



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY**

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

**Members:**

**MR T EMERSON (Chair)  
MS C BARRY (Deputy Chair)  
MISS L NUTTALL  
MS C TOUGH**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**MONDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2025**

**Secretary to the committee:  
Ms K Langham (Ph: 620 75498)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

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

## **APPEARANCES**

<b>Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Health and Community Services Directorate.....</b>	<b>1</b>

## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## The committee met at 9.00 am

### Appearances:

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

Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate  
Hall, Ms Elizabeth, Executive Branch Manager, Affordable Housing Policy Coordination, Economic and Financial Group, Treasury

Health and Community Services Directorate  
Shields, Ms Penny, Acting Executive Group Manager, Housing Assistance, Health and Community Services Directorate  
Sabellico, Ms Anne-Maree, Acting Deputy Director-General, Community Services  
Newman, Ms Brooke, Acting Executive Branch Manager, Client Services, Health and Community Services Directorate  
Balaretnaraja, Mr Ash, Executive Branch Manager, Housing and Homelessness Policy and Programs, Health and Community Services Directorate  
Yates, Ms Brooke, Executive Branch Manager, Housing and Inclusive Policy, Health and Community Services Directorate  
Hayward, Mr Lewis, Chief Finance Officer, Finance and Assurance, Health and Community Services Directorate

**MR EMERSON:** Good morning, and welcome to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Social Policy for its inquiry into annual financial reports for 2024-25. The committee will today hear from the Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs.

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

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

We welcome Ms Yvette Berry MLA, Minister for Homes, Homelessness and New Suburbs, and officials. We have many witnesses for this session. As we are not inviting opening statements, we will now proceed to questions. I have a question about the impact of rates on Housing ACT's budget. What is the impact in the 2025-26 financial year? What is the impact of increased rates, including introduction of the health levy?

**Ms Berry:** I will start. Housing ACT has always paid rates, so it is not a new thing; it is something that has been happening within the ACT government because of the way that Housing ACT is set up, as a public trading enterprise. It is not a directorate of government per se, even though it is funded by and responds to government. It is important to understand that context. We can take you through the detail of the actual amounts, as we know them at this point in time.

**Ms Shields:** I might have to take the actual figures on notice, unless Lewis has those handy. I acknowledge the privilege statement. Mr Emerson, there is an impact. As the minister said, like every other landholder in the ACT, we pay rates, and we do so as the government sets for every property that we have on our books. As you said, this year will also attract the health levy rate for every property. I do not have the exact numbers for the 2025-26 year on me, so I would have to take those on notice for all properties. Are you after the total figure?

**Ms Berry:** Ash has it.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** The additional operating expenditure for rates in the 2025-26 financial year is \$958,000.

**THE CHAIR:** What is that as a percentage of recurrent funding that you receive?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I do not have that figure.

**MR EMERSON:** Would any other officials have the figure for recurrent funding for Housing ACT?

**Ms Shields:** We will take that on notice. We may be able to come back to you shortly, during the course of this morning's session. Would that be—

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. That sounds fine. Thank you.

**MS BARRY:** I have a question around housing maintenance. Minister, I receive daily reports about the state of public housing here in the ACT. I acknowledge that, due to some restructuring arrangements, Infrastructure has taken over housing maintenance. I have a few questions. I have been told by several contractors, including public housing contractors, that work has been stopped. Can you please explain what is going on?

**Ms Berry:** Yes; we can. You asked this question or a similar question in the Assembly and put forward a position to me that we need to correct the record on with regard to public housing maintenance—how that is budgeted and work going forward. It might be better in the next session.

**Ms Shields:** Potentially. Infrastructure Canberra take the majority of the responsibility—

**MS BARRY:** I get that, but this is about maintenance prior to Infrastructure Canberra taking over. What was the impact of public housing funding on maintenance, prior to Infrastructure taking over?

**Ms Berry:** Public housing maintenance is funded each year and the amounts are shown in the budget. I am not sure what else you want. As far as what is happening now is concerned, it is probably better for the next session, when iCBR officials are here.

**MS BARRY:** Okay. Prior to—

**Ms Berry:** You are talking about what you have been hearing from contractors—that public housing maintenance has been stopped. That is not the case, but the officials to respond to that are not here today; they will be at the other session, the iCBR session.

**MS BARRY:** Okay. For my own clarity, when did iCBR take over public housing maintenance?

**Ms Shields:** I believe it was 1 July.

**MS BARRY:** Thank you. And when is the Programmed contract scheduled to end?

**Ms Berry:** The end of next year.

**MS BARRY:** What funding is currently allocated to Programmed until the end of next year?

**Ms Berry:** Again, these are probably questions for the next session. You are trying to make clear that it is for the session on maintenance. iCBR officials are responsible for that part. I think it is better that you ask them in that session. Then you will get better answers.

**MS BARRY:** Okay.

**MS TOUGH:** Minister, can you please give an update on specialist disability accommodation in Housing ACT properties?

**Ms Berry:** I can. I note, Ms Tough, that this is probably in the maintenance area as well, but it is appropriate that we could give a good update today. I know that there is some interest from members of the committee. Ms Barry's office was in touch with my office last week, so, in preparation for likely questions today, I have a bit of a statement with an update of what is happening with SDA and our properties. With leave of the committee, I will read through that.

Some committee members may be aware that around 110 Housing ACT properties are enrolled in the SDA program. Most of these properties are headleased to community housing providers. However, SDA has never been operationalised by Housing ACT, despite registering to become an SDA provider. Since I became aware, in 2023, that Housing ACT had registered for SDA and enrolled dwellings in that program, I have been working to understand and resolve the barriers to properly operationalising SDA from the ACT government.

In September, HCSD notified me that Housing ACT's registration as an SDA provider was due to expire on 14 December 2025 and it must complete a recertification audit to

enable it to renew its provider registration. Housing ACT advised me at that time that, while it anticipated being able to comply with many of the requirements that would be assessed by the audit, it would not meet all the requirements under the current arrangements.

On 7 October, I made the decision not to proceed with the renewal process and to deregister Housing ACT as an SDA provider. This will mean that, once Housing ACT's registration expires on 14 December 2025, the 110 dwellings will no longer be enrolled as SDA properties. For the people who are living in these homes, nothing will change. That needs to be made clear. They will not be impacted at all by this deregistration as SDA was never operationalised for these properties. Their tenancy arrangements will stand, whether their tenancy is managed by Housing ACT or a community housing provider, and no-one will be asked to move out of their homes because of this change in their dwelling enrolment.

Community housing providers with SDA headlease arrangements have been notified. I contacted a number of stakeholders last week and Housing ACT contacted some stakeholders as well last week. Housing ACT is working with these providers to communicate with all tenants about the deregistration. I understand that process will be through tenants but also through their support workers. This is also an opportunity to better understand the needs of those particular tenants and to ensure that there are no outstanding modification requests to their homes. This feedback from tenants and from the community housing providers will guide decision-making on the future role of the ACT government in providing specialist disability accommodation. Now is a good time to take a bit of a step back and look at whether SDA or another model is the best way for our government to support housing for people with disability.

I am sorry about this. The process has not met expectations. Given this and the timeframe from when I first became aware, I have referred this matter to the Auditor-General. My priorities always were and always will be Canberrans who live in public housing. I am taking this matter seriously and have therefore referred the matter to the Auditor-General. Whilst I understand that, of course, I cannot direct the Auditor-General to make an inquiry into this work, I have asked them to consider it. I am happy to take further questions on this or provide any further information that is required by the committee.

**MS TOUGH:** Thank you, Minister. When you say it was never operationalised, what do you mean?

**Ms Berry:** Funding was never drawn down.

**MS BARRY:** Minister, thank you for that statement. How many of those 110 dwellings need modification that has not been actioned?

**Ms Berry:** This is the work that we need to do now with the stakeholders and the tenants. We own the properties, but we do not do tenancy management. That is with community housing providers.

**MS BARRY:** My understanding is that community housing providers have put several modification requests through and have indicated that their clients have SDA funding

available. You do not have the number of modifications pending for the 110 properties?

**Ms Berry:** No, and I do not believe that stakeholders are clear on that number either—community housing providers that have headleased those properties—after the conversations I had last week. The tenancy for headlease properties is managed by a community housing provider, but the tenants themselves are supported by other support agencies. The relationship between the ACT government and the tenants is two or three times removed, and the relationship with the tenancy and tenancy support is also removed, because the work is often done through support agencies. That is my understanding from having the conversations last week. I know you have been meeting with people as well, Ms Barry, so you probably have had similar conversations.

It is not clear to us in the ACT government or in Housing ACT, and I do not think it is entirely clear to the community housing providers, who headlease the properties, whether modifications have been provided to all properties or whether all tenants have an SDA agreement within their NDIS funding. The work that we will do now with the stakeholders will be to understand the needs of the tenants better and work towards supporting them first, and then work on whether SDA is the best way forward.

**MS BARRY:** Thank you, Minister. Before I move forward, I would like to confirm: there have been no conversations between Housing ACT and community service providers about pending modifications to client residents.

**Ms Yates:** Sorry—Ms Barry, could you repeat the question?

**MS BARRY:** I would like to confirm: there have been no conversations between Housing ACT and community housing providers around modifications to the homes of people living with disability—those 110 headleases that are currently active?

