



**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**

**TUESDAY, 18 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

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## The committee met at 10.46 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

### Infrastructure Canberra

Bell, Ms Hayley, Executive Group Manager, Delivery; Health, Education and Justice

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Director-General

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General

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

The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of the city and the region. We would also like to welcome and acknowledge any 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 of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of the Assembly. The hearing is being recorded and transcribed by Hansard and will be published. The proceedings are also being broadcast and web-streamed live. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses used the 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, the Minister for Education and Early Childhood, and officials. Please note that, as witnesses, you are protected by parliamentary privilege and are also bound by its obligations. We will proceed directly to questions as we are not inviting opening statements. I was hoping to ask about Telopea Park School and the modernisation that is going on there. I have heard concerns from the P&C and families about safety of pedestrians around Telopea Park. As part of that modernisation project, is the government improving pedestrian crossings or traffic management around the school?

**Ms Bell:** The team has been working on developing a master plan that will inform the next round of consultation with the broader community and the school around what that project will deliver. We expect to commence undertaking consultation this week. We were timing our invitations to the community around the sand issue to make sure that everybody had enough notice for that consultation session. We are working with traffic engineers to make sure that we are considering any potential impacts or improvements around traffic circulating around the school and the best location for provision of

additional parking.

**THE CHAIR:** So parking is part of the investigation. Are additional pedestrian crossings or traffic speed limits and those sorts of things part of what that will look like?

**Ms Bell:** That will definitely be considered as part of our development application.

**THE CHAIR:** In March this year, the government committed to install a pedestrian crossing near the intersection of New South Wales Crescent and Telopea Park.

**Ms Bell:** That is not part of the scope of our project.

**THE CHAIR:** I can ask the government about that part of my question. You have a supplementary, Miss Nuttall?

**MISS NUTTALL:** Will the master plan involve looking at the change rooms—the facilities across from the tennis court, across from the school proper, noting that those change rooms are very old or at least were?

**Ms Bell:** The change rooms are not part of the scope of this project at the moment.

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

**MR HANSON:** Do you guys manage the Public School Infrastructure Renewal Program? As I understand it, that is the annual program of infrastructure that will be allocated towards—

**Ms Berry:** No. That sits with Education.

**MR HANSON:** Does it?

**Ms Berry:** Yes. This is the school redevelopment and build.

**MR HANSON:** So the actual maintenance of that school is not—

**Ms Berry:** It is part of Education.

**MR HANSON:** This is the new school infrastructure program. Those two programs do not marry together at all? Are they dealt with separately?

**Ms Berry:** Separately. There is separate funding and separate management.

**Ms Geraghty:** We work very closely with the Education Directorate in terms of the projects that we are delivering. The government structure has Education as our client, so the programs cross over, but they are accountable separately to the minister.

**MR HANSON:** So how do you make sure that they are compatible and are not, I suppose, tripping over each other?

**Ms Bell:** It would be part of the Education Directorate's plan to look at the assets and

part of their business case requesting investment for new infrastructure, which would come to Infrastructure Canberra to deliver. They would need to describe the asset condition and what they have done around maintenance to inform whether a redevelopment is required or there will be asset renewal instead.

**MR HANSON:** Where is that line drawn? Is it a financial line or is it just the nature of the infrastructure redevelopment or maintenance? Some of the programs in that Public School Infrastructure Renewal Program are quite significant. I am trying to work out why one is dealt with in Education and—

**Ms Berry:** One is dealt with by iCBR.

**MR HANSON:** Who makes a decision about which bucket it sits in?

**Ms Berry:** iCBR are responsible for the delivery of tier 1 and tier 2 public education infrastructure—that is, for new builds and, I guess, more significant modernisation projects. Other projects, like the Fraser Primary School oval, Melba Copland Secondary School master planning and the Lyneham High School gymnasium have partial ARP funding, and that is through Education.

**MR HANSON:** Is that line drawn on a dollar amount? How do you make the determination about which bucket it comes out of?

**Ms Bell:** The capital planning framework for the territory describes a risk based approach and what category a project will fit in—whether it is a tier 1, tier 2 or tier 3 project. There is not just a financial component; it will also consider whether it is complex, requires multiple stages or is across a precinct. There is a risk matrix in the capital planning framework.

**MR HANSON:** Tier 3 is the infrastructure program that is run by Education, and Infrastructure runs tier 1 and tier 2. Is that the delineation?

**Ms Geraghty:** That is the broad delineation. Sometimes we support on tier 3 projects or other directorates might ask us to run their tier 3 projects. But, broadly, we are responsible for tier 1 and tier 2, and tier 3 remains with Education.

**MR HANSON:** Thanks. I just wanted to try to understand where that all sits.

**MS TOUGH:** Minister, can you provide an update on the Garran Primary School modernisation project? Where is that up to at the moment?

**Ms Berry:** Yes. We can provide an update on that one. It has been going really well. I think that the students have moved in or are very close to moving in.

**Ms Bell:** They are in the process now, Minister. We received the certificate of occupancy and use on 11 November—a very exciting milestone for that project. The students will be moving in over the next couple of weeks.

**MS TOUGH:** Wonderful. So it will be up and running before the end of the school year?

**Ms Bell:** Yes.

**MS CARRICK:** Does that mean all the fencing will come down and the Scouts will be able to use their scout hall parking again?

**Ms Bell:** The Scout hall parking has not been impacted by the project. The last thing that we are working through with the Scouts is that they have requested some additional fencing to make sure that the traffic and their parking is separated when we operationalise the school. That is the last piece of work that we are consulting with the Scouts on.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am interested in asking about the proposed Belconnen primary school. What is the current status of planning for this new primary school? And will there be an early childhood education and care centre attached?

**Ms Berry:** That sits with Education.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Even though it is about planning for a new school?

**Ms Berry:** It is not at the iCBR stage.

**MISS NUTTALL:** In that case, do you provide advice at all on over-enrolment or capacity issues in certain parts of education?

**Ms Berry:** No. This is just for the build. iCBR has builds and construction. Education is for all the other policies.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I will try my last question to see if it applies. There were complaints around smell at Shirley Smith High School. At the time of construction, how aware was Infrastructure Canberra of that being a potential issue?

**Ms Berry:** iCBR did not have that project.

**Ms Geraghty:** We were not accountable, but we did work on the project. I am not aware of the smell, but I am happy to take the question on notice and find out.

**MR HANSON:** Do you have a list of what you have? Is it somewhere in the annual report?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MR HANSON:** There is delineation. Education has it, you hand it off and then you hand it back; some are tier 2 and some are tier 3.

**Ms Berry:** I was about to say, when Miss Nuttall was asking her question, that iCBR are currently responsible for the Strathnairn School and the early childhood education and care service to year 6 development. Whitlam is ECEC to year 6. Narrabundah is modernisation, Telopea Park is modernisation, Garren—oh, my computer just turned off.

