LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

(Reference: Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2025-26)

Members:

MR T EMERSON (Chair)
MS C BARRY (Deputy Chair)
MISS L NUTTALL
MS Y BERRY

PROOF TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

MONDAY, 9 NOVEMBER 2026

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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

ACT Official Visitors 1
University of Canberra 14
Health and Community Services Directorate 27

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 9.34 am

ACT Official Visitors
Dulhunty, Mr Geoff, Chair, Official Visitors Board
Doube, Ms Clare, Official Visitor for Corrections, and Member, Official Visitors Board
Webster, Ms Kim, Official Visitor for Disability
Dzwonnik, Mr Stefan, Executive Officer

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 2025-26. The committee will today hear from the ACT Official Visitors, the University of Canberra and the Minister for Equality. The committee wishes to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of our city and this region. We would also like to acknowledge and welcome any other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be attending today's event or are listening online.

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 witnesses from ACT Official Visitors—back after a long break. We will go to questions. I want to ask about the time it takes to appoint and re-appoint Official Visitors. It has been raised previously as a concern that this process can be quite slow. Has that been resolved? Mr Dulhunty, I am not sure if this is a question for you as the chair. Perhaps you could talk us through this a bit.

Mr Dulhunty: No; it has not been resolved. It is an issue that we will be taking up with the new minister. At the moment, it takes up to six months, and during that process we are unable to say anything to the applicant, but they have been recommended and we are waiting. We cannot say anything. We are losing valuable applicants because they have not heard anything for a six-month period and then look for other positions.

Ms Doube: I can give the example of my own re-appointment. I had one term of three years which ended at the end of August, and it was no surprise that it was coming up; it was well known. It was advertised at the start of the year and I did my interview soon afterwards, in February or so, and then was not able to be told anything until the point of re-appointment, which was a couple days before the end of the term. It was in August that I found out that I was re-appointed, but, because I did not know that was happening, I had to say goodbye to people, start wrapping up and hand over everything, and then found out that I was re-appointed. So it has both a professional impact and, obviously, a personal impact in that I did not know if I had a job two days later. That obviously has personal implications. That is an example.

THE CHAIR: You said it takes up to six months. Is that from the point at which the board makes a recommendation or from the start of the process?

Mr Dulhunty: Stefan can probably explain the process.

Mr Dzwonnik: As you probably know from *Governance Principles—Appointments, Boards and Committees*, there is a three-brief process. At the very start, you have to prepare a brief for the minister to seek their permission to advertise for the statutory role. That was not the case a couple of years ago. You could just go ahead and advertise and then go with the two-brief process. I would say the six-month process is from the start of advertising, so to speak. I get the feeling that previous Legislative Assembly staff might have been a bit more familiar with the process internally. In this Legislative Assembly, I do not think staffers are as familiar with the procedures as they used to be. We often find that there are internal delays. In some cases, there might be ministerial shifts as well that result in delays, or something is going on. It seems there is a bit of a decrease in efficiency and maybe less familiarity as well.

THE CHAIR: They need to get sign-off to advertise, and that can maybe take some time, even though it is essentially a tick-and-flick exercise, because you cannot not have these positions filled?

Mr Dzwonnik: Yes. In Clare's instance, we definitely had a gap to ensure that we filled her position, so that it would happen before the appointment lapsed, but we were running until the very end. I had to push to get her appointment through, otherwise her appointment would have lapsed, there would have been no Official Visitor and there could have been a gap, but, fortunately we were able to communicate with staff and get that through.

THE CHAIR: There are basically long delays with it sitting in the minister's office?

Mr Dzwonnik: It could be a delay in consultation with the ministers. Sometimes there are high-level reviews of our briefs and there might be a delay. Ministerial shifts could cause a delay as well—that kind of thing. I find standing committees quite efficient, so I am happy with that, but sometimes in the last three years a standing committee process might take longer than a month. Earlier this year, we had a standing committee which did get back to us, but then there was a delay with it sitting in the minister's office. There are procedural things where steps are being missed. In the last Legislative Assembly, they made the procedure and they nailed it. They were really efficient at getting it through. In this Legislative Assembly, I do not think the staff are quite onto it, or maybe newer staff follow these procedures. I would recommend that they review and see what their portfolio staff would be comfortable with.

THE CHAIR: I think we have 28 days, don't we? We have a statutory timeline that we have to hit as a committee. Are there any supplementary questions on this issue?

MS BERRY: We have a captive audience to fill the committee spaces, though.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS BARRY: I have a quick question. There are a lot and I hope that everyone can get a chance. I have a question around homelessness services. Have you had any contact with women experiencing domestic and family violence at risk of homelessness?

Mr Dulhunty: I will have to take that on notice because we do not have the homelessness person here. Sorry, Ms Barry.

MS BARRY: That is all right. If you are taking it on notice, I can put that through.

Mr Dulhunty: Okay.

MISS NUTTALL: I believe that you might have spoken about this in the previous session. I apologise if I am asking you to repeat yourself a bit, but I am keen to ask about the disability death review scheme and the NDIS quality and safeguards review.

MS BERRY: We did not ask.

MISS NUTTALL: Fantastic. Even better. The Assembly passed a motion during the last sitting week to establish an ACT disability death review. We noted during that debate the longstanding work by Official Visitors to progress that mechanism. The minister for disability raised the information-sharing barriers, with restricted access to NDIS data being a potential restriction to the function of the territory based disability death review scheme. Is that something that you are aware of?

Ms Webster: Yes. I met with Minister Orr last week with regard to the quarterly review, and the death review came up. She mentioned that, because the NDIS is a federally funded program, the ACT government would need to liaise with the federal government; that there had been discussions with the federal government; that they had declined to work with the ACT government with regard to the death review; and that therefore her hands were tied in relation to that.