**Ms Yates:** Eighty-five of the 110 are headleased. It would be a question for iCBR as to whether there are any outstanding repairs and maintenance orders for those 85. For the 25 that are managed by Housing ACT, I understand that, at the end of last year, property condition audits were undertaken that raised some works. My understanding is that they were priority 2 works, so they are scheduled, but the timing of delivering those in the 25 dwellings and how many there are—

**Ms Berry:** Could you explain priority 2 works to the committee?

**Ms Yates:** I cannot.

**Ms Berry:** Okay. It is for iCBR.

**Ms Shields:** Yes. It is an iCBR question because it is about the different priority levels within the Programmed contract and how they work through them. Obviously, the highest priority ones are with respect to health and safety, domestic violence and immediate disability works that are required. It flows on from there. Obviously, we receive new reports every day as well, so those lists continue to move and the priorities will continue to be managed by Programmed and Infrastructure Canberra. Infrastructure Canberra will be able to give you a much more detailed response.

**MS BARRY:** Thank you very much.

**MISS NUTTALL:** When did Housing ACT sign up to the SDA in the first place?

**Ms Berry:** I understand that occurred in 2017.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In as much detail as you are able to give, what specifically are you referring to the Auditor-General in this case?

**Ms Berry:** I can table a copy of this letter, if it is helpful.

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

**Ms Berry:** In September this year, as I said, I was notified that Housing ACT's registration as an SDA provider was due to expire. I went on to say: "I was also advised that Housing ACT would be unlikely to meet the requirements of the audit report"—as I said in my statement. I said, "While the decision to deregister will have no impact on the tenants"—as I said—"I am concerned that HCSD did not adequately implement decisions of the government, particularly directions in 2023-24, to engage with tenants in SDA enrolled properties to understand their SDA status and needs. This inaction meant that my decision to deregister Housing ACT had to be taken without this critical information. It is not clear to me what authority Housing ACT had to register as an SDA provider in 2017 and enrol dwellings in 2020." The letter goes on to say, "I cannot direct you, but would I encourage you, if you can."

**MISS NUTTALL:** Thank you. That is helpful to understand.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, if I am correct in understanding your statement, Housing ACT signed up in 2017 and you were informed in 2023.

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MR RATTENBURY:** What was going on in the intervening six years?

**Ms Berry:** This is the work that I have been doing since I was advised, to understand how the enrolment happened—not wanting to go on a witch-hunt or anything like that; just wanting to understand how the decision was made. I probably cannot say, without all the information that I am still gathering together, how the decision was made or why it was made. SDA became available around 2016-17. I will not assume, because I do not know. Since I found out in 2023 that the SDA funding had never been operationalised, we have been trying to work with Housing ACT and with stakeholders to understand whether tenants have SDA funding as part of their packages and whether they need modifications that have not been provided by us already. I understand that any modifications that were requested have been provided, but I do not know for sure, because our relationship is removed from the tenants. A bit of work still has to happen, but the priority at this point in time is to work through this with the stakeholders, who have been very happy to work with us to try to figure this out going forward, and immediately provide those supports to tenants going forward. I am happy to provide anything that I can to the committee.

I have a document that I provided to the Auditor-General. If you would not mind, I will take it on notice for the moment so that I can get some advice that it is okay to provide. That will give a bit of a timeline of everything that I have been working through.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you. Could I ask about the financial implications of this. What money has ACT Housing been receiving under the program since 2017?

**Ms Berry:** None.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Was funding available to the agency during that period? You talked about the fact that the funding has never been drawn down. The committee would be interested to understand whether there has been a missed opportunity and clients have missed out as a result.

**Ms Berry:** That is complex because we do not know which tenants, if any, have SDA as part of their NDIS package. They will all have the minimum disability modification support funding in their NDIS. One of the stakeholders I spoke to last week said they might have something, like a minimum, but not SDA. The stakeholders that I spoke to do not know and the community housing providers do not know which tenants have SDA as part of their NDIS; it is something that their support services will know. So it is a quite complicated relationship and I am trying to work through, with those partners, who has what and how we can support the tenants, if they have not been supported previously.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Have modifications been made—

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MR RATTENBURY:** that either the ACT government or the community housing providers have paid for and could have been funded by the commonwealth?

**Ms Berry:** That is not clear either. My understanding is that, if they have SDA funding, they will have a different level of modification. The ACT government, through the public housing maintenance program, would provide any other disability modifications—handrails, ramps and things like that—to any housing tenant.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Sure, but, if we could get money from the commonwealth, that would obviously help, given the state of the ACT budget.

**Ms Berry:** Yes. Again, I am trying to understand whether SDA is the appropriate approach for the ACT government, even though Housing ACT signed up in 2017. I cannot confirm this, it might not be factual, but, when I was speaking to stakeholders last week, they indicated that the New South Wales government had these kinds of experiences as well. It is a bit of a complex system. It is about whether Housing ACT was the appropriate organisation to sign up for SDA in the first place or how that could be operationalised. It is a bit complicated, as everything unfortunately is with any kind of disability support. The navigation through that system is a bit challenging.

**THE CHAIR:** There was public reporting from April last year. A *Canberra Times* article says:

The ACT government has told The Canberra Times it is launching an engagement project to hear from tenants living in Specialist Disability Accommodation about their housing needs, preferences, challenges and opportunities. The views of families, carers and providers are also being sought. It is expected the work of the project will be used to inform government decisions and take up to four months.

Is your statement today essentially indicating that that work may not have occurred and you are unsure as to why?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** To Mr Rattenbury's question and the same reporting, a disability services provider, Hartley Lifecare, indicated they knew of 48 residents who were eligible for SDA funding and were living in public housing. The response to a question on notice in the Senate indicated there were 14 people eligible. Obviously, that was inaccurate. There is some confusion. Certainly, at least some residents have been eligible for funding, based on those figures.

**Ms Berry:** These are questions that have unknown answers at the moment. I respect information or advice that was provided to hearings in the federal parliament. I would not put my money on it. I would rather we go through the work that we need to do to understand the tenants' needs, as well as whether they have SDA funding and the type of SDA funding that they have as part of their NDIS package.

**Ms Shields:** Also, it is not clear whether the number you have just given us, Mr Emerson, is of the 110 properties we are talking about or more broadly across the housing portfolio. There may be other tenants that we need seek further information on.

**THE CHAIR:** In the same reporting, it was indicated that more than 1,700 NDIS participants were in public housing at the end of 2023. Do you have an idea of what that figure is today?

**Ms Shields:** I do not have an updated figure. That is part of the work we will be doing that the minister outlined.

**THE CHAIR:** If the average SDA funding is \$19,000 per year, and it is up to \$90,000 per year, the committee would be very interested in a response to Mr Rattenbury's question about foregone revenue. I understand the point is whether SDA is the way to go, but, if it had been utilised to its maximum since, say, 2017, or at least 2023, what would the impact have been on the territory budget? That would be great to—

**MR RATTENBURY:** Could you get that information on notice, Chair?

**THE CHAIR:** Could that be taken on notice, to the extent that you are able to answer the question?

**Ms Berry:** Sure, although I doubt that we would be able to get that information before the end of this committee process. In fact, I doubt it very much that we would be able to understand the full amounts in two weeks, because we do not know who has SDA and what type of SDA funding that is, particularly within these properties but also

across ACT government properties. Again, it would very much be a guesstimate on potential foregone revenue, if any, noting that it is my understanding that a lot of the modifications that any tenant would have required would have been done by the ACT government's public housing maintenance program. The good thing going forward, if I can find a silver lining to this, is that the ACT government is insourcing disability modifications, so at least we will have some eye on what is happening in that space.

**THE CHAIR:** You have taken on notice how many Housing ACT residents are NDIS participants, and you will respond if possible, and, among those, how many are eligible for SDA funding. Again, you will respond, if possible, within the timeframe.

**Ms Yates:** There is some information I can provide to the committee today about the 110 dwellings.

**THE CHAIR:** Could I just get that confirmed before we go to that?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms Yates:** In terms of the 110 dwellings, there is some background that I can provide around how the SDA funding works. SDA is very different support under the NDIS. It is quite unique in that the funding is paid to the provider, not the participant. Having a dwelling enrolled does not mean that you are automatically eligible for the SDA funding. To be able to draw down on that funding, there has to be a person living in the dwelling who is eligible for the NDIS, with SDA included in their plan, with the level of SDA matched to the dwelling that they are in. Within the 110 dwellings, we have 291 bedrooms that could attract SDA in the event that those conditions are met: they are occupied by a person with SDA that matches those plans, and they are willing to have SDA provided by that provider. The SDA funding is broken down at a per-bedroom rate for a dwelling. We know that, across those 110 dwellings with the 291 bedrooms, the maximum funding possible is approximately \$3.6 million. However, all of those conditions need to be met for every day of the year to attract that funding.

We know that is unlikely to be the amount that we would be able to draw down in the event we were to operationalise it, not least because not all of those dwellings could necessarily be tenanted to their maximum capacity. We would have to manage vacancy during the year and we would have to have tenants in place whose SDA inclusion matched the design category of the enrolled dwelling.