**Ms Geraghty:** Majura and—

**Ms Berry:** Here we go. Majura and the new college at Nicholls.

**MR HANSON:** That will probably solve some confusion. That is handy because, if I could go to my substantive question, Mr Chair, it is about Whitlam.

**THE CHAIR:** Go for it.

**MR HANSON:** Could you give me an update on Whitlam please?

**Ms Geraghty:** Construction is progressing very well on that project. We are starting to build the structure and pour the slabs for that, and we are on target to open for P to year 6 on day 1, term 1, in 2027.

**MR HANSON:** It is obviously a growth area. Are you building for the capacity you expect in the short term and scoping to expand that site?

**Ms Geraghty:** There is scope within the current structure. There will be some shell space available to be fitted out in the future as part of a future funding decision, and the master plan also identifies some areas for new structures to be built for growth.

**MR HANSON:** What is the anticipated capacity of the school in 2027, when it opens? Do you have an estimated number of students?

**Ms Geraghty:** I have a number here of 780, but I will need to take that on notice to double-check whether that is for the shell space that we are growing into or on day 1.

**MR HANSON:** It opens as—what did you say—P to—

**Ms Geraghty:** P to year 6

**MR HANSON:** But it will go beyond that in later years, or does it stay P to year 6?

**Ms Geraghty:** It is just the EC—

**Ms Berry:** The early childhood centre.

**MS CARRICK:** Will that have community space, given that the tender for the shops and its community space did not proceed and is at risk? Is the community space at the shops or the school?

**Ms Berry:** All of our schools have capacity outside of school hours for broader community use.

**MS CARRICK:** Is Molonglo Valley College in the pipeline?

**Ms Berry:** It is not with iCBR at this point in time.

**MS CARRICK:** Do you expect it to come onto the pipeline soon? Canberra College is packed and there is need for another college.

**Ms Berry:** Canberra College has capacity and there is a new non-government school being built in Stromlo, in the Molonglo area as well. The school build in the Molonglo area is part of the whole Molonglo project, and that sits with the Suburban Land Agency for timeframes. I do not have that here because the officials for that response are not part of this work.

**THE CHAIR:** Was Majura Primary sitting with Infrastructure Canberra during the previous phase, when it was an expansion project as well as a modernisation project and then it came back across, or was it—

**Ms Berry:** Everything initially sat within the directorates. iCBR—when did you take over? I cannot remember the actual date.

**Mr Cahif:** As a result of the AAs—and this probably goes to one of the areas of Mr Hanson’s questions—a number of projects were transferred mid-flight, as you could call it, and those projects came across to Infrastructure Canberra. In our portfolio, there are a number of projects that we initiated after it had been developed through the capital framework. From stage 0 to stage 1, it becomes a project which is transferred to Infrastructure Canberra to deliver. We are involved in the delivery components of those business cases. Several, such as Majura, were already projects sitting in the education department and then moved across to Infrastructure Canberra to be delivered.

**Ms Geraghty:** Those projects transferred across in November last year.

**THE CHAIR:** Regarding consultation and work that was done prior to the re-scoping of that project, to what extent can that be utilised, or is it being utilised by Infrastructure Canberra in its development of a new scope for the modernisation of the school?

**Ms Geraghty:** All of that and the most recent round of consultation. We were intrinsically involved with the consultation and the development of the listening report. We partnered with the Education Directorate to undertake that consultation round.

**THE CHAIR:** Was there a level of transfer across of officials who were involved in earlier consultations for the more recent consultations?

**Ms Geraghty:** The team came across as part of the administrative arrangements.

**THE CHAIR:** That is great. Are you able to provide an update on where that is up to, what the next steps are and a general timeline?

**Ms Geraghty:** We have undertaken various scoping options and we have provided a recommendation and advice to government for them to consider. We have advised the community that we will be back to brief them on what the agreed scope of the project will be in early 2026.

**THE CHAIR:** That is great. Minister Berry, do you know when the decision at your end is likely? Does that go through cabinet and that sort of thing or is that a decision

for you?

**Ms Berry:** That is a good question. It may need to go through cabinet. It depends on the scope of the project. The consultations at this point in the project have been really positive. The young people have had some really good and ambitious ideas for the modernisation. The whole school has been engaged in it and it has been a really positive project. I acknowledge that there were some challenges in the past. I think we have overcome those. Everyone is working closely together.

**THE CHAIR:** That is good to hear. This is a more general question: when you are presenting those kinds of options, how many options are usually put forward? It does not have to be specific to this project. And what is the reason for the different options? Are there different costing profiles? How does that look?

**Ms Bell:** It takes a whole range of scenarios into account to make sure that we are presenting the best value for money scenario for government. It can be informed by the site, the design and the demand projections for a particular service. Also, it is often informed by the budget envelope that we need to try to stick with to make sure that we are delivering something that makes sense for that investment. A range of criteria will be factored into that options analysis.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it typically: “This is what we think you should do. Here is another option you can choose if you want to” or “Here are three options. We don’t have a recommendation. It’s up to you.” How does that work?

**Ms Berry:** We always have options. It might not be just a particular option. It might be an option with some other things to it or things taken away, depending on what the project is informed by through all the consultation that we have done with the community and, of course, the budget and need.

**MS BARRY:** I would like to confirm that Strathnairn is scheduled to open in January next—

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MS BARRY:** That has not changed?

**Ms Berry:** No. It is going really well.

**Ms Geraghty:** It is going well. There is a two-stage opening.

**MS BARRY:** From preschool to year 2, and then in 2027—

**Ms Geraghty:** That is right.

**Ms Berry:** Everything is going beautifully there.

**MS BARRY:** That is good to know.

**MR HANSON:** The Narrabundah organisation is due to be finished in 2027. Can you

advise me on what that organisation is?

**Ms Bell:** We are building a new design, arts, technology and science building, and some related landscaping works at the end of that project.

**MR HANSON:** Has that commenced?

**Ms Bell:** Yes. It is also going particularly well. The structure is well progressed. We are above ground now and we are on track for completion in early 2027.

**MR HANSON:** Is that replacing existing infrastructure or is that new, in the sense that it allows for more courses? This might more an Education question: is the idea to expand the scope of what Narrabundah is doing or is it just replacing old stuff?

**Ms Berry:** I understand it is replacing the teaching and learning spaces that were demolished because of asbestos contamination.

**Ms Berry:** The school has changed a bit. It still has the transportable classrooms, or “the village” as it is described by the school. This is one part of the modernisation project at Narrabundah. There is more to come at Narrabundah. This is stage 1, I think. More work will happen once we can move classes to that area, and then we will build and replace some of the other classes that were demolished—the current transportable classes there.

**MR HANSON:** It sounds like some of these projects are now on track. A number of them have experienced delay—Whitlam and others. Does this indicate that the ability to get trades and products for building is back on track? It got a bit clunky during COVID. Has that stabilised now?