With regard to information sharing, the Official Visitors continue to work directly with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to look at information sharing and look at new consents being made available, particularly in following up outcomes of complaints that have been made. We still find it extremely difficult to get information regarding outcomes of complaints that have been raised directly with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

MISS NUTTALL: That is helpful to know. Thank you. When you say that, during that conversation, essentially the minister had spoken to the federal government and their hands were tied, did you get any indication of how recently that was and the justification the federal government gave for not being willing to engage with this?

Ms Webster: It would have been within the last three months. It certainly was raised in the quarter prior to the last, and, as I said, we met just last week. So it would have been in the last three months. She did not give me a specific reason as to why they had declined but that they advised that, in order for a death review to proceed specifically with regard to the deaths of people with disability, given that the NDIA are providing those supports, they must be able to work together on that.

MISS NUTTALL: Does that match your understanding of the powers available to the ACT?

Ms Webster: My understanding is that all of the disability services are now provided through the NDIS. Obviously it was very different. They were locally funded and there was a lot more oversight and transparency to look at and overview things. There are huge restrictions now. A lot of my recommendations to the minister are to raise things with the federal government regarding the NDIS, including the issues and concerns that we have in relation to the services being provided. She is doing that, and the responses that she has received and have been passed on to us are very stock standard, somewhat to the effect of: "We're working toward having all NDIS organisations registered, and, once that's achieved, it should solve the majority of the issues." The majority of the issues that are coming through in the complaints are coming from registered NDIS organisations.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you. I really appreciate that. The annual report states:

> OVDS has continued to refer concerns to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission but has often observed limited evidence of timely investigation or resolution. Similar concerns arise regarding oversight of private guardians and financial managers.

Could you please speak in a bit of detail to this and outline what sorts of failures to investigate or resolve complaints the OVDS commonly observes in dealing with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission?

Ms Webster: We raise any complaints that we have directly with the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission via direct emails and through the complaint forums. We also have semi-regular meetings with them. We have been advised that they receive a large number of complaints. They are unable to deal with each individual complaint and they are more looking for trends. That is quite problematic, particularly when some smaller NDIS organisations have potentially two or three participants that they provide a lot of supports for. Often, where the managers, directors and owners are providing direct supports themselves, it is very unlikely that you are going to get a lot of trends reported, because they are not large enough. We are not hearing back and we are not getting results. We are referring these matters to the Human Rights Commission. They seem to be our biggest ally with regard to their responsiveness and they definitely visit and follow up. Having said that, when it comes to issues around conduct, misappropriation of funds, coercive control and recordkeeping, that comes down to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission. We are continuing to receive similar complaints from not only participants' family members but also support staff that are working for these organisations.

MISS NUTTALL: Does that essentially mean that what the Quality and Safeguards Commission is asking individual organisations to do is the function that a disability death review would prescribe—the risk factors? It seems that, if you are asking individual organisations to be the ones to monitor the trends, that sort of outsources the responsibility to groups that do not have the capacity to look at it.

Ms Webster: It is usually not the providers that are raising the complaints. Quite often

it is the participants, family members or advocates. Often other stakeholders, like behavioural support therapists and NDIS support coordinators, raise the concerns. We generally do not hear anything back from the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, and quite often we are not seeing any change. When we return to visit, we see the same issues presented each time. We are often getting follow-up complaints from family members and participants themselves, and again from staff reporting that there has been no change, regardless of the complaints that have been made.

MS BERRY: I should declare that I have a family member who works in disability support, so I am getting a pretty good understanding of how that works, or how it does not, in this case. On page 7 of your annual report, you talk about quality, training and supervision of the workforce, and I know that there is a significant churn in that sector. Do you have a recommendation, as Official Visitors, about the kinds of things that could improve that work? That would be one of the challenges—that there is a churn, and the story changes, because of the churn in the workforce. Is there something that the NDIS and the NDIA are missing around the workforce? Apart from wages and that kind of thing, it seems to be a fairly hidden workforce. They are often working on their own.

Ms Webster: One of the biggest issues that we have identified is that there is a lack of oversight and transparency of the workers that are either working in the community or are in supported independent living. Largely, they are working unsupervised. You may have a supported independent living house with anywhere between one and four people and with one staff member, and they hand over between shifts.

We have seen examples where we have turned up unannounced and there have been no staff at supported independent living residences. Participants have been left alone for unknown amounts of time—some with such cognitive decline that they are unable to communicate or let you know exactly how long they have been alone, and they are unable to call emergency services or use a phone.

We have seen situations where we have found staff members sleeping on the job, in a staffroom. There seems to be a big issue with oversight and ability, when it comes to these organisations. There is the issue of funding as well. They are funded to provide a certain amount of hours of support for a support worker, but how do you then have oversight of their workers? A lot of trust is involved here.

In the quarterly report prior to the previous one, we had a situation where one support worker was working for two organisations—separate disability organisations—at the same, exact time, rostered on at the exact time, and there was a major incident where he had one lot of people in a bus in a car park, and he was providing support to somebody else in a hydrotherapy centre. If it were not for participants in a bus becoming extremely heightened in distress, self-harming and absconding, that would not have been brought to the attention of the Official Visitor, who was then able to bring it to the attention of the providers themselves.

In those instances, they were quite well-known providers. They were very proactive in investigating and looking into that. However, it appears to be an issue where many support workers are working for multiple organisations; they are trying to split their time. As we can see in some cases, they are taking on shifts at the same time—it is two organisations—and they cannot provide care to two different sets of people at the same

time. But where is the oversight?

Some organisations are bringing AI systems into the house—facial recognition, for example, where a staff member comes in and their face will be recognised on a device; it will be recorded, that they are required to check in within certain times. I think that is also used in situations where staff are claiming that they are providing active overnight support, when sometimes that is questionable. It is a big funding issue, and it can absolutely drain funds. We found there are also some organisations that are tracking their work vehicles. They can look at that, but it is when they are probed and when complaints are raised with them that they are able to look at that.