**THE CHAIR:** If we use the enrolled dwellings as the constraint, then it is a quite narrow set of parameters that allows us to access that funding.

**Ms Yates:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I am interested in the constraint of how many residents are eligible for SDA funding. I understand that the answer we are getting is "We're not sure," but, if that number were quite large, it sets a different constraint. Then the question we would be asking as the committee is: "How many homes should be made SDA-eligible to access that federal funding? That would be quite interesting for us to know."

**Ms Berry:** That is the work that we are doing, to understand whether SDA is the best way forward for the ACT government. It is one option. We need to understand the tenants better, SDA funding and how it would work from the ACT government's perspective, and then work with our stakeholders to see whether there are other options and investigate those as well. It is not clear to me whether SDA is the best way forward or whether the decision that was made in the first instance was the best decision to make at the time. That is the work that we will do, to understand the tenants better and what their needs are.

**Ms Yates:** As well, there is a constraint to the information that you have requested, in terms of how many in the tenant cohort in public housing might have an NDIS package. We do not routinely capture information about whether tenants are eligible for the NDIS or inclusions in their plan. We will be constrained in providing that information because we do not ask for it. We would have to ask specifically.

**THE CHAIR:** Might you be able to provide how many people are living with disability? That is going to be a larger number than the number in the NDIS.

**Ms Yates:** And then there is SDA within that. Within the NDIS, SDA is at the pointy end of support. At scheme maturity, the NDIA anticipate that only six per cent of NDIS participants will have SDA in their package. So there is the question of how many people within the tenant cohort have disability. Then there is a subset of who may be eligible for the NDIS, and then there is a subset of who may be eligible for SDA.

**THE CHAIR:** That could be a hundred. Six per cent would be 103, based on the 2023 figures.

**Ms Shields:** We know that 46.8 per cent of our tenants identify as living with a disability, as at 30 June this year, but we do not know the level.

**THE CHAIR:** A smaller proportion.

**Ms Shields:** Yes. To the extent of the information we capture, we know that is how many identify as having a disability, but that is very broad. We do not have the capacity, with the information we have, to narrow that down.

**MS BARRY:** I would like to confirm that you do not have the capacity to narrow it down to how many of the 6.5 per cent currently have SDA funding.

**Ms Shields:** No. We do not ask for that level of detail.

**Ms Berry:** We will understand this better, but my understanding is that people who live anywhere and have an NDIS package would have some kind of support through a support agency, and that support agency would know their packages. Whether they provide it to the tenancy managers—in this case us—would be a question for them. It is a really complicated space. In any case, if any of our tenants ask for modifications through the public housing maintenance program, that is done as a matter of course.

**MS BARRY:** The reason this is very difficult for me is that I have someone who has

currently been waiting for a modification for three years. She has SDA. That modification was not done because Housing ACT said that they would not provide for that. So it is really difficult for me to understand how this is happening.

**Ms Berry:** Have you put that person—

**MS BARRY:** Yes.

**Ms Berry:** I think I understand who you are talking about. Housing ACT is supporting them.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Have you done any work to understand how the current NDIS changes will further restrict people's access to SDA funding through NDIS plans?

**Ms Berry:** No. I am not the minister for disabilities, but it will.

**Ms Sabellico:** All of that work will be considered in the negotiations with the commonwealth, in terms of disability reform and what that looks like. As you can appreciate, at the moment greater focus is on foundational supports and Thriving Kids. But we can ensure that we raise the issue with the minister for disability, in terms of raising it broadly through negotiations with the commonwealth.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am keen to ask about OneLink. Is the government in discussions with community housing providers on using OneLink to provide an affordable rental home?

**Ms Berry:** There is a new provider of services provided by the ACT government after a recent procurement process was completed. The new provider is the Salvation Army and the new name is First Canberra. There will be a process for the Salvos to go through to do that name change and we will support them in communicating that to our tenants and others. What did you ask?

**MISS NUTTALL:** This was specifically about affordable rentals.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** As a part of our intake and assessment process, there is a process that can be gone through where people can select the option of affordable rentals. That is managed through that process. I will have to take on notice whether that is done through OneLink or whether it is through our broader waitlist.

**Ms Berry:** FIRST Canberra.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Through FIRST Canberra.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In New South Wales, there is a tenant matching platform for affordable housing that allows you to apply online for an affordable rental property. Was any thought given, either during the procurement or in conversations since, as to whether this kind of service could be integrated with FIRST Canberra?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I think the question you are asking is more about the broader waitlist, as opposed to the central intake service. All the intake and assessment for the

central intake service is done via community housing providers through headlease arrangements.

**MISS NUTTALL:** The idea is that people have to search multiple websites to find the affordable rentals. If they approach FIRST Canberra—because they are homeless, they are sleeping rough or they are at risk of it—there would be a more streamlined or facilitated approach to accessing an affordable rental. That is why I am asking specifically about the FIRST Canberra program.

**Ms Berry:** We have definitely had those very broad and early conversations with community housing providers, but we are not at the stage—

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I can confirm that the central intake service does not look at affordable housing, but the broader waitlist does ask questions and does look at matching people with affordable housing options as well.

**Ms Berry:** FIRST Canberra is not the gateway for everyone at the moment. It is not part of this contract, but it is not something we would say is off the table. There have been some initial but not very formal conversations with community housing providers about what that might look like going forward. At the moment in the ACT, they have their own waitlist that they manage.

**MISS NUTTALL:** This is certainly feedback we have heard about OneLink. I wonder whether it is the same for FIRST Canberra: for young people sleeping rough, when they are under 18, they do not believe that they can access the service. Is that correct? Is the service supposed to help everyone?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I understand—and I will have to confirm this—that it is available to people who are over 16.

**MISS NUTTALL:** For those under 16, what would be their pathway if they are homeless?

**Ms Berry:** If they got in contact with OneLink or FIRST Canberra, they would be put through to a youth support organisation. Again, the portal is not for everyone yet. I say “yet” because I think it would be a good way forward, but obviously we would need to get agreement from everybody that it was a positive move and then negotiate some contract changes.

**Ms Sabellico:** Usually, if there are younger, families would potentially be informed, and then we would look at accessing the service system appropriate for those young people, depending on what their needs are.

**Ms Berry:** Yes. I guess CYPS would be involved in that too.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I need to correct something I just said. It is for young people who are 15 years plus, not 16.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Is there any kind of catch-all system for a young person if you do not really know what services are out there? What are our referral points? Forgive me

for being blunt, but, if a kid is kicked out of home, what are they supposed to do?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** The central intake service will refer people to other support services through Children, Youth and Families, but also the support services that exist more broadly for young people.

**Ms Sabellico:** We have in-posted Children, Youth and Families workers in FIRST Canberra, as we did with OneLink, and they will help to navigate and look at what is available in the system. It goes through that pathway. If it comes through Children, Youth and Families, we would do the same through our intake service.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Does FIRST Canberra—and previously OneLink—gather information of how many young people under the age of 15 actually ask about services? Do you get a breakdown by age? Do you get information on how many times they try to access the central intake service before they are ultimately successful?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I am happy to take that question on notice.

**MR RATTENBURY:** How long was OneLink in place? Five or six years?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** No. My understanding is it was since 2016.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Nine years or so. Was it absolutely necessary to change the name? We have seen in the session this morning that everyone is struggling with the new name. For the vulnerable cohort of clients, this is going to be a major communication exercise and, frankly, quite confusing.

**Ms Berry:** As it was when it changed to OneLink. OneLink was the name that Woden Community Service, which was the previous provider, put to the program. FIRST Canberra is the name that the Salvos have put to their program.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Did someone ask Woden whether they would give the name over? They are a pretty generous crowd.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I do not think that specific question has been put to Woden Community Service. But, ultimately, this is our central intake service. It was a central intake service since 2016, and it will continue to be our central intake service from here on. Probably one way that we could alleviate any potential confusion is to refer to it as the central intake service.

**MS BARRY:** You keep swapping providers. You went from Woden Community Service to the Salvation Army, and you keep changing the name. Isn't it better to just call it the "housing central intake service" and avoid the name being beholden to a new provider?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Ms Barry, I would not suggest that we continuously change the name. In 2016, it was a service provided by Woden Community Service. Nearly 10 years later, it is changing. But, as I said, we would refer to it as the central intake service and are happy to continue to do so to try to alleviate confusion. But different providers will look at naming their services in a specific way.

**MS BARRY:** As I said in my question, you are not beholden to the service provider—it is a service that the government supports—but the name reflects that.

**Ms Berry:** Sometimes organisations have attachments to the names and so the ACT government does not sort of name something for them. But what I can say to the committee is that we will take the question back to the Salvos and see if there is something we can work out through that process. I cannot remember what the service was before OneLink now, but it had a name too. I know it is complicated, because it takes a moment to get used to it, but we can certainly put the question to the Salvos. I can probably even get you an outcome within two weeks depending on what their immediate response is.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I want to ask about homelessness services. I understand we are now about two and a half years into a commissioning process for the homelessness sector—which seems a very long period—and high and complex needs procurement has not progressed during that period. Are you able to give us a timeline for the procurement for those services?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Your statement is correct. We have undertaken commissioning now since 2022. All of the commitments made through that process have been completed except for high and complex clients. The government is considering options. What we heard from the sector was that they would not be able to accommodate high and complex clients within existing funding envelopes. The government has looked to understand how it might be able to address those needs.