**Ms Geraghty:** Yes. One of the things that we have done is release an infrastructure pipeline to industry so that we can make sure that industry is aware of our upcoming projects. It is quite transparent. We think about how we plan our projects to give better continuity and more consistency to industry. We are very conscious that Canberra is going through a considerable number of projects, not just by the government; there are also private projects as well. We do a lot of industry engagement not only within the territory but also interstate to make sure that we have the right trades and attract the right workforce to deliver our projects.

**Ms Berry:** Weather has a huge impact on delivery as well. We have had a good year, particularly for the new schools in Strathnairn and Whitlam. The weather has been on our side.

**MR HANSON:** There are no particular blockages for any particular product or shortages in trade or something like that? I imagine that is across Infrastructure, not just Education.

**Ms Geraghty:** There is, but we work very closely with our delivery partners and with industry to try to work through those issues. There are issues at all of our sites. Sometimes we need to use substitutes and fix it later. But we try to make sure that we are working through the problems together.

**MS TOUGH:** I was going to ask whether Strathnairn preschool will be open next year, but Ms Barry already checked that. This is probably for Education, not Infrastructure Canberra: will the outside-of-school-hours care at Strathnairn also open next year?

**Ms Berry:** That is with Education. It is going through procurement. Hopefully a decision is pending on that.

**MS TOUGH:** Thank you.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I would like to go back to Garran, if that is all right. I am interested in the capacity issues and sporting requirements that led to the Garran modernisation and redevelopment project.

**Ms Berry:** That is probably an Education question. A bit of historic knowledge would not be held here. There is a double gymnasium being built at Garran.

**Ms Bell:** Yes. That is stage 2. Once all of the children have moved into stage 1, we will demolish the existing facilities and build the double gym and hall.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I was at Garran the last time the hall was redeveloped. That would have been in 2011, I think. That is fairly recent, I assume, in terms of school builds. I am thinking about somewhere like Tuggeranong, where I do not think we have seen a quick turnaround time between a new hall being built and then it being demolished for another one to be built. Does Infrastructure Canberra have any input into decisions to demolish?

**Ms Berry:** No. That sits with Education.

**MR HANSON:** Could you give us an update on Nicholls, please? What is being delivered? When is it being delivered? And how is it tracking?

**Ms Bell:** We are working through the design phases. We have a delivery partner engaged for that project. They have just submitted the DA application for the completeness check. We will move into a phase of consultation. We will negotiate with Planning around the timing for that to make sure that we give the community the best chance of providing us feedback over the December-January period. With that DA application being submitted, we are on track for that to be completed for day 1, term 1, in 2028.

**MR HANSON:** What is anticipated to be delivered?

**Ms Bell:** I have a note here that talks about capacity. We have initial capacity for 800 students, with room to expand to 1,100 students. I would have to take on notice the specific scope of the project, in terms of the types of teaching spaces that we are providing there.

**MR HANSON:** What are the school levels?

**Ms Bell:** It is a college.

**MR HANSON:** This is probably more an Education question: will that take pressure off Gungahlin?

**Ms Berry:** Yes.

**MS CARRICK:** Do you have a program to make sure that the school halls that the community uses for sport or culture have adequate lighting, floors and boards to enable the schools to rent them out? I have come across a school that says they need better lighting to be able to rent the hall to the community so that they can make money out of it. Do you have a program to ensure they have the right things they need to lease out the hall?

**Ms Berry:** It sits with Education, Ms Carrick.

**MS CARRICK:** The halls are not Infrastructure things?

**Ms Berry:** No. It is not a tier 1 or tier 2 project.

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

**Short suspension.**

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

Infrastructure Canberra

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Director-General

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General

Loft, Ms Catherine, Executive Group Manager, Delivery, Housing

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

Kerkow, Ms Kyla, Executive Group Manager, Pipeline, Capability and Estate

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

I want to ask about HAFF round 3. This has come up in some of the other hearings. Is iCBR ready to bid for this round of funding for the Housing Australia Future Fund?

**Ms Loft:** We are working with the rest of government on HAFF round 3 and looking at potential outcomes that we could deliver. We are definitely interested. It is definitely on the radar. It is part of the planning work for the next program.

**THE CHAIR:** I should probably know this: for round 3, has it been made clear as to what kinds of projects that round of funding will target—community housing, public housing or a mix?

**Ms Berry:** No.

**Ms Loft:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** If they open that tomorrow, would you be ready to make some proposals?

**Ms Loft:** Absolutely.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you able to provide any indication of the scale of projects that you would be keen to submit for?

**Ms Loft:** It would come down to the funding that is available, land availability and what we could do within the timeframe. It is certainly something that the planning team are looking at, and working with the housing coordinator-general's office, who are coordinating it—across strategic policy in Health and Community Services as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Will some of that work focus on new housing? Is there any scope? It would be new housing, but there are various developments happening in the ACT right now. We have knock-down rebuilds and consolidated blocks. There is one on Cowper

Street, for instance, where there were a whole bunch of standalone dwellings and now they have been turned into something else. Are those sorts of projects eligible for that funding?

**Ms Loft:** We have done that now, through round 2—projects that were already in the pipeline, what would be applicable for that funding. If those are the criteria for round 3, we could definitely look at that. But what is in the pipeline now is committed to the growth and renewal program. We would be looking for additional projects, definitely.

**MS BARRY:** I have a few questions around specialist disability housing accommodation.

**Ms Berry:** That is not us, Ms Barry. That is with housing. This is infrastructure.

**MS BARRY:** Minister, you have not even heard the question.

**Ms Berry:** Okay; go for it. I am pretty confident it is not answered here, though.

**MS BARRY:** You cannot tell me when iCBR first became aware of the issue of SDA?

**Ms Berry:** No, because it does not sit with iCBR.

**Ms Loft:** No, that is not us.

**MS BARRY:** Let us go to housing maintenance. Minister—

**Ms Berry:** That is not us either, is it?

**Ms Loft:** No.

**Ms Berry:** It depends which part?

**Ms Loft:** Yes.

**Ms Berry:** Ask the question and we will see how we go.

**MS BARRY:** Minister, again, I have been told by a number of contractors involved in public housing maintenance that the work has not been funded and it is not being done. Can someone tell me what is going on?

**Ms Loft:** Work has not stopped. In this quarter alone, there have been 10,000 work orders completed.

**MS BARRY:** Where is the disconnect there? I am hearing from contractors and I am hearing from clients that work has not been done for many months. I went out the other day to visit a resident, my constituent, who has had a request in for about three years regarding black mould. It has not been done. Where is the disconnect?

**Ms Loft:** I would be very happy to look into the black mould example, if I can get those details. Work is prioritised and it is responsive. Anything involving health and safety—

dis-mods and DV fall into that category—is done within the urgent timeframes. That has not stopped.

If the work falls into capital works, planned works, it then goes onto a prioritisation schedule, depending on how urgent the work is. If the works are being delayed or if it is further down the prioritisation list, it is being triaged and categorised. Sometimes it is being committed within this year's budget. It is definitely on the list. It might feel like we are not getting back to the tenants quickly enough about those timeframes, but there is always a schedule of planned maintenance.