They tend to be some of the larger, better-known organisations. With the smaller ones, I think there is very little oversight. The concerning part is that, often, with the smaller ones, the directors, the owners, are the ones providing the direct support themselves.

MS BERRY: When you say small, is it just a couple of people? Is that your definition of small, or is it 10, 20 or 30?

Ms Webster: It may be a single director or a couple, for example. They may have one or two supported independent living houses, and they may be providing community support to two or three community access places.

MS BARRY: Essentially, the directors work as the support worker?

Ms Webster: Yes, they are doing shifts. It has been reported that, if they are unhappy with the support workers that they are employing, or if the support workers that they are employing are questioning some of the—

MS BARRY: Activities or—

Ms Webster: concerns that they are seeing, they are being taken off-shift; that director will then fill that shift.

THE CHAIR: Problem solved; great!

MS BERRY: There are some real problems there for the workforce as well, if there are people who are doing the right thing, or trying to do the right thing, and you have others who are not doing the right thing.

Ms Webster: It is a huge problem. It is a financial problem. We are getting calls that are often not specifically OV-related, because it is not always directed around the protected people. People say, "I have to pay my mortgage, and I have to know that I have a certain amount of shifts, and because I asked, 'Where is the care plan?' and because I asked, 'How can I provide an incident report?' I have now been taken off-shift for the next two weeks."

THE CHAIR: Can I ask about the case that you mentioned? There was a support worker working for two organisations concurrently; they have left a number of people that they are supposed to be supporting unsupported on a bus. Are you aware of any consequences for that individual?

Ms Webster: Yes, I believe that person was dismissed from both organisations and reported to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, and also to the—

Mr Dulhunty: Health Care Complaints Commission?

Ms Webster: No, Working with Vulnerable People. I think it is very important—I cannot highlight it enough—that, with these circumstances and these individuals, it needs to go through to Working with Vulnerable People, because they still hold those cards, and they just go on to the next organisation or they open up their own business. That information needs to be fed through, so that it is tracked, and they cannot just run from one job to another—or, if they find that their reputation is so poor, they open up an organisation themselves, often in a spouse's name. They are providing the supports, but it may be a spouse or a family member whose name is the legitimate registered name.

MS BERRY: I am turning now to corrections. I want to ask about the pilot literacy project with the Canberra Institute of Technology—your understanding of how that is going. Are you hearing good things about it? Obviously, there is always a need for more.

Ms Doube: It is too early to get a sense of how that is going. We are aware that there was an assessment done of who might be appropriate for that program, but I am not able to give much detail. It is probably too early to really get a sense of that. As you say, I think it is incredibly positive that it is occurring, and it is also positive that it is with CIT, because I am hoping that that might open up some other doors for a range of other programs and initiatives as well.

MS BERRY: It is exciting. I also saw in your annual report that there are now computers that are more accessible.

Ms Doube: That is right.

MS BERRY: That is amazing. I know that it has taken forever.

Ms Doube: In some of the common areas, there are more computers available, which is fantastic. We are hoping that, at some point, there will be tablets available. That was a project that was promised some years ago, but it has not been delivered yet. We are hopeful about having that in the future, because that would be an absolute game changer, in terms of not only family connection and communication but also access to a range of online resources.

MS BERRY: I am seeing the pathways through the literacy project, and for people to be able to do the things that everybody takes for granted and which are everyday activities when it comes to admin support—supporting people in getting phone numbers, emails and things like that. We all do that.

Ms Doube: Yes.

MS BERRY: But people are not able to do that, in the AMC, or even in Bimberi. Is the project just in the adult—

Ms Doube: I am not aware. I only cover the corrections area, so I am not aware of anything similar in Bimberi. There are a couple of issues. Literacy, obviously, as you say, hopefully, will have widespread impacts around a range of areas—self-confidence and all sorts of things. In terms of being able to add phone numbers and all the administrative side of things, that still takes some time, although not as long as it did take. It is positive that there is greater access to computers. Obviously, having one communal computer for 30 or 40 people means that there is limited access, but there is more access than what was there before.

To me, the big change will happen once individuals have tablets, and we are able then to move a lot of the things that have been done, and are currently done, in paper forms, which takes more time, in terms of passing things on, and there are also lots of examples of things getting lost along the way. Being able to convert that to an electronic process would be an absolute game changer, for some of those simple administrative things, like adding phone numbers or emails.

MS BERRY: And being computer literate, when they leave. I remember when there was only one computer, in the library; that was the only one that was accessible to anyone, and there was a queue. Excellent; there are some positive things.

MS VASSAROTTI: I have a few questions in relation to children in the adult mental health unit. On page 11 of your annual report, there is a recommendation that age-appropriate, trauma-informed mental health facilities be established so that children are not placed in the adult mental health unit, as has been happening for the last few years. I note that the *Canberra Times*, in August, reported that children were placed in the adult unit, despite there being a dedicated ward that had six beds and provided care for patients aged 12 to 18. Can you clarify whether or not there is a youth ward?

Mr Dulhunty: Yes, there is. There is a dedicated six-bed child and adolescent unit located in the children's hospital.

MS VASSAROTTI: Why weren't we seeing children being placed there instead of the adult ward?

Mr Dulhunty: Usually, because the person was so acutely psychotic and aggressive that they could not be managed in the children's unit. The level of expertise required was not there, initially. The other issue that traditionally happened was that they did not have an area where they could isolate someone for time out, because it was a dangerous area that has since been repaired. That took two years. Now, they can put somebody into seclusion for a while, to settle things down. Another issue is sheer numbers. If you have six children in the unit, there is nowhere else to go.