It is important to recognise that, through challenging budgets over the last few years, the government has prioritised important frontline programs that are coming to an end. It has prioritised the acknowledgement of the work that this sector does by continuing to fund them at high levels that were agreed through the 2020 budget, and it has looked to fund critical services as well.

**Ms Berry:** However, I would say, Mr Rattenbury, that I and Housing ACT are having regular conversations with homelessness providers given that complexity has grown. It is significant now. We are trying to work through what the best way is to support these people through services, given that the need has changed and is much more complicated. The existing programs might not have been as all-encompassing, and I think it is a recognition that it is harder.

Yes, we have a budget to work within but, understanding that things have changed in our world and it is becoming more challenging, we are not closed to the idea of continuing those conversations and looking at maybe other ways to do things if that is possible. We are not sure, but we are open to those conversations about innovation as well.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Can you just clarify what has been happening to the support services for those clients during this stalled period?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Support services for people with high and complex needs are continuing. I would argue that everyone who enters into the homelessness space will

have a level of high and complex needs. There are over 50 programs that are dedicated to supporting them, whether it be through tenancy and property management, whether it be wraparound supports, whether it be outreach services, whether it be services that support engagement with our central intake service and whether it be food services, counselling and peak body funding. For a cohort who can be broadly described as having high and complex needs, there is a significant number of programs and funding that is directed to try and stabilise them and get them into medium- to long-term accommodation.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Is there specific funding for outreach in the sense that, rather than rely on the clients to come in, there is actual dedicated outreach?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Absolutely. There are programs such as the Early Morning Centre, programs such as Street to Home, which is run by St Vincent de Paul, are outreach services. We also provide some outreach through the Central Intake Service. It will go to other programs and it will look to engage with those tenants. There are also other connections that other service providers provide.

**Ms Berry:** As you would know, Mr Rattenbury, on occasion, when there is a need for it, where a whole range of support services and ACT government would wrap around a particular individual or individuals with mental health supports and health supports, the police will be involved as well. We are working a little bit differently to how we would have been a little while ago but, knowing that things have changed, we might need to continue to work to adjust to that.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** There are a number of working groups that are looking to bring together the entire ACT government service system, whether that be through the City Working Group, the Dickson Working Group or the Oaks Estate Working Group, in looking to connect mental health, justice and community safety, health and community services, ACT Policing and other government and non-government agencies and organisations. It is not all dedicated towards people who are experiencing homelessness, but it certainly does support and help us identify where people need support.

**MR RATTENBURY:** You mentioned there were 50-odd programs supporting these clients. Would it be possible—and this is a question on notice—to get a consolidated list of what those programs are?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Absolutely.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Are you happy to take that on notice?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** We can take that on notice.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I just want to clarify the outreach programs; I am told that St Vincent de Paul are not operating an outreach program because they are not funded for it.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** St Vincent de Paul run the Street to Home program, which is our assertive outreach program.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thanks.

**THE CHAIR:** Squatting is one of the areas where you are going to see people with high and complex needs. I just wanted to follow up on something from the estimates hearings where I asked about Housing ACT's policy for engaging squatters. Minister, you said, "We don't just kick them out. We are humans. We talk to them about putting in an application form," and Ms Rule said:

No, there is not a specific policy document that I can provide to you, but our standard practice is to work with anybody that we find who is in insecure accommodation which may be through squatting or people that we know are on the street or wherever they might be, and connect them to homeless services and try to find accommodation.

But an answer to a question on notice said that if Housing ACT receives a report of squatting or trespassing, operational practice is that Housing ACT will work to understand if another authorised occupant is occupying an Housing ACT asset. If that is confirmed, the field officer will attend a site visit and issue an unauthorised occupants notice to the unauthorised occupant. They may fix that to the property door or the point of entry, and they are required to contact ACT Policing once that is been done. But there is no mention of what the engagement with support services is in the response I received to the question on notice. I am trying to understand if Housing ACT does engage with people who are squatting.

**Ms Berry:** What is the number of that question on notice?

**THE CHAIR:** I am going to have to check for you; sorry. It was in estimates.

**Ms Berry:** Can you take that question on notice?

**THE CHAIR:** I can take that question on notice. I might not be able to get back within two weeks, but I will see how I go.

**Ms Berry:** Thank you. I would like to have a look at that, because that seems a bit black and white, and I do not think that is the way Housing ACT works generally. They would go in and talk first. The first part is always: who are these people? Anybody who is experiencing homelessness is experiencing homelessness wherever they are, and Housing ACT's job through, whatever means, is to try and offer them support if they are willing and/or put them in touch with support services. The first act is not a straight-up eviction or a move-on notice. But there might be circumstances where it is dangerous or they have been known to be squatting for a while it. You could not generalise it too much. There would be different circumstances. I do not know if you have anything else.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I have an answer regarding the QoN. It is QoN 158.

**Ms Berry:** I will look at that question on notice and the response that was provided. I think it is missing some of that information that might be more useful.

**THE CHAIR:** You might also look at 327 and 328 in estimates as well. It might be a

way of not having to take it on notice. So you are going to have a look at that, take it on notice and perhaps provide some more information back on notice?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, and I will do adjustments to those if it is necessary.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. In relation to data—and we have touched on this a little bit with the SCA challenges—as you would know, I have been trying to chase the change in distribution of Housing ACT properties across the ACT over time. In annual reports hearings at the start of the year there were several questions from different members about this, and we received a nice table that showed where properties are distributed across the ACT in different regions at that point in time. But I have received responses, first in estimates, indicating there was not enough time to gather the data to provide a response. I then asked a question on notice in the chamber and was told it would take too much resourcing to provide an answer showing how properties were distributed several years prior and several years prior to that.

**Ms Berry:** I am remembering this, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Would either the minister or officials be able to talk me through why that is been a challenge and what kind of data is available to indicate where properties have been based across the ACT and how they have been distributed over the last, say, 10 years?

**Ms Berry:** The first part to the answer is that it is not my practice to provide detail at a suburb level of public housing numbers for safety reasons and for the privacy of those individuals. The second part of the question around movements would be extraordinarily difficult to track back over many years, because movements would include sales, demolishing and rebuilds and a range of other new homes in composition and everything. The request that you have asked is quite detailed and it would be very difficult to do that in the detail that you have asked for. So I think the correct advice was given by Housing ACT in that circumstance.

I can offer a briefing to you, if that helps, and give you some examples of where things have changed and shifted. But that would for now or maybe within the last four years maybe. I think we could do it across a couple of suburbs.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for the offer. Just to clarify: the question was at a district level and the response that we received was that, at the beginning of the year, for the inner north it was that 9.2 per cent of housing was Housing ACT properties; in Weston Creek, 8.2 per cent; and then Tuggeranong. It was that kind of breakdown. I have been seeking a breakdown not from 2024 but from prior years. Is that kind of information stored somewhere? There is this perception that public housing is moving from the centre of the city out to the outer suburbs. So I am trying to get some information about that. Is that distribution of properties tracked in some way?

**Ms Berry:** I know where the houses have been built during the last Growth and Renewal Program and that—and Mr Rattenbury will know this pretty well—when a range of homes that were demolished in the city area, a lot of people had the idea, or kind of created this myth, that the ACT government was moving everyone out of the north part of the city, the inner north. That was not the case. A lot of new housing was

built in the inner north and inner south. We could probably get the number of homes that were purchased—maybe.

**Ms Shields:** We do hold the information. It is not an issue of not having information; it is going back and tracking it over that extended period of time. That takes time, and I need to take an official away from other duties to do that piece of work. So it is managing those competing priorities. So, yes, the information is there and, yes, it does exist; it is how long it takes to pull that information and put it together.

**Ms Berry:** Under the last program, 1,288 properties—I still remember that number; it has been engraved in my mind—that went through the initial Growth and Renewal Program. I recall in the inner north part of the city—kind of in this area and your electorate, Mr Emerson—there was very high public housing density. The density has been removed a bit in this area and spread out to other parts of the city. But there were a significant number of homes that were replaced here in the city. You would not know them because you cannot tell that they are public housing, which is great. We might be able to get some broad numbers around what it looked like back at that stage. That will have changed as well I imagine.

**Ms Shields:** It will, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, if there is a point of time that is easier for you to provide that comparison. I did ask quite a specific question, to be fair, with multiple different points of time. But this is just to get a gist, really.

**Ms Berry:** Back at the beginning of time, things were very different within public housing in the ACT. But part of that salt-and-pepper approach, which I know people have strong views about, is about making sure there is public housing all across the city, so that people can live wherever it suits them, like the rest of us.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you; so that is taken on notice.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, you made the observation that it is your position not to provide suburb level data—I think you said for safety or privacy reasons. I am not meaning to mis-paraphrase you. How is it a risk for people if you were to sit here and say, “There are 50 public housing properties in Waramanga”? How does that risk people’s privacy or safety?