With the responsive works—and black mould would fall into responsive, which is why I would be happy to look into that—they are all done within four hours, 24 hours, seven days, depending on the triaging.

**MS BARRY:** This has been years.

**Ms Loft:** I would be very happy to look into that, if I can get the details.

**MS BARRY:** How would you prioritise an elderly First Nations woman who has been expecting work to be done on her taps because she cannot use the taps? Where would that fit as a priority?

**Ms Loft:** That would be a disability modification, and that would be done as responsive works.

**MS BARRY:** What is responsive work? Is that tier 1 or tier 2? How many days do you—

**Ms Loft:** It comes into four hours, 7 pm the next day, or a seven-day timeframe, depending on the triage of the actual work.

**MS BARRY:** This has been six months. This First Nations lady has been waiting for six months. How do we explain that? What is going on?

**Ms Loft:** I would need to look into the specific details to be able to get that information for you. If it is as has been described, it would be done within those timeframes. If not, I am very happy to look into that.

**MS BARRY:** Okay. Would you be able to provide your current service standard by categories of maintenance, modifications and repair, and your current performance data against those service standards?

**Ms Loft:** Our KPIs for the contractor?

**MS BARRY:** Yes, please.

**Ms Loft:** For year forward, urgent work, which is any immediate risk to health and safety or security, that is completed within four hours. The current target is 94 per cent. For maintenance work, which is a risk—that, if it is not repaired, it will become a risk—that is completed by 6 pm the following day. That target is 94 per cent. For urgent work

to be completed within five days, the target is 90 per cent. For non-critical urgent work, which would not impact the livability of the home, that is to be completed within 20 days, and the target for that is 95 per cent.

**MS BARRY:** Of these targets, which ones have you met? What are your percentages across these targets?

**Ms Loft:** Let me see if I have that or if I will have to take it on notice.

**Mr Cahif:** This is to manage the Programmed facilities maintenance contract. In terms of the targets we have met, we are managing a contract, as opposed necessarily to doing the work ourselves through our trades.

**MS BARRY:** I am sure you have set KPIs for Programmed; is that right?

**Ms Loft:** Yes.

**Mr Cahif:** Those are the KPIs for Programmed.

**MS BARRY:** Which ones have they met?

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

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

**MS BARRY:** Thank you.

**Ms Loft:** We have monthly contract management meetings and Programmed provide reports which our team will verify as well. That is reported quarterly. I have all of that information. If I can take it on notice, I will get it for you.

**MS BARRY:** Thank you. I note that the current public housing portfolio is valued at \$8 billion; is that right?

**Ms Loft:** \$8.1 billion, yes.

**MS BARRY:** It represents 97.6 per cent of Housing ACT assets; is that right?

**Ms Loft:** Yes.

**MS BARRY:** What standard do you use to determine the maintenance budget for your public housing stock?

**Ms Geraghty:** It is not a question for us. It is set by Housing ACT, sitting within the Health and Community Services Directorate.

**MS BARRY:** Okay. I will put that on notice to Housing ACT. The evidence given in previous hearings—I think it was the Housing hearing—was that the contract with Programmed would end in 2027. Is that right?

**Ms Loft:** That is right.

**MS BARRY:** What formal review was undertaken of service delivery before the decision was taken to end that contract? I think it was a 12-year contract; is that right?

**Ms Loft:** It had multiple options, up to 14 years, including all the options.

**MS BARRY:** What formal review was undertaken of service delivery?

**Ms Geraghty:** Again, that would be a question for Housing ACT, within the Health and Community Services Directorate.

**MS TOUGH:** Minister, can you provide an update on the multi-unit properties insourcing trial?

**Ms Berry:** Yes, we can. That has been a really successful trial. As we are working through that, we are getting information and data on how the trial is working and progressing, and things that we can improve. Some of the things that have been improved through the pilot of this program of works have made a difference for tenants living in those multi-unit properties. It has also taught the government a lot about how we can manage those projects going forward. Ms Kerkow can give an update.

**Ms Kerkow:** I have read and understood the privilege statement. The multi-unit properties insourcing trial commenced in July 2024 and ran throughout the financial year, for 12 months. It started with two multi-unit properties and, over that 12-month period, it extended to a total of eight sites. That included delivery of common area repairs and maintenance. The services expanded over that period to include a number of planned maintenance tasks, such as fire, lift and emergency lighting, which was ACT government led, and included a combination of trained staff and contracted service providers.

The trial has been completed. It ended at the end of the financial year. The services continue to be delivered, not only at those eight sites but it has been expanded to a further two. Those common area repairs and maintenance services are now being delivered at 10 multi-unit property sites.

As the minister mentioned, a review of that delivery has demonstrated iCBR's capacity and capability to deliver those services safely and effectively. There was no negative feedback received during the trial period. There was anecdotal feedback of a level of appreciation for the service delivered during the trial period.

**MS TOUGH:** I think you said that residents have noticed a difference in the quality of maintenance and services being delivered on those sites.

**Ms Kerkow:** Yes. From the feedback provided to our employees working onsite and through the tenant consultative committee, it was generally positively received.

**MS TOUGH:** You said it has expanded from eight to 10 now. Are there plans going forward, possibly, of getting bigger and better?

**Ms Berry:** That is the plan, to insource the whole project. This has been a good way to start to understand our own workforce, the work that is required and how we can manage that work going forward. The plan going forward is to completely insource the public housing maintenance program, starting with the multi-unit properties, disability modifications and domestic and family violence modifications. As you can imagine, it is quite a big piece of work. This is, I think, still the government's biggest outside contract. Bringing it in will be a piece of work.

**Ms Loft:** Complex.

**Ms Berry:** Complex, yes.

**MS TOUGH:** Is there a timeframe going forward on how this will be rolled out?

**Ms Geraghty:** Yes, there is. We have been developing a program and working towards the end of the Programmed contract.

**Ms Loft:** In 2027, we will enter into a demobilisation with PFM and spend that 12 months integrating the work so that it is government-led through Infrastructure Canberra.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, do any other states or territories use a private company for housing maintenance? Do we have a model that is comparable to other jurisdictions?

**Ms Loft:** That work has been done. We can take that on notice. Yes, all jurisdictions have a hybrid model. There is not one that is completely insourced. We are the only one completely outsourced at the moment. With the majority, it is around call centres and various pieces of work. We have looked at that modelling as well. We can supply other jurisdiction modelling for you.

**MR RATTENBURY:** That would be useful. When you say that they have a hybrid model, they still deliver the services. You talked about call centres; they are delivering a service, but they are perhaps outsourcing the triaging. Is that what you meant?

**Ms Loft:** Insourcing—government-led call centres. They are determining the work. It seems to be the majority consensus across jurisdictions that that is better off being government-led.