Another issue is that sometimes people are at risk of sexual safety. You might have adolescent females on the unit with stronger, larger adolescent males, and you have an issue of potential sexual unsafety, or sexual safety issues, between those two. They will usually move the male, the larger male, to the adult mental health unit.

I was given a guarantee that every child that goes to the adult mental health unit would be special, one-on-one, whilst they were there, and put in what they call the vulnerable

person suite, which is an area at the back of the high-dependency unit. That does not happen, and I have raised my concerns about that, because if they are in the high-dependency unit, they will be in an area where you have very psychotic adult individuals, psychotic AMC individuals, people with a history of assault, all being in the same area as a child. There is a lot of research—and I keep pointing back to the research—that says it is more traumatic to go through that process in an adult environment than it is in an age-specific environment.

MS VASSAROTTI: Yes. That is pretty disturbing, having regard to—

Mr Dulhunty: It is disturbing.

MS VASSAROTTI: the answer that you have just put onto the record. You said that you have been raising these concerns, and that you hold very strong concerns regarding that. What is your understanding about what is being done to address that?

Mr Dulhunty: It is now being monitored by the office of the Chief Psychiatrist, who is a forensic psychiatrist. He supports the position. There is a child and adolescent psychiatrist who supervises the unit, who now holds that position as well. It is also being monitored by the Public Advocate and the children's commissioner. There is quite a bit of oversight now, whereas before it was only me, bobbing up and down and screaming a bit. There are now three or four people who are asking about it. Sometimes it is appropriate, because the person is so aggressive or so psychotic that they need to be in an environment where there are more staff. Particularly at night-time, there are only two staff members in the child and adolescent unit, and in the acute unit there are more staff and more access to medical officers et cetera.

There is a lot more oversight now than there was before, and a lot more questions are being asked about the appropriateness of admissions and why admissions are happening, whereas before they were just going under the radar.

MS VASSAROTTI: You also spoke about the fact that you had been very clear about specific needs that would be there, in the case where it was appropriate, and the children went into the unit, particularly about where they were housed, care plans and supervision. Is that now occurring, or do you still hold concerns regarding those elements?

Mr Dulhunty: I still have concerns regarding that, and I will bring that up with the new Official Visitor for Mental Health, to take it forward to the new Minister for Mental Health, to say that there needs to be a policy statement. I will also speak with the Chief Psychiatrist in that regard, to say we need to have a policy that says exactly how children will be managed on that unit, because of the risks.

MS VASSAROTTI: How often do we see this happening?

Mr Dulhunty: Recently, once every six to seven weeks, you would see a child on the unit, whereas before it was frequently. Nearly every time that I visited, which was weekly, there would be a younger person on the unit. I am not saying "young, young", but 14, 15 or 16-year-olds.

MS VASSAROTTI: At that same time, was there evidence that the youth ward was heavily utilised?

Mr Dulhunty: No, it was because they could not manage the individual at the time. Normally, I would do an adult mental health visit; then I would go down to the child and adolescent unit, to have a look for myself.

MS BERRY: Would that be recorded somewhere? Do they register where these young people are?

Mr Dulhunty: I know it is being monitored by the Children and Young People Commissioner and the office of the Chief Psychiatrist. They would have the numbers recorded—not necessarily the clinical reasoning behind why, but the numbers.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned the two-year period in which issues needed to be fixed at the child and adolescent unit, to be able to isolate someone there.

Mr Dulhunty: That has been repaired.

THE CHAIR: There was a door that needed fixing?

Mr Dulhunty: There was a door that opened the wrong way and left staff at risk of being in an area where they could not remove themselves—a little bit like the acute unit in the emergency department. They had to repair that before they could do it, even though it was a purpose-built, brand-new unit.

THE CHAIR: Install the door the wrong way and you are in trouble.

Mr Dulhunty: Yes.

THE CHAIR: While we are on the adult mental health unit, what is your assessment of its suitability? Is it conducive to rehabilitation and recovery of patients in general?

Mr Dunhunty: No.

THE CHAIR: What are the problems? Is there evidence? Is the model that is in use currently an evidence-based model?

Mr Dulhunty: They have a model of care, and I suppose the rehab approach has changed over the past five years. There is a much more structured program now than there was. Again, there is the environment; the unit itself does not lend itself to be conducive to being able to break out into quiet spaces or have time with therapists, and have activity areas that are separate. It is a barn.

THE CHAIR: What has been the response when that has been raised? Is it that the model of care is not appropriate? Is it that the model of care is not being followed or not being implemented? Are the spaces inappropriate? How is that being responded to from the government side?

Mr Dulhunty: Originally, it was the lack of being able to recruit allied health staff,

particularly around art therapy, music therapy, occupational therapy et cetera. They have now been able to recruit, and nursing has also stepped up and taken on a therapy role, which I think is appropriate, and that is much better. But there are limitations to that unit, regarding how flexible it can be—being able to do an activity at one end of the area, when you have people who are highly psychotic at the other end of the area, and not being able to have spaces dedicated to activities or therapeutic interventions. If you are looking at rehab, there is no consumer kitchen or any area where they can learn living skills, in order to move back into the community. There is the same issue at Dhulwa.

THE CHAIR: As you said, it is like a barn, to use your language.

Mr Dalhunty: Yes.

THE CHAIR: On a different topic, can I ask about the Official Visitors Board—whether or not there is a First Nations representative on the board and whether or not there should be?

Mr Dulhunty: There should be, and we approached the previous minister, and the minister previous to that, to ask for a First Nations representative on the board. To date, we are still waiting for feedback. I think the last feedback we had was that they were considering the matter. We thought that, with the push to Closing the Gap, it is more appropriate now than it ever has been for us to seek that advice. We have required First Nations advice on several occasions, but we have to go through JACS and then find an individual who is happy to step in.