**Ms Berry:** The level of public housing fluctuates within each area of the ACT. If a person who was wanting to perpetrate violence, for example, understood that their partner was in public housing and somehow found out that it was in Waramanga, they then might be able to go through and understand where public housing is just from chatting through the neighbourhood and then locating their spouse or their partner or ex-partner. If it is a smaller number, it would be easier for a potential perpetrator to investigate. That is in the safety space. I say that because I know of examples where individuals have been located in public housing in suburbs and have had to be moved numerous times for their safety by Housing ACT. Somebody can probably back that in, but it has been reported to me, and I have seen homes and spoken to people where that is been a risk.

The other part to it is: why should people's homes be disclosed in such a way when, for example, if a home was for sale, you would need to go to a website to find out if it was for sale then you would identify that that was the home that you were going to buy. I get it, but there are ways that people could find out this information outside of what I provide. I would just rather not make it easy for people.

**MS BARRY:** Minister, I just want to understand the affordable rental scheme and how that works. There is an inconsistency between a rental property and what the tenants pay. Currently, the policy is that the investors pay less than 75 per cent of the market value or rate but the tenants are only offered 20 per cent to 25 per cent below market value. Can you please explain that 20 per cent to 25 per cent discrepancy?

**Ms Newman:** I have acknowledged and read the privilege statement. The affordable rental offer scheme is a program that we offer for those who do not fall within public housing. We have lessened the criteria in order to pay for that so that it is a catch-all for more people. But, for the specific details on it, I will take that on notice.

**MS BARRY:** Okay. Thank you. So what you are taking on notice is the discrepancy between the 75 per cent that the investor is paying and the 20 per cent to 25 per cent that the tenants are required to pay? Thank you. Could you advise what arrangements CMTEDD has put in place to ensure investors are complying with this policy?

**Ms Berry:** Sorry, I did not hear that.

**MS BARRY:** Could you advise what CMTEDD has in place to ensure that investors are complying with this policy?

**Ms Newman:** I will have to refer that to CMTEDD, when they are in front of you. I am not sure of their policy relating to that.

**MS BARRY:** Okay; sorry.

**THE CHAIR:** We do have the Under Treasurer here.

**MS BARRY:** Yes, that is right.

**Ms Hall:** I have read and acknowledge the privilege statement. If this relates to the Affordable Community Housing Land Tax Exemption Scheme, those properties are all managed through community housing providers, and those requirements are in place in terms of requiring 75 per cent or less of market rent.

**MS BARRY:** Sorry; I did not understand that.

**Ms Hall:** All of those properties are managed through community housing providers; they are not leased directly from private landlords.

**MS BARRY:** Sorry; the question was about the fact that the policy currently is that the investor pays 75 per cent of market value and the tenants are offered 20 per cent to 25 per cent less.

**Ms Hall:** Sorry; I do not understand what program that is. Do you have the specific name?

**MS BARRY:** That is the affordable rental scheme policy.

**Ms Newman:** The 75 per cent is what we would change the community housing provider under a lease agreement that we have with them. It is up to them what they would charge their tenants. Normally it is 25 per cent; however, if you are in a community housing provider home, you can apply for commonwealth rent assistance if you are eligible, which often makes up the difference for our community housing providers.

**MS BARRY:** So the ACT government does not pay the difference between the 75 per cent value and the 25 per cent—that difference is not paid by the ACT; the commonwealth makes up for that difference? Is that right?

**Ms Newman:** It depends on an individual's circumstance, what their finances are and what the community housing provider hands on to charge the tenant.

**MS BARRY:** And you do not have oversight about what that market is looking like? You are not looking into that? You are not asking those questions?

**Ms Newman:** I will have to take it on notice.

**MS BARRY:** Okay; thank you. I guess that answers my next question then. Again, because you have taken those questions on notice, I guess you cannot tell me how you have confidence that the investors are actually meeting the policy. So I will wait for what response—

**Ms Berry:** I think we might be talking at cross purposes, because community housing is not an investment or private ownership model; it is a community not-for-profit. I think you are talking about affordable rentals by developers kind of thing—are you?

**MS BARRY:** My understanding of the affordable rental scheme is that it is your policy. Is that right?

**Ms Hall:** If we are talking about the Affordable Community Housing Land Tax Exemption Scheme, private landlords can participate in that but they do it through CHPs and they receive a land tax exemption for the property. But that is all managed through CHPs. There is no individual relationship between a private landlord or investor and the tenant.

**MS BARRY:** Okay. And there is a relationship between you and the CHPs to make sure that that policy is implemented.

**Ms Hall:** Yes.

**MS BARRY:** Right. So it is all independent of—

**Ms Hall:** The landlord, yes.

**MS BARRY:** The landlord.

**Ms Hall:** Yes.

**MS BARRY:** Who is the landlord—you or the private owners?

**Ms Hall:** The property owner.

**MS BARRY:** The property owner?

**Ms Hall:** Yes. They are private property owners. They may be members of the community who are, for example, on posting or have an investment property. They then enter into arrangement with the community housing provider, who then manages a tenancy with the tenant. It is not done directly between the property owner and the tenant.

**THE CHAIR:** Does the government require means testing or something to that effect to ensure that it is going to people who need it?

**Ms Hall:** Yes; we have income eligibility limits. Those are in accordance with our broader affordable housing requirements.

**MS BARRY:** So who is setting those income eligibility limits—the ACT government?

**Ms Hall:** The ACT government, yes.

**MS BARRY:** Again, going back to the question, if you are setting those income eligibility units and there is currently a discrepancy between what the investors are paying and what the tenants are required to pay, how do you monitor that?

**Ms Hall:** The investors are not paying. We are providing a—

**MS BARRY:** An incentive?

**Ms Hall:** —land tax exemption, and then the management of those properties is done through the community housing provider sector, which is regulated through the national system.

**Ms Berry:** I think you might be talking about the Turner Build-to-Rent. It is a Build-to-Rent site. The ACT government will be subsidising the—

**MS BARRY:** Is that the affordable rental scheme, or it is a different one? I know there are different schemes. But, yes, the Turner Build-to-Rent sounds right. So you bill the tenants rents at an affordable rate—

**Ms Berry:** For a period of time.

**MS BARRY:** For 15 years or so?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, that is right. So how do we hold the developer—

**MS BARRY:** How do you ensure that the investors are not getting more than the 75 per cent incentive? Let me put it this way: if a rental under that scheme is to cost \$500—that is market rent; right?—under that policy, you are required to offer the tenants the rent at \$350. This is just spit-balling figures.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, I get it.

**MS BARRY:** With your 20 per cent to 25 per cent below market rate, it means that they would be paying \$400, for example. So I am asking why.

**Ms Berry:** We would have a deed of agreement with the developer. That would include the number of properties that are required under the deed of agreement in that particular development that would be rented out at an affordable rate. The deed of agreement would also include the number of years that that affordable rental has to be provided. I cannot remember what it is for Build-to-Rent in Turner. I think it was 10 or 15 years. But it has not been built yet. We have a proposal and we have got this agreement with the developer. Did you want to—

**Ms Hall:** We receive quarterly reporting from the CHPs on the other program we were referring to, the Community Housing Land Tax Exemption Scheme, which includes the value of the waivers, rental details and so on. There may be cases where the waiver is higher than the rental gap, but those would only apply if it is a very, very, large and high-value block.

**Ms Berry:** For Turner, for example—and, again, this is just numbers; don't quote me on them right now because it has not been built yet—if it is, say, 200 and 40 of those are affordable rentals, part of the agreement that the developer has with the government is that they are rented out at affordable rates for 10 years and the ACT government subsidises the developer or owner to do that and to keep them for 10 years as affordable rentals.

**MS BARRY:** Sorry, Minister; I just want to be—

**Ms Berry:** Are you asking how we keep them to account?

**MS BARRY:** That is correct. You are subsidising because the developer is getting that incentive—right? How do you ensure that tenants are not paying above that 20 per cent to 25 per cent that you have set?

**Ms Hall:** In our rental deeds we have requirements for reporting on that. We do not have any of these projects operational yet, but there are a range of requirements around reporting and the CHP need to manage that. If the tenants are not the appropriate tenants, there is a range of things they need to do in terms of ensuring appropriate tenants are within those properties.

**Ms Berry:** But they might not all be CHPs, though. That is my—

**Ms Hall:** The Turner Build-to-Rent is not managed through a CHP. But, through our

Affordable Housing Project Fund, all of those properties are managed through CHP. It is a really key element of how we have designed those programs to leverage all of the existing regulation and support around that sector.

**MS BARRY:** I think you are talking about something different and the minister is talking about something different.

**Ms Berry:** No, it is the same thing; they are just different designs. Properties are rented out at an affordable rate, but the ones that we are doing with developers for example, like the Turner Build-to-Rent, have different arrangements or agreements than what we would have with CHPs. However, the deed agreement—which we do not have yet, because it is not built—would include things like regular reporting.

**Ms Hall:** Yes, regular reporting. They are very complex deeds but there is a range of requirements and, where there are CHP involved, aligning to the requirements under the NRSC system as well.

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a very quick one following up on that. In those instances where it is a developer rather than a community housing provider, like in Turner, are there clear mechanisms for means testing? What we hear is people concerned where you just rent out, like you said, 40 of these places at 75 per cent of market rate and you just give it to your mates who do not need it—but, great, they have cheaper rent. How does that work in the case where it is not a community housing provider and not the land tax exemption scheme?