**MR RATTENBURY:** In the budget there was reference to a readiness review that Infrastructure Canberra is to provide to the government, as part of the 2026-27 budget. Can you tell us what that will achieve or what it is designed for?

**Ms Kerkow:** The readiness review is part of the government's insourcing policy. It is undertaking assessment of the remaining services under the total facilities maintenance contract that have not yet been insourced. We have talked about multi-unit properties; disability modifications and domestic violence planned activities will likely commence insourcing next calendar year. For the remaining services, that readiness review is underway right now, to inform a 2026-27 business case and a decision of government as to whether, how and what staging there is to insource the remainder of those services under the contract.

**MR RATTENBURY:** As this is taking place, what is the methodology for communicating the change to tenants? Do they visibly see the change or is it still the same mechanism for tenants?

**Ms Geraghty:** Infrastructure Canberra does not interface with the tenants. We are working very closely with Housing ACT, who are the interface with the tenants, so that the tenants do not see a difference.

**Ms Berry:** The communications around this will be important. The trial on the multi-unit properties has been a good place to start looking at how we communicate with tenants and make sure that there is no confusion about who they contact, as we go through this.

Obviously, our aim is to have this happen as seamlessly as possible, but I am sure there will be challenges thrown up along the way. The trials that we have been conducting have given us some insight into the best way we can do that. Obviously, at scale, things will happen differently, and not every tenant has maintenance or upgrade requirements. The start of this work is giving us the learnings that we need, hopefully, to get through the process in a way that does not impact anyone.

**MS CARRICK:** Does this provide any benefits for tradies? Will tradies be employed by the government to implement this program? Will those tradies be able to help with the housing build, where there is a shortage of tradies?

**Ms Geraghty:** We already run a trades team. Faheem can talk a little bit more about the plans for the trades team.

**Mr Khan:** Thank you for the question, Ms Carrick. We have a trades team currently. That trades team will expand, as we take on more of the work that the minister and colleagues have been talking about, particularly with the government-led delivery of the total facilities management contract.

As part of the readiness review that my colleague Ms Kerkow touched upon, we are undertaking an analysis of what the scale of growth of that team would look like, as well as some of the other functions that Ms Loft touched on with regard to a call centre and other services that would be government-led delivery.

We are looking to establish this as a single service model for the provision of services—not just for the works that will be required under the total facilities management contract, but some of the work that is undertaken more broadly across government, such as some of the broader property portfolio repairs and maintenance that are undertaken in those facilities. It is about looking to invest in the equipment, resources, skills and training for that staffing cohort so that they can expand the services that they can undertake.

That is a significant piece of work that we are undertaking now and planning for over multiple years. It will require investment in our people—investment that has already started—and an acknowledgement of what our future state looks like, which we are developing.

Some of the types of training investment that we are particularly focused on include ensuring the highest standards of health and safety, of course, as well as interactions with some more vulnerable members and cohorts in our community and ensuring that our staff are appropriately trained for those interfaces. Our colleagues in Housing ACT are responsible for tenancy management; we will work closely with our colleagues in HCSD so that we have an understanding of the environments that our staff will be engaged in, in delivering these types of services.

There will also be an apprenticeship program, as part of the work that we are doing. We already employ apprentices. We have a trades team of 36 staff currently, seven of whom are apprentices. We are investing in some of our senior trades and supervisors to ensure that they have the training and capacity to provide that support to apprentices as they work through our system as well.

**MS CARRICK:** Will there be work with the CIT and with people in the private sector who win the tenders to build public housing, so that apprentices have the opportunity to be part of a public housing build, which would help them to move into the private sector and become—

**Mr Khan:** The work that we are doing now is an acknowledgement that the breadth of scope of the work that could be undertaken is really significant. I do not think we are in a position now where we are explicitly defining the pathways of what work might be undertaken, but we are also not ruling any of those out.

Significant investment is being undertaken to establish a pathways hub. That will be a critical tool for facilitating the growth of the industry more broadly, in order to support the delivery of the infrastructure projects that you have touched on.

**MS BARRY:** The task force indicates that it has taken a system approach to insourcing, evaluation and assessment. Can you explain what that means? What is a “system approach”?

**Ms Kerkow:** Ms Barry, can you repeat the question?

**MS BARRY:** The annual report says that the task force has taken a system approach to the insourcing, evaluation and assessment. What is that?

**Ms Kerkow:** It is looking at the total facilities management contract holistically and the existing services that we are already providing. It is looking at the system of insourcing within ACT government—looking at all the component parts of the total facilities maintenance contract, as well as the facilities maintenance activities that iCBR was already delivering across ACT government.

**MS BARRY:** That is the assessment. What is the evaluation component?

**Ms Kerkow:** The insourcing framework has stages of evaluation. You do an initial review; then there is an evaluation component. It is the stages at which you assess insourcing, in terms of whether insourcing is appropriate, whether you are ready to insource and whether it has been effective.

**MISS NUTTALL:** The government has committed to a thousand new public housing properties by 2030. These will be delivered by Infrastructure Canberra, I understand, via a new delivery model and strategic approach, and that is to be considered by the government through the 2026-27 budget process. That is what it says on page 22 of the annual report. Is there anything you can tell us about this new delivery model and strategic approach?

**Mr Cahif:** There is a range of ways to deliver public housing, and it is an area that requires scaling from the delivery that has been done to date. It is likely that there will not be one single approach. It will involve a combination of tried-and-true delivery methods, along with some of the more scaled approaches. That is something that has been developed and it will be brought to government for a decision.

At this stage we are focused on looking at what has been successfully done throughout other jurisdictions. It is about talking to the market, understanding what capability and constraints would be around those sorts of areas and how to bring forward the appropriate balance, noting that this will be a multi-year build; therefore, a pipeline of work is incredibly important.

We have the existing initiatives, such as growth and renewal. How do we ensure that that continues, rather than have a drop-off for business as well? Those are all factors that have been brought together for that advice to government.

**MISS NUTTALL:** Assuming it passes through government and the parliament in September 2026, Infrastructure Canberra will need to have built or have underway a thousand new dwellings in 3½ years, to have it all delivered by 2030. Are you confident that this timeframe can be met?

**Mr Cahif:** It is ambitious, and we will continue to work our way through. That is what the thinking and the delivery models are designed to do, when it comes to how to scale this. There are multiple ways of doing that. Again, it is about balancing cost and delivery timeframes. That is part of the thinking.

**Ms Geraghty:** That is what the business case we are currently working on is assessing, and that is the advice we will be providing to government, as part of the budget process. The other pieces are land and funding availability. They are the other key components that we are considering as part of this puzzle solution. We are very conscious of that time frame and the expectation, and we are doing everything we can to—

**Ms Berry:** With all the things that we are doing now in housing, as part of our growth and renewal and growth program, around traditional build, for example—purchasing off the market, purchasing off the plan, purchasing homes that are for sale generally in the community—we are looking at whether there are opportunities for funding and partnerships with the federal government or others. We are looking at different methods of construction and using different modular homes. We have a planning book—

**Ms Geraghty:** Pattern book?

**Ms Berry:** A pattern book—that kind of thing. We are looking at all the things we have already been doing and seeing which ones can be engaged differently or better going

forward. Things are evolving and moving very fast in this space, across the country—across the world, even. We are looking at what other different things we can pull into what we are doing now, in order to speed up and be able to deliver those thousand homes by 2030.