We now have two First Nations persons who are Official Visitors—one for corrections and one for children and young people—but they do not sit on the board. I think it is a bit of a stretch to ask them to take on that role on the board, as well as being an Official Visitor in the area. We have asked twice—three times.

Mr Dzwonnik: Three times now, because we recently issued a letter to the scheme's new minister, Minister Tough, as well.

THE CHAIR: You have not received a reason for it not to have happened?

Mr Dulhunty: "It's a good idea; we'll look into it."

Mr Dzwonnik: Maybe they are looking to progress it. It is hard to say. It is all a bit opaque at the moment.

THE CHAIR: You will have done training as statutory officeholders in relation to your obligations under Closing the Gap, or under the Public Sector Management Act, so do you have concerns that it is hard for you to fulfil those obligations on things like genuine self-determination and shared decision-making without having that kind of representative on the board? It puts you at risk.

Ms Doube: I definitely believe that we should have that expertise on the board. If you look at the areas that we cover, there is a reason why two Official Visitors are specified to be First Nations individuals. I strongly support that, but I would say that there should

be that level of engagement, support, advice and guidance at a whole-of-scheme level; therefore, it would be appropriate to be on the board.

Mr Dulhunty: We deal with issues from Official Visitors around First Nations people, where we might have to determine at a board level what strategies to use, but we do not have that advice on hand at a board meeting, so we would have to seek independent advice, which is lengthy and time-consuming.

THE CHAIR: You said you have raised it three times. When would the first time have been?

Mr Dulhunty: With minister—

Mr Dzwonnik: Cheyne.

Mr Dulhunty: Cheyne.

Mr Dzwonnik: I believe June-July 2024 was when we first raised it, just before that Legislative Assembly ended.

MS BARRY: Going back to the adult mental health unit in general, have you seen an uptick in staff occupational violence?

Mr Dulhunty: No, it is about the same there. I think there has been an increase in occupational violence in the emergency department area and in the behavioural assessment unit, the BAU, where most people will present. There have been issues around AMC consumers and occupational violence with nurses. My position has always been that, if we are going to have AMC consumers in that unit, there needs to be a separate unit for forensic consumers, or they would be better managed in Dhulwa.

MS BARRY: With the separate unit for forensic consumers, obviously, you have raised it. Again, what feedback have you received? Nothing? Okay; thank you.

MS VASSAROTTI: Page 6 of the annual report notes that consumers requiring forensic rehabilitation continue to experience long-term detention in highly restrictive settings, which is inconsistent with the Mental Health Act's principle of providing care in the least restrictive environment. What progress, if any, has been made to rectify this situation?

Mr Dulhunty: None.

MS VASSAROTTI: None?

Mr Dulhunty: No. Since they closed Gawanggal, which was a dedicated rehab forensic unit, there has been no movement. There was some discussion around opening a new Gawanggal. The reason Gawanggal was closed at the north-side hospital campus was so that they could build a new hospital. That was a 10-bed rehab unit, and it was never replaced with another unit anywhere.

The assumption was that rehabilitation would then take place in Dhulwa. Dhulwa is the

most restrictive mental health environment that we have in the ACT, so it is not designed in any way, shape or form to be a rehab environment. Consumers might be, for example, on day leave for eight hours a day, as part of their transition back into the community, but when they come back into the unit, they are not allowed to have a phone, they are not allowed to have a laptop, they have to be checked every 30 minutes, they have to go through screening and they have to be supervised by security. It is non-existent.

MS VASSAROTTI: When did that other facility close?

Mr Dulhunty: Three years ago, when there was first mention of the north-side centre. The facility is still there. It is being used as a site office, so it is a very nice site office, but it is probably very expensive to maintain. It could have been used until this time.

THE CHAIR: We will wrap it up there. On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. I do not think we had any questions taken on notice, did we?

Mr Dulhunty: Just one.

MS BARRY: Don't worry; I will put the whole thing on notice.

THE CHAIR: You will lodge it? No questions have been taken on notice, so you have no homework. You are free to go. Thank you very much. Thanks for your work.

Appearances:

University of Canberra
Shorten Professor Bill, Vice-Chancellor and President
Lincoln, Professor Michelle, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Moore, Ms Michelle, Chief Operating Officer
Drummond, Mr Geoff, Chief Financial Officer

THE CHAIR: We welcome witnesses from the University of Canberra. 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. As we are not inviting opening statements, we will go directly to questions. I will ask about the financial situation at UC. On the 2025 revenue, it looks like it was $409.5 million versus expenses of $413.8 million. Does UC continue to operate at a deficit?

Prof Shorten: In 2024, the year before I started, we made a loss of $45 million. In financial year 2025, we managed to reduce that deficit to $4.3 million. For this year—though the final number has not come in yet—the trajectories continue to be positive.

THE CHAIR: So it might be a slight surplus, but not—

Prof Shorten: Not much, but a slight, yes.

THE CHAIR: I am curious about the staffing profile at UC. Obviously, there is a lot of background there and things are turning around—particularly for you, Professor Shorten, being somewhat new to the role. I am interested in what your observation has been in terms of the allocation of staffing or resourcing across the workforce. Do you think the balance is right—is it top-heavy; is there too much investment going to teaching; and so on? What is your general sense?

Prof Shorten: I will go to what I think are a couple of the headline points and then maybe the committee will want to unpick that and get into more of the detail. A change program started before I got there. The university staff were broadly divided, as you are aware, into academic categorisation and professionals. There was a reduction of about 170 people from, say, mid-24 to the end of 2025. Professional staff were reduced more than academic staff. It is also fair to say that academic staff are paid a bit more than professional staff on average. There was a reduction from the full-time equivalent number in 2024. There were approximately 1,175 staff. That reduced to close to 1,100 in the course of 2025. At the same time, our student load increased by 3.6. Again, in 2026, we have had further strong student growth, and so we have started to hire people again to reflect the growth. In terms of our proportions, senior management are about 3.3 per cent of the total profile.