**Ms Hall:** Still the reporting—making sure they have the income eligibility and reporting on that and evidence for that. With the Turner one, we are not at that point yet of having fully developed that. But, certainly, for the deeds that we have developed, the income thresholds and that reporting is a big part of our system.

**THE CHAIR:** So that is always the case wherever there is an affordable housing component negotiated in some kind of agreement with the ACT government?

**Ms Hall:** Yes. Income thresholds are a really key element of these policies.

**MS TOUGH:** Minister, can I get an update on the Woden Youth Foyer and when people might be able to start calling it home?

**Ms Berry:** For people who have had the chance to visit the Woden Youth Foyer, it is quite an extraordinary development. There are programs like the Foyer around the country, but this one is different in its own way. They are all a bit unique. Something I have been championing for a long time was having that youth foyer as part of the CIT development; so I am excited that it is finally there. We will give you an update on where it is at.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** As the minister said, I can provide an update on where we are at with the youth foyer. We are expecting the last of the defects work to be completed in the next three weeks, at which point it will require further certification. So it is about

four weeks until the youth foyer is completed and occupiable. I have to be conscious that we are in a live procurement process. So I will not be able to talk at great detail about what is transpiring there, but we are expecting that to be resolved this month. From there, we will engage in contract negotiations with the preferred supplier, which we expect to occur in December.

**MS TOUGH:** Hopefully that means that either in December or early in the new year it will be ready to open for people to start calling it home.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Yes, intake and assessment—indeed, yes.

**MS TOUGH:** Wonderful. What is the capacity?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** The youth foyer has 20 bedrooms. It also has, I think, three parents' rooms as well.

**Ms Berry:** It also has some specifically disability modified rooms as well.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** It certainly does, yes. The entire complex has been designed to accommodate people with a disability.

**MS TOUGH:** What is the minimum age of someone who might be able to live in a youth foyer?

**Ms Shields:** It is for young people aged 16 to 24 years.

**MS TOUGH:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** You said intake and assessment is likely to be in January. How long does that process generally take? What is our best guess at when people will be—

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I think intake and assessment will commence as soon as a contract is executed. That period of negotiating a final service agreement is unpredictable, but we are expecting that to be settled in December.

**Ms Berry:** I think, from memory, when Common Grounds were being tenanted, it did not take very long. But it was a careful process, making sure that everybody was not just put in at the same time—and the chaos of letting a new environment in that circumstance. We will work with the provider of that service to make sure that it is done in a way that people can adjust and be supported as they move in, rather than 20 young people all just thrown in the deep end. It tended to work better if they were moved in gradually over a relatively short period of time.

**THE CHAIR:** Have the defects in that property been addressed?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** The last of those defects is currently being addressed, which relates to the fire stairs. That is the element that I explained before. It will take about three weeks to complete with a week of certification thereafter.

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry; when was the week of certification?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Probably three weeks from last week. So it will probably be the first week of December.

**THE CHAIR:** During estimates, questions were asked about why a provider had not already been engaged, and the indication provided was, “We have got to do all the defect management first.” But now a provider is being engaged and the defect have not all been addressed.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** A provider has not been engaged just yet. They are both converging on December. We expect defects to be completed in December and we expect a contract to be executed in December as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Would it have been possible to execute a contract sooner, such that as soon as all the defects were complete and the certificate of occupancy were issued—

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I would be thrilled to but, essentially, we will have to go through contract negotiations. In some circumstances that can be very straightforward. In other circumstances there might be a handful of clauses that we need to negotiate on. So it is unpredictable how long that will take.

**THE CHAIR:** Sure, but if it had started sooner, then you would finish it sooner—perhaps a learning.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Indeed.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I understand the funding for this was secured in the 2023-24 budget. So why did you not start procurement earlier, given that optimal outcome.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I will go back to the fundamental question here, which is that the defects will be completed in December 2025 and we will be engaging a provider in December 2025.

**MR RATTENBURY:** But there is presumably a bump-in period. You said the period of contract negotiations is uncertain. Given that funding was secured in the 2023-24 budget, this could have been done earlier.

**Ms Berry:** Yes, in an ideal world it would have been better to have it sorted out sooner. Unfortunately, it just did not work that way.

**MR RATTENBURY:** But, Minister, my question is: why wasn't it done?

**Ms Berry:** I think part of the response to that is around the defects work, the procurement process and negotiations.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Your question is right. This could have been done earlier, and we may have had a provider in October or November that might have been able to bump-in earlier in December once defects had been completed.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Yes. The consequence of this is that people who are in a very

vulnerable situation end up having to wait longer. That is the target audience for this service, and they being left in a position where their service is not being provided in a timely manner, for a reason that is absolutely unclear, despite the fact that the funding was secured.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Funding is not the only element that needs to be secured. There are procurement processes that need to be negotiated, including the Government Procurement Board timelines that exist with that. There is complexity and there is unpredictability in our procurement timelines as well. There is also unpredictability in our evaluation processes too. Again, the building and rectification of defects will be completed in December 2025 and we will have a provider engaged in December 2025.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am just trying to find reference to how much was actually committed in that 2023-24 budget. Do you have those numbers to hand? I am so sorry; I am furiously Googling.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I do not have those numbers to hand. I can take that on notice. It is complex, because over a number of budgets there has been commonwealth funding that has been dedicated to the youth foyer and there has been service delivery funding that has been dedicated to the youth foyer. Even in the most recent budget there was also building and maintenance funding that has been provided. So it has occurred over a number of budgets. I will take that on notice so I can give you the most comprehensive answer possible. But I am going to predict someone is going to send me a message as I log back onto my computer about this.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Fantastic. Perhaps while you are typing and logging in, are you able to provide the actual value of the contract that the ACT government is offering as part of this?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** That question I will have to take on notice. That will be on the public record, but we will need to go through contract negotiations before I am able to advise that.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Okay. I would be interested in what this looks like, given what you are taking on notice, but I would be interested in the value of the contract essentially comparative to other youth foyers either in the ACT or in comparable jurisdictions in New South Wales.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I am happy to take that on notice. I am happy to take that whole series of questions on notice, which is how much funding has been provided in totality for the youth foyer and then how that might be comparable to other youth foyers.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Thank you.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** But I note that no one youth foyer is the same. There are 40-bedroom youth foyers that have a different scale to them. There are non-purpose-built youth foyers that will have other challenges associated with them that might require additional funding to offset those complicating factors. I am happy to provide that information on notice.

**Ms Berry:** I think you have to take that into account with those parameters that they are all different and so the funding for those and the services that are provided will be different.

**MISS NUTTALL:** What would be the unique factors in this Woden Youth Foyer case? What are the things that we should look out for that would mean it would not necessarily be super comparable to other youth foyers? What are the core elements there that mean it is hard to compare?

**Ms Berry:** There are 20—

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** There are so many different factors. The way that funding would be bid for would be based on our very, very specific case. Some youth foyers might have 24-hour support associated with them because of the client cohort they are working with and others may choose not to. It would come down to the level of support staff that are working on the project. There are a significant amount of variables, right down to the cost of building maintenance. If you have live plants inside your youth foyer, that is an additional cost. If those plants are on an automatic watering system, that is a different cost as well. It really, really drills down to a significant level of detail.

I do have an answer for your question. In 2025-26, the government funded just over \$1 million per annum into the forwards for the youth foyer.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am interested in asking about vacancy rates for ACT public housing properties. As at 30 June 2025, there were 520 public housing dwellings vacant, I understand; please correct me if I am wrong. That is 4.4 per cent of the total housing stock at the time. Of these, only 41 were awaiting sale and demolition. Is it normal to have 4.4 per cent of the public housing stock vacant? Why weren't the remaining 471 used to provide housing for those who are currently homeless or at risk of homelessness?

**Ms Berry:** That is probably about right, and it would depend on the level and complexity of the work that would be needed to bring some of those properties back online. That can take some time, depending on what needs to be done to the home. I do not think it has gone up. I think that is pretty much the average, isn't it?

**Ms Newman:** Correct. When we are allocating a property that comes back online for allocation, it is not an exact science. We match the house to the person that is on the waitlist. There are a number of different reasons why there could be a delay. Every applicant who we assess as being next on the list has two allocations available to them. They might view a property and say that it is not for them—it is not in the right catchment area for school, or potentially does not suit them ageing in place. They will come back, and that extends the time. We then need to find somebody else who is suitable for that property. It could also be based on the demographic in the area; it does not suit them, or it does not suit a family cohort. It may be an area for a young person. There are a number of reasons, but we are heavily focused on making sure that we match the correct property to the correct person, so that we do not have a high transfer rate.

**Ms Berry:** It is about getting the homes ready and making sure that they have all the

things that they need. It is a good opportunity for us also to make sure that those homes have insulation and electricity upgrades et cetera. While they are empty, it is much easier to manage that. There might be a contract that does all the houses, depending on what needs to happen there.

If homes do not suit people's needs, that takes a little bit of time. I know that when homes are finished in areas, people think, "Why isn't there someone in there?" the day after it has been completed. It is because, again, you have to go through the defects process. It takes a bit of time to work through that. It is then about matching people to the home, and the home to people. That can sometimes take a couple of days or a couple of weeks. Sometimes it can take a month or more.