It is ambitious, but it is achievable. It is about working through those opportunities. We may have opportunities that arrive, depending on what happens in the federal space, that we are not aware of now and that might assist with building those. That will, hopefully, take some heat off us. That is definitely something that we are keen to continue working on with the federal government. There may be partnerships with other organisations, businesses or developers that might want to partner with us to build something different and unique in our town that we have not done before.

**MISS NUTTALL:** I am interested in how you are planning to balance costs with delivery timeframes.

**Ms Geraghty:** We are working on the business case now. We are trying to bring forward different options through the government for them to consider.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Mr Cahif, you made the point that that is a way off. Can you outline for the committee what that intention is? Is it essentially, “We can build faster but it costs more”? You made the observation of that tension.

**Mr Cahif:** There is a whole bunch that goes in. Absolutely, if you want to accelerate things, it costs more, although that is matched by escalation, if it takes longer. There are those issues. There is also the type of dwellings that you would build. There are some of those other scaling issues where, on a per dwelling basis, the scale is usually bigger—the bigger scale, in terms of how many dwellings in one development can be built, compared to standalone. All those are areas that we are exploring through this business case.

**MR RATTENBURY:** The minister briefly touched on the progress that has been made with prefabricated homes; there is a program being explored. Can you give us an update on that?

**Ms Loft:** We have a range of programs for modern methods of construction for growth and renewal. There are nine precast concrete panel dwellings. They have been delivered, as part of the G&R program. That definitely was quicker on site. Yes, it did cost a little bit extra, but we had real-time efficiency with that one.

There is one structural insulated panel project. That is in DA design phase for two dwellings. There are pre-made panels, with the insulation, and they click together. The modular project is in the procurement phase. That involves four dwellings. That is where the parts are all made in a factory and assembled onsite. We also have a low carbon project which is in construction; that is due to be delivered in mid-2026. That is eight dwellings, to take it up to an eight to nine EER. That is in a various range of construction—the end result. We are trialling different things to see what can be efficient, faster, better for the community, better for the tenants and better for maintenance.

**MR RATTENBURY:** The commonwealth, I understand, has made funding available for prefabricated and modular housing. Is that something that the ACT has applied for and/or received?

**Ms Berry:** I do not know whether we are able to apply for that for homes in the Housing ACT space. I will have to check that. We will take it on notice and see where it is—

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you. I will check the name of the program and come back to you. I think the first category you mentioned you said were slightly more expensive than a regular house. Has that been the case across all the different types or is that a particular category?

**Ms Loft:** For the prefab, yes. It probably comes down to scale. We did a trial. There is a lot of competition in the market. It is new. It was definitely quicker. You are weighing up a project that is delivered a lot quicker as well, so it is about how you measure cost. Is it the dollars you spend or is that we are delivering a house in half the timeframe? There is value there.

**Ms Berry:** The concrete prefabs are also dependent on a particular block—a nice flat, square block. If you had a pattern design book, in the future, say, and we could identify blocks that would suit a particular style, that might save some money or make efficiencies, and there could be perhaps a quicker build. We are not quite at that point in the program to be able to identify land and build those kinds of projects. Land is becoming finite and hilly, unfortunately.

**THE CHAIR:** We will have to leave it there. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. If you have taken any questions on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. We will now suspend the proceedings.

**Hearing suspended from 11.49 am to 3.02 pm.**

Appearances:

Stephen-Smith, Ms Rachel, Minister for Health, Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Finance and Minister for the Public Service

Infrastructure Canberra

Bell, Ms Hayley, Executive Group Manager, Delivery; Health, Education and Justice

Geraghty, Ms Gillian, Director-General

Cahif, Mr Ashley, Deputy Director-General

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back to this public hearing of the Standing Committee on Social Policy for its inquiry into annual and financial reports for 2024-25. We now welcome Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA, the Minister for Health, and officials. Please note that, as witnesses, you are bound by parliamentary privilege and bound by its obligations. You must tell the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated as a serious matter and may be considered contempt of the Assembly. When taking a question on notice, it would be useful if witnesses used the words: “I will take that question on notice.” That will help the committee and witnesses to confirm questions taken on notice from the transcripts.

As we are not inviting opening statements, we will go directly to questions. I am curious about plans to relocate Arcadia House and if there has been any progress on those plans since April, or thereabouts, when I last heard about them.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No; I do not believe there has been any further progress. The Health and Community Services Directorate is continuing to try to identify sites on the north side that might be appropriate.

**THE CHAIR:** Is the Burrangiri site now out of the question or is that still a potential option in the future?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No. It is out of the question for two reasons. Firstly, Burrangiri remains open as a respite facility and the plan is to try to relocate Arcadia House when we can, because the current facility is also not as appropriate as we would like. Part of it has been closed down because it is not fit for purpose. We also had feedback. As I said at the time, when Burrangiri was being considered, the preferred option was a site on the north side. Most of our alcohol and other drug services are on Canberra’s south side, so it is important to have this particular service on the north side if we can. Obviously, the community’s response in relation to Burrangiri was not very positive. We want Arcadia House to feel welcome, wherever it is. The location is very close to shops that have a substantial liquor store. We always knew that was not going to be an ideal location.

**THE CHAIR:** Was any consideration given to somehow integrating it into the Watson Health Precinct? When you say “north side”, are you thinking more about Belconnen and Gungahlin?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No. We looked at whether it would be possible to put any additional facilities in Watson, but at the moment that is not looking like an option.

Having three facilities there already is quite a lot of use of that site. Given that it is not completed, we want to see how it operates before we consider doing anything else on that site.

**MS CASTLEY:** Minister, in August last year, the helideck was opened at the new Critical Services Building, with helipads to accommodate two helicopters, a landing site and a parking site. What was the expected utilisation of the two pads when the helideck was designed? And how does this compare with actual utilisation?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** My recollection, from when we discussed the design, was that the parking site was intended to be in use only if required. It is not intended to be in use on a regular basis. I will hand over to Ms Geraghty to see if she has an answer for you.

**Ms Geraghty:** Sorry, Minister, but I cannot remember. I am happy to take the question on notice.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** We will take the detail on notice.

**Ms Geraghty:** And I will check with CHS about the actual figures.

**MS CASTLEY:** Great. Is it true that aircraft are prohibited from using the landing site when the parking pad is occupied?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I am not sure if that issue has been rectified. Some concerns were raised around the design of the parking site subsequent to it opening. There was a very detailed design process. The building meets all required standards. One of the providers raised a concern about that issue. I think you are right. That has been raised. I believe it has been rectified, but I am not 100 per cent certain, so I will take it on notice.