THE CHAIR: The headcount?

Prof Shorten: Yes; or headcount/cost.

THE CHAIR: Maybe FTE.

Ms Moore: 3.3 per cent in FTE.

THE CHAIR: In FTE.

Prof Shorten: The sector averages 3.9 per cent senior management. So, to the extent that that is useful, we run on a leaner senior management than universities generally. Our proportion of FTE, which covers academic or that balance between professional academic, is about 42 per cent plus of the total number of employees. The sector operates closer to 38 per cent academic with the rest being professional. I might put some of those numbers there. We tend to rely on less casuals than the sector as a whole, and we are pretty modest in our use of consultants too.

THE CHAIR: What does that 3.3 per cent senior management FTE cost? Do you have that on hand?

Mr Drummond: The cost of the executive, as we have got in the financial statements, is $2.3 million.

THE CHAIR: But as a proportion of total payroll?

Mr Drummond: Let me calculate that very quickly.

THE CHAIR: We can do our sums. In terms of trends, have you assessed the trend in that shift in those proportions?

Prof Shorten: Which trend are you referring to?

THE CHAIR: The executive management level. Has that FTE gone up or down over, say, the last 10 years?

Mr Drummond: It went up until 2024, which is when we undertook the rebalancing. Since then, it has stayed absolutely stable for those staff and senior manager contracts.

THE CHAIR: Over at CIT, there have been some interesting trends there. Over the last decade, there has been a doubling of the senior and executive management workforce, while 68 teaching positions have been lost. In the same time, course enrolments have gone down 40 per cent and the costs have gone up 38 per cent across the institute. Is that concerning? That is something that you would want to avoid, I imagine.

Prof Shorten: Is it concerning about CIT or is it concerning about us?

THE CHAIR: Yes; concerning about CIT, from your perspective.

Prof Shorten: I think we have a hearing on the 25th where we have been invited to go for our vision and ideas. But it is not sustainable to keep hiring senior managers and getting rid of frontline staff. The trend at UC has been different. I think that was the trend at UC, but pretty tough decisions were made even before I got there and since I have been there. We run lean at the senior management level, and it is demonstrable both in the payroll and in the percentage of FTE. We benchmark against UniForum. Do

you want to explain very briefly to the committee, Geoff, who UniForum are and why we think this is a useful benchmark to consider?

Mr Drummond: There is a program called UniForum which universities can participate in. We basically provide then with financial and staffing information, and anonymously there is benchmarking that takes place across the participating higher education institutions. For the last couple of years, we have either been the lowest or the second lowest within the cohort of institutions within UniForum. That took a very big change in 2024 when we made the very hard decision to restructure the organisation. In terms of our financial performance, we are lean.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Finally, yes, there is a separate inquiry on this, but would you imagine that, if you had a role in determining the workforce profile both in UC and CIT, an arrest in growth at the senior and executive level might be something that you would pursue?

Prof Shorten: Yes. We have just done, for example, a faculty restructure. That is for 2026. UC had five faculties. We formed the view that we did not need a whole lot of senior leaders; we needed to free up resources for more teaching and research. The aim is not necessarily to shed jobs per se, but to redirect resources to teaching and the creation of new courses. I think CIT has that opportunity, but it is going to need pretty hands-on leadership.

MS BARRY: When you say "senior management executives", is that heads of departments or deans? Are those senior management executives?

Prof Shorten: The senior managers are those on senior manager contracts, and that does include the deans, yes.

MS BARRY: You talked about compressing a few faculties. How many of the senior management have you lost in the last 12 months since that reprogramming?

Prof Shorten: We have done it without forced redundancies. We had five deans and now we will have two.

MS BARRY: So three have been offered redundancies?

Prof Shorten: We still have jobs for people to do, but, over time, it will be by attrition not by forced redundancy. They are all skilled leaders. We have had vacancies which we have not filled when people have stepped down.

MS BARRY: My question is: where have those three now gone in the—

Prof Shorten: We are fortunate. We had two resignations and we have had someone else go to research. Rather than refill those positions, we have taken the opportunity to free up some of those wages and put it further down into the system.

MR MILLIGAN: We are all quite aware that there is discussion happening around a potential merger between UC and CIT. You may be aware that some independent RTOs are concerned with that merger and what that might look like for them. Have you had

discussions with the independent RTO sector, including OCTEC, and/or independent RTOs in terms of what that merger might look like and how UC would work with the independent sector?

Prof Shorten: The assumption in your question is that the independent RTOs are all concerned. Not all of them have put that to us. I know that you know that sector very well. The first thing I would say is that we are open to talking to them. Secondly, I have spoken to the Master Builders, I have spoken to the schools who run RTOs, I have spoken to the Catholic Education Office, who run RTOs and I have also reached out to the motor trades. I am not saying that I have spoken to all 70 plus RTOs in the territory, but I have spoken to some of the sort of thought leaders. They are all pretty keen to work with us. The schools will speak for themselves, but I think they have found UC quite approachable in the past. That is why I think they have all put in submissions supporting the merger.

Speaking to the Master Builders and other groups in the construction trades, we would work in partnership with them. We would not seek to replace, but I do think there is a great opportunity to identify the gaps in the trades training and see what courses we can deliver jointly and see what we can do where there are gaps which they would also like to see us fill. The only way it is going to succeed is by engagement with industry. That is why I think we have seen so many industry bodies put in submissions, most of which support us.