There can be demolishing and rebuilding, which will require, again, contract negotiations, to get a contract to demolish a number of homes together and build a number of homes in those spaces. That takes a bit of time as well. I would say, though, that we are working on how we can get some of the homes that are being repaired or upgraded, for whatever reason—I cannot remember the number of those particular properties as of the date that you referred to; was it June?

**MISS NUTTALL:** Yes, 30 June.

**Ms Berry:** We are looking at how we can try and get those homes back online sooner. It is just that they are all different.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Do you do a more detailed breakdown when you do your point-in-time information of how many are, for example, in that contract negotiation phase, how many are looking at minor defect rectification?

**Ms Newman:** Yes. We have a breakdown of those at the final stage of development as at 30 June 2025, those that are under current planning and assessment, those awaiting maintenance and upgrade, those that are available for allocation, and those waiting for sale or redevelopment.

**Ms Berry:** We can provide that information. With maintenance or upgrades, as of June—this number will have changed by now—the figure was 276. Under planning and assessment, it was 51. Vacant and available for allocation, there are currently 140. There are currently 43 that are for sale or redevelopment.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am interested in—perhaps with the same breakdown, if you are able to provide it—how many vacant ACT housing dwellings there are, currently.

**Ms Newman:** Currently, as of today?

**MISS NUTTALL:** Yes.

**Ms Newman:** As of 30 September, we currently have 510 that are vacant.

**Ms Berry:** That is including all those things. Available for allocation right now, or as of June, the figure is 140.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Still 140?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, from June.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am asking now about the current—

**Ms Newman:** There are 140. They might not be the same 140 properties that were vacant—

**Ms Berry:** It is 140 again. There you go.

**MISS NUTTALL:** This may be something that can be provided on notice: could you provide the number of vacant ACT housing dwellings over the last two years, if possible, broken down by month?

**Ms Berry:** Sorry, by?

**MISS NUTTALL:** By month, if that is okay—each month for the last two years. That may well be something that—

**Ms Berry:** We could do quarterly. Quarterly would be—

**Ms Shields:** We have quarterly. That would be relatively easy to provide, if that would be—

**MISS NUTTALL:** That is fine; thank you.

**Ms Berry:** We can take that on notice.

**MISS NUTTALL:** What is the average turnaround time right now on a vacant dwelling from the date between the old lease ending and the new lease commencing—noting the different circumstances?

**Ms Berry:** Take it on notice.

**Ms Shields:** It will be potentially quite difficult to calculate because of the number that come in and out for those different reasons. I will see what we are able to get for you on notice.

**MISS NUTTALL:** That is very kind. How many ACT housing properties did we, in essence, lose over the last year from our existing stock?

**Ms Berry:** Our stock is growing, so we are not going backwards.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In terms of demolitions, in terms of existing housing that was essentially taken out of stock.

**Ms Berry:** I think we have that information somewhere.

**Ms Shields:** We will do.

**Ms Berry:** We might have to take it on notice for you.

**Ms Shields:** Was that in the last 12 months, Miss Nuttall?

**MISS NUTTALL:** Beautiful. I am also interested in how many you lost sight of—essentially owned but have not managed actively.

**Ms Berry:** What was that one?

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am interested in the number of homes that ACT housing has lost sight of—essentially, that you own but have not been managing actively.

**Ms Shields:** I would suggest that we manage all of our properties. Can you give me an example?

**MR RATTENBURY:** We have heard reports from community sector organisations of houses that they have had and they have given back to Housing ACT, and Housing ACT has said, “We didn’t even know we owned that one.”

**Ms Shields:** I am happy to have that information provided to us so that we can investigate that particular instance. I am not aware of any of those circumstances. They have not been raised.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** I do not know that we can comment on things that have been said by community housing providers that we are not aware of.

**MR RATTENBURY:** We will check that and provide them to the minister, if we can get more specific examples.

**Ms Shields:** That would be helpful; thank you.

**Ms Berry:** Previously, Ms Barry, you were talking about—it might have been you, Miss Nuttall—the central intake service providing whole of housing or a support service for everybody. The information that is provided from June was that there were 66 applicants on the community housing register only. These are applicants that were not on any other waitlist. 625 existing public housing tenants were seeking transfer to another housing property. 235 applicants were on the waitlist for public housing, which excludes transfer applications, who have domestic and family violence identified as an issue, and there were 87 applications for transfer with domestic and family violence identified as an issue.

I wonder whether somebody has in front of them—I cannot find it right now—the information on the changes to the waitlist and the decrease in the time for priority housing. Whilst we are seeing growth in the numbers of people who are applying for public housing, we have moved the priority housing application times.

**Ms Shields:** I have that information. In June 2023, the average wait time was 0.7 years for a priority category. As at 30 June 2025, it was 0.4 years as an average for the same category.

**Ms Berry:** We were starting, in 2023, or in late 2022, to realise that growth in housing as well.

**MS BARRY:** Minister, I want to pick up on your comments around the public housing stock growing. Actually, it has only gone back to the 2017 base. Can you please explain that comment, in light of the fact that the population is growing?

**Ms Berry:** As part of the current public housing growth and renewal program, the ACT government committed to 1,000 homes being renewed and 400 new public homes purchased or built, and added to the public housing stock. The growth was from 11,700-and-something. I do not have the September figures.

**Ms Shields:** The September total for residential properties owned by Housing is 11,885.

**MS BARRY:** Thank you. I understand that that is growth, from the government's perspective, but my question is: how do you account for this population growth? I know that the population is not—

**Ms Berry:** Yes, I know what you are asking about. Without wanting to give members of the committee a history lesson on public housing in the ACT, of course, there was significantly more public housing when Canberra was being built, and over those early years. They were built for similar and different purposes. Over the years, public housing has declined as the population has grown.

However, we have also increased and have community housing, which did not exist before. We are also now investing in affordable housing rentals, which did not exist before. Public housing now is focused very much on the neediest people in our community. That is a change from the accommodation that was previously provided. Public housing itself is not growing at the same rate as population growth; I get that. I cannot argue against the facts. But I can say that the approach of government over the years, across the country, has been to focus public housing on those people who need it most. The market rentals do not exist as much as they did in the early years of public housing in Canberra.

Some states and territories sold off a lot of their public housing to private owners, developers and/or community housing providers. New South Wales sold off tens of thousands of homes. In the ACT, the ACT government at the time provided some public housing—I cannot remember the numbers—to start community housing here in the ACT. This would have been probably 20 years ago. Now we are seeing growth in community housing as well, with a bunch of different funding arrangements, like the affordable rentals that we were talking about before. There will be 800 new community housing affordable rentals under the affordable housing rental scheme. That will be in the pipeline as well.

You will see growth in a whole range of different housing, from public housing for those people who need it most, to community housing, affordable rentals, private build to rents, build to rent to buys, which is another initiative that we are doing here in the ACT, as well as the 30,000 to which the ACT government has committed to grow housing generally, including the 5,000 community, affordable and public, by 2030. You

are seeing growth. No, it is not the same as population growth, in the public housing numbers. But we are tackling the housing crisis from a number of different fronts.

**MS BARRY:** I recognise that government would not be able to build all the houses that Canberrans need, based on population projections—

**Ms Berry:** We are going to try.

**MS BARRY:** but you have mentioned that public housing would be targeted specifically to the vulnerable. How are you projecting that, and what calculations are you using to ensure that you are providing those houses for the most vulnerable, based on population increase? What work or modelling is currently being done?

**Ms Berry:** A range of different areas of modelling. Australia is experiencing a housing crisis that we have never had before. We are deep into catch-up, in trying to provide homes to those people who need it most. We are now at a time when both state and territory governments are investing in this space like they never have before.

Having a federal government partnership in this space is significant. We have a significant pipeline which will start seeing homes built within the next three to five years, in the short term. In the medium to longer term, there will be other homes that are built through a range of different funding models and partnerships.

We are seeing, in my time as housing minister, partnerships with private developers, community housing providers, philanthropic organisations, a range of different charities and community organisations—the federal government and our own—which we have never seen before. I talk about public housing growing, and it is, and that is the work that the ACT government is doing. But that is not the only area where we are seeing growth.

**MS BARRY:** It does not answer my question, though, which is: what modelling is currently being—

**Ms Berry:** Modelling?

**MS BARRY:** Yes.

**Ms Berry:** I am sorry; I got distracted. There is a range of different modelling that we use through organisations, peak housing bodies in the ACT and federally, work that Treasury does around population growth, understanding where the population is growing, where babies are being born, and meeting those needs. That is for housing generally.

I do not think anyone can deny that, for people who are experiencing significant financial issues, and a range of other issues, that is where the need is felt most. I do not think you need any specific data to point to that being the picture. We are working as hard as we can in the ACT, and across the country, to build as many homes as we can and focus on and target those people.

**MS BARRY:** Based on the modelling and projections that you are doing, what are you

considering to be the most vulnerable?

**Ms Berry:** A combination of complex issues or individual circumstances at a point in time. It could be people from minorities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, young people, women, older women, single men, people experiencing domestic and family violence, and people who are living with disabilities or living with conditions that mean they cannot participate in the way that maybe the rest of us can. I have probably missed a bunch out. It can be a single one of those, or all of them together.