**MS CASTLEY:** So pilots have raised concerns about the safety of the helideck?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I would not put it like that, Ms Castley. The provider raised some issues around a particular type of use of the helideck, and those concerns were taken into account. As I said, it was never intended that a helicopter would be regularly parked and another would arrive at the same time. It has not caused any disruption to the way the service operates. We had only one helipad previously anyway. The parking bay was an addition.

**MS CASTLEY:** Why do we need two?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I will take the question on notice. I am remembering the conversation but not very well. It was quite some time ago that we talked about how you would use a parking bay and a helideck. I will take the detail of the question on notice and will come back to you with the original reason we included the parking bay, the concerns that have been raised and how they have been addressed.

**MS CASTLEY:** Perhaps you could also include whether any pilots have refused to land at the helideck.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I will take that on notice.

**MS CASTLEY:** Thank you. Was the facility assessed against the Civil Aviation Safety Authority standards?

**Ms Geraghty:** Yes, it would have been. And CASA.

**MS CASTLEY:** Is it true that the parking pad has been built too close to a building wall and that creates a rotor wash and renders it unsafe? Have you heard that?

**Ms Geraghty:** I have not heard that, but I am happy to take the question on notice.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** That will be part of the response to the question I have already taken on notice.

**MS CASTLEY:** All right. Was a single pad design ever considered or costed rather than two?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I suspect it was, but, again, I will take that question on notice, as to whether the parking bay was always part of the design or that was added at some point through the process.

**MS CASTLEY:** Perhaps we could also understand the cost of the additional pad in your answer. That would be great. I will wait for your questions on notice. Thank you.

**MS TOUGH:** I am interested in how Infrastructure Canberra is progressing new health infrastructure in the ACT following the budget, particularly how the \$81 million being invested in the new North Canberra Hospital is being used.

**Ms Bell:** We have a range of parallel activities that we are working on at the moment. One of those is developing all the various options, support and detail that will go into the business case for investment in the whole facility. We are also progressing town planning investigations—understanding the various opportunities and constraints of the site—and are undertaking consultation with various agencies, like the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, to understand what our planning pathway is. We have undertaken some master planning of the site to understand how it will be developed in the first stage and then in the longer term. We are also undertaking significant consultation with consumers, staff, neighbours and stakeholders. We are progressing well on the concept and design phase of the project, which is when we start to do the block and stack. We are also undertaking planning to commence early enabling works on the campus in March. We have also recently lodged the DA for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, which will be relocating off the site to make way for the project.

**MS TOUGH:** What will those earlier enabling works involve?

**Ms Bell:** A range of things. A whole bunch of buildings are in the footprint of where we are planning to build the first stage and they will need to be decanted. We are also planning for diversions of inground services and infrastructure, and upgrades of services and infrastructure, to make way for the new build.

**MS TOUGH:** Wonderful. Pivoting to Canberra Hospital, I understand there will be 400 additional car parks provided there. Whereabouts on the campus will they be?

**Ms Bell:** On the old helipad site. That is one of the sites. There is also the old CIT site—

**MS TOUGH:** Across the road.

**Ms Bell:** where there is some existing car parking. Now that we have demobilised for the contractors that were supporting the Canberra Hospital expansion, we are also expanding the car parking on that side.

**MS TOUGH:** Wonderful. Thank you.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I want to ask about a couple of projects that are in the bailiwick of this session. The south-side hydrotherapy pool has been completed and is open. Do you have a final reconciliation on the budget for that project?

**Ms Bell:** Could we take that question on notice, please?

**MR RATTENBURY:** Sure. Fair enough.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I understand it came within budget, though.

**Ms Bell:** Yes. There are just some final financial close-out details that I need to obtain from my team to be able to provide an accurate figure on that question.

**MR RATTENBURY:** That is fine. My first question was: do you have it? The answer was: yes, you are close. On notice, you will get it and give it to us when you have finalised it.

**Ms Bell:** Correct.

**MR RATTENBURY:** I was just checking. Thank you. In a similar vein, the Watson Health Precinct is obviously still underway. Is that currently tracking on budget?

**Ms Bell:** Yes.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Terrific. What is the completion timeline for that project at the moment?

**Ms Bell:** Mid-2026.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Six or eight months to go, roughly.

**Ms Bell:** Yes. They have made excellent progress in the last six months. That one was a bit slow to get out of the gates, but the structure is going up really well now. The critical path is through some of the fire and water re-main works and approvals that we need to do around that part of the site.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you. I want to ask about North Canberra Hospital, the new hospital, which is obviously in the design phase. Is that being designed to be an all-electric hospital?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Terrific. Thank you.

**MS CARRICK:** What is happening with the Woden urgent healthcare clinic? That is a federal government commitment.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** As you note, Ms Carrick, it is a federal government commitment. It has nothing to do with Infrastructure Canberra. But, in the spirit of cooperation, my understanding is that—

**MS CARRICK:** And looking after your residents.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** My understanding is that the commonwealth are probably quite close to an announcement. They undertook an expression of interest or request for tender process or something. I understand that they are reasonably close to making an announcement, but obviously I am not going to pre-empt a federal government announcement.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you. There was an election commitment to provide structured car parking, multilevel car parking, at the Canberra Hospital. How is that coming along?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** As we just discussed, the first stage of providing additional parking at the hospital is the 400 or so additional parks that we are working on at the moment, on the helipad site and the CIT car park. In parallel, we are continuing to look at options for multistorey parking. I am not sure if Hayley has anything to add to that.

**Ms Bell:** Only that we will prepare a business case for a future decision of government on the options for the multistorey car park.

**MS CARRICK:** Given it is an election commitment, will it be this term?

**Ms Bell:** I think we are targeting the 2027-28 financial year.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** At this point, I do not think it will be completed within this term. It depends on the delivery model that we determine, as well as some of the other practical issues. As you would appreciate, Ms Carrick, building a car park on an existing car park means losing some car parks for a period of time. The first stage of adding these additional 400 car parks has been really important as part of the preparation for understanding how we can build in the shortest period of time and minimise the loss of car parks during the construction process.

**MS CARRICK:** Where are the additional 400 car parks?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** On the old helipad site and on the former CIT site.

**MR RATTENBURY:** On the corner.

**MS CARRICK:** I know, but I thought that is where the multistorey one would be.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No. The plan has been for a multistorey car park on the Yamba Drive car park site.

**MS CARRICK:** Is that on the hospital side or on the other side?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** On the other side of the road.

