson businesses—

Ms Ramsay: They do not pay a levy.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. Quite a lot of questions have been taken on notice. Please provide those answers within five days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. Thank you for providing your experience and knowledge. Thank you, broadcasting and Hansard. If any member wishes to ask questions on notice, please upload them to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible and no later than five business days from today. We are now adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 5.15 pm.