**MS CARRICK:** I have a question on the modelling and the targets. From your modelling, does that tell you how many public housing additions to the stock that you need each year?

**Ms Berry:** It would be part of it. However, the ability to build homes also comes into the equation. Money, on its own, will not create public housing, because there are also a number of other crises that are being addressed at the same time. There is the construction workforce challenge, an increase in the cost of supply challenge, land, greenfield and brownfield land, and noting that that is much more complex and finite than it ever has been. Those are a couple of reasons.

**MS CARRICK:** Do you take all those things into account—the workforce, the cost of supply nowadays, the land—in determining what you can achieve for targets each year for public housing?

**Ms Berry:** We have set a target for 1,000 new public homes and 4,000 community and affordable homes by 2030, and 30,000 homes altogether by 2030. There are all those challenges, and what we saw over the last five years, until 2023, which we talked about earlier; those challenges included COVID, weather and issues that were happening overseas—wars and unrest in other countries. All of that was impacting on our ability to build homes anywhere. Those issues still exist today. It is about understanding those issues, seeing what land we have in the pipeline, through the land release program, and understanding what is possible for the ACT government to build in a period of time.

That figure of 30,000 is an ambitious goal, given that we are still facing a number of complexities. The greenfield land under the Indicative Land Release Program is much more challenging because of all the issues that we care about—environmental heritage, Aboriginal heritage and culture, and a range of infrastructure challenges. All of that is put together and we think, “What’s our best guess at how much we could build? What’s possible in the ACT?”

**MS CARRICK:** What was the target for 2024-25 for public housing—the year just gone?

**Ms Berry:** Public housing will ebb and flow over the years, but we will have a target at a point, at end of time, for when the housing development will be completed. Under the current growth and renewal program, which took longer than we expected, because of all the issues that I talked about earlier, we had hoped to have completed that program by now, from memory. That was expanded out to 2026-27. With the additional 400 public housing property properties, we will have met that commitment by 2026-27. But it will not be a matter of saying, “By year, we are doing a hundred homes,” because of

the complex nature of our builds, which includes demolishing homes and purchasing homes off the market. One year you might get 90 and the next year you might get 110; but, at the end of the program, we will have delivered the 400.

**MS CARRICK:** In the Suburban Land Agency annual report, it has the target for public housing being 100 for 2024-25, with 60 delivered. That is down by 40 per cent. This program has already slipped. When will they be built? When will this be finished, and how do you keep yourself on track, if you do not have annual targets to monitor?

**Ms Berry:** We do have annual targets—you have just listed them—but sometimes things arise that are out of the government’s control, and it will mean that that target might not be met in that year, but it could be made up in the next year or the year after.

**MS CARRICK:** Do you have mitigation strategies? If 40 of these are in the Molonglo town centre, goodness knows when that will start, so how do you cover that?

**Ms Berry:** It is really challenging, no doubt. Things come up which are unexpected—for example, the koala at Jacka. Nobody could have predicted that there would be a koala in a proposed new suburb build. That means there are somewhere between 150 and 200 properties that are likely to not be built in Jacka. At the end of the 30,000, we might not have met exactly 30,000. We might have exceeded it, which would be awesome, but there will be reasons like that where we have to think, “Okay, where else can we build? What’s possible? Is there other land or opportunities available to build homes?” noting that the ACT government is responsible for about two per cent.

**MS CARRICK:** If you are being proactive, can you bring stuff forward? You have stuff on the program; are you able to bring it forward?

**Ms Berry:** If it is ready, and it needs to be ready across a range of different areas. Greenfield is complex, for a range of different reasons. With brownfield, it could be the infrastructure around it, including plumbing, energy—all those different stakeholders that the government or a builder or developer would have to—

**THE CHAIR:** I want to go back to the question from earlier about rates. Have you received the message?

**Ms Shields:** No, I will continue to take that on notice, but I would like to correct the record around the Programmed contract. I think we indicated it would end next year. It is actually at the end of 2027 that that contract will end.

**THE CHAIR:** We heard earlier that there was a \$958,000 rates increase—related to the question taken on notice—in the coming financial year. How many public housing properties are there in the ACT?

**Ms Shields:** As at—

**THE CHAIR:** Now.

**Ms Shields:** I had that number before.

**Ms Berry:** 11,800.

**THE CHAIR:** 11,800 or thereabouts?

**Ms Shields:** I will have to re-find the number. It is 11,885 as at 30 September.

**THE CHAIR:** There is a \$100 levy for every property; that is over \$1 million just there. How can the number for rates increases be below—

**Ms Shields:** We might be talking about two different points in time. I have just given you the 30 September number. Earlier, that number would have been—

**Ms Berry:** For June.

**Ms Shields:** June; is that correct?

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** Yes. That rates number is not just for the health levy; there is also the fire and emergencies levy that is there, per property; there is the Safer Families Levy, as well as the health levy.

**THE CHAIR:** Also, general rates increases.

**Ms Shields:** On top of that, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Shouldn't it be significantly more than a million—\$1.185 million?

**Ms Shields:** I would like to take it on notice, as we said earlier, so that we can make sure we get you the exact—

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, maybe you need to fact-check that figure.

**Ms Shields:** So that we are talking about the same points in time as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. I am curious about the increase in rates borne by Housing ACT in 2025-26 and what that equates to as a proportion of the rates that were paid. What is that as a percentage? The total amount of increase and the percentage amount, and how that compares—

**Ms Berry:** The percentage amount of what?

**THE CHAIR:** The rates for the last financial year; \$25 million was borne by Housing ACT. Whatever that figure is, if it is a \$2.5 million increase, it would be a 10 per cent increase. As a proportion of rates from the last financial year, and how that might compare to the 3.75 per cent indexation.

**Mr Balaretnaraja:** It does get even more complex, because multi-unit sites are strata titled; therefore there are different ways that levies would be applied to them. It will not be as simple as the number of houses divided by X figure, because not every single property or dwelling will have levies applied in the same way.

**THE CHAIR:** What I am trying to get at is this: rates have gone up by a percentage. Across Housing ACT, there is a total amount of rates, there is a total percentage increase. The Treasurer, I believe, indicated during estimates that there is a 3.75 per cent indexation rate on recurrent funding for Housing ACT. My curiosity is about whether that is sufficient to cover the increase in rates this financial year.

**Mr Hayward:** I can answer a couple of the questions. In terms of the increase in rates, I do have some percentages here. That represents 1.5 per cent of controlled recurrent payment funding. I know that we also have own-source revenue. That is rent that we charge our citizens.

When we look at total revenue, the increase in rates that we are expecting in 2025-26 represents approximately half a per cent of total revenue, or 0.3 per cent of total expenditure. In terms of the total make-up of our outlays, it is relatively small. As was touched on, because we have multi-unit tenancy sites, some of these rates and levies are much lower. It is not a one-for-one basis, so it is not 100 times 11,000 properties, for example, for the levies. It might be \$100 times 6,000 or something like that. It is a much lower number. I do not have the specific numbers in front of me, but that is an example that there is not a one-for-one basis across this.

We also note that, when we are putting our budgets together, there are general movements across the board. We might have expected a certain number of properties at a point in time and budgeted for that in terms of our rates. If we have a lower number of properties, there will be a slight surplus there, and we can use that to offset other increases in rates as well. As you touched on, we also have that 3.75 per cent increase in our funding for the rates themselves. There are several things that are happening, with movements in either direction, but our net increase that we are looking at was that \$958,000 that was referenced.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, I want to ask about the Rent Relief Fund. It has now been 128 days since it ended. The government is—

**Ms Berry:** Thank you for that.

**MR RATTENBURY:** That is all right. I can go further and say that, at two clients a day, it is now 256 clients who have not accessed the service. The government has given an indication of creating a similar but different program. Are you or your agencies involved in the design of that new program?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, I am. I have responsibility for the Rent Relief Fund now.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Can you tell us what the timeline is or where you are up to with planning the replacement, the alternative?

**Ms Berry:** I cannot. We are still in the process of making a decision about that. If there is any information that I can provide before this hearing finishes, I will, or I will do so during the last sitting period. If I have something to say earlier, I will try and provide that as quickly as I can.

**MR RATTENBURY:** What are the key changes that you are considering, given the

government was not comfortable with the previous version?

**Ms Berry:** The changes that have been suggested include rent relief and/or—again, this has not been decided—it could include some more flexibility around that, whether it is for a financial difficulty that an individual or family are experiencing with their home, for example, insurance, whitegoods all going out at the same time or something like that.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Do you have a timeline for the commencement of procurement for the new program?

**Ms Berry:** I do not.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Not at this stage. Is there consultation being undertaken with stakeholders at the moment about the design of the new program?

**Ms Berry:** There will be.

**MR RATTENBURY:** That has not started yet, either?

**Ms Berry:** No. I should say apart from the initial roundtable, no.

**THE CHAIR:** We will have to wrap it up there. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. If you have taken any questions on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretariat within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank our witnesses who have assisted the committee through their experience and knowledge. We also thank broadcasting, Hansard and the secretariat for their support. If a member wishes to ask questions on notice, please upload them to the parliamentary portal as soon as possible, and no later than five business days from today. This meeting is now adjourned.

**The committee adjourned at 11.01 am.**