MR MILLIGAN: CIT currently offer 239 certificates in their offerings. It has reduced quite significantly since 2022. Have you or would you look at the current offerings that they have in place and would you look at either removing some or adding some courses? Have you considered whether it would then put you into competition with the private sector if you introduce new courses that are not currently being offered by CIT but offered by independent RTOs?

Prof Shorten: The Assembly has taken, I think, a strong interest in this issue—in particular, since the departure of their latest CEO. That was only a matter of two months ago. It probably would have been presumptuous for UC to start saying out of 239, what is meritorious and what is not. We have not done that level of detail, but I do have a general principle which is motivating this whole discussion. Our aim is to increase our offerings. CIT currently has 16 per cent share of all VET in the territory. Our aim would be to increase offerings, but the way we would do it is to work with industry. The reality is that there is enough vet training to go around; the question is: where are the gaps? With industry engagement, our principle is to offer more courses, to increase the offerings. Looking at their current balance sheet, I do not know what their plan is to increase, but we want to see more offerings and we would liaise with industry.

MR MILLIGAN: Obviously, CIT gets a lot of funding from the federal government but also the territory. If UC and CIT merge together, a lot of that funding would follow to UC. Would you be looking at negotiating what level of funding would go to you and then what level of funding you could give up to the independent RTOs so they can get a larger, fair share, of that funding that is allocated?

Prof Shorten: I think the non-CIT RTOs have an 84 per cent share already. UC merging with CIT would not be to see CIT shrink. There is a lot of discussion to be had.

We would be governed by the National Skills Agreement, which funnels whatever fed money there is through the government. We have put in a pretty detailed submission. Part of the challenge for this is that, if we put in too much detail, everyone gets their backs up and says, "It is all some sort of secret plan." But, if we have no detail at all, then everyone says, "You have not thought about it." Where that invisible line between not enough and too much detail is, I am not sure.

What we have endeavoured to do is to explain that we would set up a separate CIT college which would report directly to the vice-chancellor. We have said that CIT would keep its course delivery, academic quality, design and curriculum, traineeships and their TAFE Centres of Excellence. We do see, though, advantages underpinning with dual sector academic quality, good governance and leadership across the dual sector with strong relationships with both ASQA and TEQSA. We could work together on academic integrity. We can come together on lifelong learning, short courses and micros, and pathways both between CIT to UC and UC to CIT. We would work with industry. That has been my whole modus operandi, really, for 35 years and, in these two years here, that has been how we have been rolling at UC. UC, traditionally, has worked quite well. We work with the private operators.

MR MILLIGAN: Obviously, there is some concern from people who currently work at CIT that, if it did become one, there would be job losses and redundancy potential. There is also concern about how the new board would be operated and what sort of representation CIT would have in that combined board.

Prof Shorten: This would, obviously, be subject to longer discussion as we work through all the submissions that have gone into the standing committee's inquiry. It would be a new board, and you would have to guarantee TAFE or CIT representation and industry representation—we are clear about that in our proposed submission—but it is a matter for the Assembly and the government to work out exactly what that looks like. As a principle, we want to see TAFE staff, TAFE students and industry all represented and people with TAFE experience and VE experience in the new structure.

In terms of the jobs, I understand that CIT is now, as we sit here, going through voluntary redundancies. The prospect of job loss is right now for the CIT staff. In our merger, our aim would be to grow jobs, not shrink jobs. In a merger, our aim would be to have new offerings for students, not fewer courses. Our aim in the new offering would be to work with industry better than I think happens now. This is a proposition about post-school education within the ACT, which has two relatively small institutions. UC-CIT could be much more of a national leader and develop new propositions for learning.

MR MILLIGAN: I guess with any measure that potentially comes about, you would develop your own strategy in terms of how you work with industry, how you work with the independent RTO sector and how you develop the course offerings wanted by industry. Would all that, those strategies and directions be done and developed before the potential merger or agreement to merge?

Prof Shorten: I think there are two steps in this merger proposal. One is: should we or shouldn't we? I do not think CIT—vis the government—or we should invest in a whole lot of really extensive restructuring discussion if there is no appetite. At the end of the

day, if the Assembly and the government do not want to do it, tell us—and then fine; we will just move on with life. We are interested in vocational education, VOCED. I do not think a modern university is a sufficient post-school educational institution without providing vocational education as one of its things.

I get the importance of maintaining the CIT identity. I get the importance of guaranteeing their industrial conditions. I get the importance of talking about growth and new opportunities for students and adult re-learners in industry. We have put in our proposal new mechanisms to properly embed consultation. It is no secret; I have gone and spoken to the plumbers, the builders, the motor trades and a range of different school systems. They like CIT but they would like to have more engagement. That is not strictly a governance issue, but I think we can make it part of the governance of a new merged entity.

The other people who have to be relevant to decisions about the future of CIT is the ACT and its government and the Assembly. Under the funding model, UC gets a third of its funding from the commonwealth and the other two thirds come from other sources. With CIT, it is more like 80 per cent—75/80 per cent. But, if the government and the ratepayers of the ACT are paying that portion of the bill for training in the ACT VOCED, then they have to have a say in the policies that get set in a way which does not even happen with the universities. Things around courses and other matters have to be something which is decided between people, not just done by the merged entity.

MR MILLIGAN: Thank you very much.

MISS NUTTALL: I have a quick supplementary. When you say that, through the merger, you are hoping to bring more jobs to CIT, how do you see that working in practice? What is the mechanism to ensure that there is growth in jobs?

Prof Shorten: First of all, the current trajectory is not great. That is not the fault of the frontline teaching staff. Long before I got here, there have been ructions in terms of the leadership of CIT. This merger idea was looked at previously, last century but also in 2011. At the time, it was viewed that instead of merging with UC in 2011, they would create an independent board. Whatever that intent, I think if you look at the coverage that CIT has had, maybe not all of it is fair but some of the criticism is fair and the status quo has not delivered in the way which I think was hoped for. In other words, they tried the separate board approach, tried it in real time for 14 years, and it perhaps has not delivered in the way which I think people hoped at the time back then in 2011-12.