**MS CARRICK:** I see. That is a bit of a hike.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** That is where a lot of the current parking is. The other consideration that we have is: what do we do with that corner of Yamba Drive and Kitchener Street, where the old helipad is and the staff car parking is? That is obviously a really important part of the site. We are conscious of the fact that there is not a lot of patient, family and visitor parking on that part of the campus. Part of the master planning work is to think about: where is the right place to build, and how do we do it? That is part of the work that is underway. The current proposal is that the multistorey would go on—

**MS CARRICK:** Is it an option to put the multistorey on the north part of the campus so it is closer to the National Capital Private Hospital, the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children and emergency—

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I do not think we would end up with just parking on that part. That is the most prominent corner of the campus and we probably do not want people to approach the campus and see a multistorey car park. That is probably not quite the look we are going for. We also recognise that we need to have convenient parking on that part of the campus and consider what that looks like, in terms of the future of Building 12, which is the building where the theatres were, along Yamba Drive, and Building 1, which is the tower building. That is all part of the master plan consideration. One of the challenges of the master plan is: what do you do first and how do you move things around on an operating campus?

**MS CARRICK:** When you say “on the other side of Yamba Drive”, do you mean on Yamba Drive or where the old Woden Valley High School was?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** On Yamba Drive, but on the other side of the road from the hospital, where the level car park is.

**MS CARRICK:** Thank you.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, is there any commonwealth contribution to any of the ACT’s health infrastructure projects?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** It is quite unusual to get commonwealth funding for health infrastructure projects. You might have seen that we recently opened the refurbished

Lesley's Place, run by Toora Women. A small amount of commonwealth funding went into that. You will recall that a small amount of commonwealth funding went into Winnunga's new building. It tends to be relatively small amounts of funding in specific areas rather than a 50-50 co-contribution to build the hospital.

One of the things we have been talking about in the context of the National Health Reform Agreement is that the National Efficient Price, the basis upon which we are funded by both the commonwealth and New South Wales, does not take into account infrastructure costs. Every jurisdiction is in the process of building new hospitals, because a lot of our infrastructure dates back to the mid-20th century. That is not captured anywhere or supported by the commonwealth at all. That is part of the conversation. Of course, when you start having those conversations, you also have to take into account the Commonwealth Grants Commission et cetera.

**MR RATTENBURY:** It seems to be the case that other jurisdictions do not generally get capital funding out of the commonwealth either from a health perspective.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** That is right. It is quite unusual. It is not unheard of but quite unusual.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Are there any examples you are aware of where they have?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I know that the Labor Party committed to funding a medical centre in South Australia, I think, during the election, and there was one other as well, but I cannot remember where it was.

**Ms Geraghty:** It was some time ago. It was Tamworth Hospital and Port Macquarie Base Hospital in New South Wales.

**Ms Bell:** In 10 years, I think there were one or two.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Yes.

**MR RATTENBURY:** It sounds like electrics may have been a focal point at some time.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** I have something in my mind saying that maybe the other one was in Tasmania, and there might have been one in Western Australia, now that I think about it. Anyway, I do not know, but definitely not here.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you. In the context of those discussions—and you touched on this regarding the Efficient Price discussions—how much consideration is being given to the fact that the ACT is obviously a regional hospital, if not a tertiary hospital? Those Efficient Price considerations do not really cover the capital infrastructure. We are clearly having to build for neighbouring regions. It is not that we have any concern with supporting people from the regions, but the financial equation does not seem to work in our favour.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** It is an ongoing part of our conversation with NSW Health and the New South Wales health minister. I am not sure whether we have formally extended our cross-border agreement with New South Wales to the end of June next year, but I

have certainly written to the New South Wales health minister, saying that we might as well do that, given the delay in the National Health Reform Agreement. I expect to meet with the New South Wales Health Minister before long. Obviously, there is no requirement for New South Wales to fund the capital infrastructure here. What I think we have more opportunity to talk to them about is how they are investing in infrastructure in southern New South Wales. The new Eurobodalla Regional Hospital, for example, is a significant investment in southern New South Wales. Fairly recently, we have seen some media commentary about people in southern New South Wales claiming that it is relatively poorly funded compared to other local health districts in New South Wales. Encouraging investment there is also helpful for us.

Chair, I can provide some information in relation to Ms Castley's earlier line of questioning. My office has advised that Canberra Health Services has confirmed that the helipad parking bay is now in use following some design rectifications. In case people run off with the idea that it is not in use—and if Ms Castley and her office are watching—it is now in use.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Minister, is there an update on the estimated cost of the new North Canberra Hospital at this point?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** No. We are still working through a business case process. The business case to determine the final construction cost allocation will come forward in the 2026-27 budget.

**MR RATTENBURY:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** What was the reasoning behind designating the Inner South Health Centre a territory priority project?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** We have indicated, in relation to our Planning (Territory Priority Project) Amendment Bill 2025, that we believe all public health facilities are priority projects. We are concerned about the potential for delay in delivering this critical community infrastructure. We said all the long that we think that public health facilities are priority projects. This is one we really want to get on with.

**THE CHAIR:** How has the conversation gone on that?

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** Concerningly, I heard from a Griffith resident who emailed me over the weekend—I saw their email today—saying that they had not heard anything about the consultation, which is disappointing because I have done a number of street stalls and door-knocked the area about three weeks ago. I believe there has been letterboxing as well. We have been engaging closely with the Griffith Narrabundah Community Association. The constituent had heard about the project from the Griffith Narrabundah Community Association. That is part of the reason we engage with local residents associations, so that they can spread the word and get feedback from their community. I know that there are some people in the local area who believe that there has not been consultation. There were other people whose doors I knocked on who were very aware of both the project and the process that was underway around the major plan amendment. There is a mix of views in relation to that.

I emphasise that the current consultation is around the major plan amendment and territory priority project declaration. I have been really clear with people, and I want to be clear today, that, as we go through the development application process, that is where people will see the detailed design. That will be a further opportunity to have engagement. We will be doing a lot more work to engage with the community around what that design will look like. But we have already taken on board the community's feedback about parking and traffic. It is fairly predictable feedback, I would have to say. It is not something we did not anticipate. The Griffith Narrabundah Community Association, at their stall at Griffith Shops, had some of that information available from the early plans that we had shared with them, so people had an opportunity to see what the early design looks like. But we are still in that detailed design phase.

**MS TOUGH:** This has probably just been covered. I am wondering how the Inner South Health Centre is being progressed.

**Ms Stephen-Smith:** The consultation closes tomorrow on the major plan amendment and the territory priority project proposal. This process is being led by CED, by Planning. It is then a process for the planning minister in relation to decision-making about that. Obviously a major plan amendment needs to come to the Assembly as well, so there will be an opportunity for the Assembly to consider the major plan amendment. While it is called a major plan amendment, it is not actually that major. There is already a community facility zoned block on the site, which is where most of the trees are, so it is really about extending that community facility zoned block to some of the open space. We have been very clear with the community that that is where we intend to build. It is just that it is not the bit that is community facility zoned at present.

**MS TOUGH:** Awesome. Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** We will wrap up. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your attendance today. If you have taken any questions on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. Also, on behalf of the committee, I would like to thank witnesses who have assisted the committee through their experience and knowledge throughout the day. We also thank broadcasting and Hansard staff for their support, as well as the secretariat. 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.

**The meeting adjourned at 3.29 pm**