I guess CIT could always go back and become a government department. But, looking at the challenges—and I know Yvette is very familiar with education—in TAFE with funding, it would still could be a constrained environment. Our vision is a new entity that is about growth and about providing the students of the ACT one door, whereby they can still go to uni if they want or go to TAFE if they want. These days there is no hierarchy between the two. Maybe some people in the past at universities thought that somehow they were better. The reality is that your average citizen does not see that one is better than the other—and nor do I. So it is a matter of offering opportunities for people.

There is a real cost advantage for students in terms of merging the two entities. You

might have a student who does a couple of years at uni—the parents are going, "You have to get a uni degree"—and then a couple of years in, they go, "My goodness; this is not for me, but I would not mind doing a CIT course." At the moment, what happens is you just get the HECS debt with no qualification and you have to start again. The experience of the dual sector universities in Victoria shows a lot greater traffic between. When you are in the same general organisation, united but distinct, what happens is that there is a lot more traffic. It is the same with someone who has done a trade. They have been on the tools in construction and they have run a small construction business, but they would like to perhaps expand into some of the courses taught by university. We have lots of individual case studies where that has worked. So that is where we are headed. That is what I think works.

MISS NUTTALL: Forgive me if you explained this in your answer, but I could not really draw the bow between that and the potential growth of jobs at CIT; so I wanted to just zero in on that.

Prof Shorten: Okay; sorry. I was giving you the meta, and I will give you the specifics. At the moment, CIT is going through VRs, voluntary redundancies. I talk to national employers and ACT employers. I want to become their educational provider. If they have staff who want to get uni degrees, great—we can work on recognising prior learning and prior experience. But most Australian companies actually need as many tradie jobs as they need uni jobs. When I talk to national employers and try and attract them to sending their people to Canberra, I am missing half a limb; the menu is not really complete without the VOCED trades positions. So I am confident that, through greater industry engagement and being able to talk to employers and by having a full offering under one roof, we will create new demand. Industry employers would see the ACT, unlike the rest of Australia, as a one-stop shop to find their training and learning needs for their staff.

The second area is international. CIT has 48 accommodation beds, or 45—they probably know the number better than me; but very few. We have 2,400. CIT's presence to attract international students has diminished over time. We know that, through our talking, we can attract more international students who might want to do VOCED training, but with the university name it is easier to attract them. We would be able to find new students. For me, it is all about the growth. The link is to grow the educational customers, grow the educational learners, and then that is how you create new jobs.

MISS NUTTALL: Is that specifically new jobs compared to the number of jobs CIT has now?

Prof Shorten: Yes.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you. That is really helpful.

Prof Shorten: We can see around Australia—we have relationships with TAFE Queensland, for example, and private RTOs in New South Wales—that there are things that could be taught by CIT and us that are not being done anywhere in the territory, which can attract students to the combined entity.

MISS NUTTALL: That is helpful to know. If the merger is to progress following the

inquiry, what is the particular role that you see government playing in funding, as we talked about a bit earlier, and the delivery of the operations. Obviously, right now, government takes, I suppose, a stronger hand in CIT.

Prof Shorten: If people say, "Okay; this looks like a solid decision. Let's now try and map it out and make it work," those discussions will take probably 18 months plus, because there is a lot of detail and we have to hear the voices of CIT staff too. At the moment, CIT has sort of retreated a bit and said, "Until the government tells us what we are doing, we cannot really talk to you or anyone about this." At some point, we have to lower the drawbridge and have that discussion. The government has a role, I think, to show leadership and say, "We think the principle is good here; let's crack on."

We would still expect that TAFE would be funded by the National Skills Agreement, as it is now. There are a lot of back-office costs which you do not need two of. Do we really need two sets of cloud computing? Do we really need two sets of library learning spaces? Do we really need two sets of negotiations for learning resources like licence and subscriptions? Do we need to have two sets of student complaint systems? Do we need to have two sets of facilities management? That is not about reducing jobs; it is about reallocating money so we can provide new courses, new research and new liaison with industry about their needs and working with the RTOs.

MS BERRY: A change of direction from me: I am interested in learning more about the Connect Up 2617 program. Can anyone talk to me about that?

Prof Lincoln: It started as a research project around reducing the loneliness of young people in the ACT and it showed that it worked. They did a range of activities through that program. I do not know if it has continued with funding, though. I can take that on notice.

MS BERRY: Okay. Was that funding through the University of Canberra or—

Prof Lincoln: A combination with government funding, as I understand it, for a short period. It was a trial.

MS BERRY: That is all I was going to ask, but, given that was such a short answer, I will ask another question. The University of Canberra Connect program—

MS BARRY: UC Connect.

Prof Lincoln: The pathway program?

MS BERRY: The pathway program—yes. Bill, there is the situation you described before about a student going to the University of Canberra, finding it is not their jam, and then going on to do a trade. That is very much the situation one of my children found themselves in.

Prof Shorten: It is real.

MS BERRY: I find that appealing because I have an example of that happening right

in front of me. Is UC Connect still going with the university and Lake G?

Prof Lincoln: It runs with some schools in Canberra—that is right. It is a university preparation program for students who are not anticipating that they will get a competitive ATAR, when they start working towards getting to university in years 11 and 12. Students come through that pathway and usually go into a diploma at UC and then on to a degree, if that is what they want to do. They can also apply to other universities. It is not only a direct pathway to our university.

MS BERRY: Do you find with that program in the ACT that students stay, or do they find a different thing?

Prof Lincoln: Once they get into a diploma, they tend to stay, but from Connect the number is not as high because they may go to university, they may go to the CIT or they may go to another RTO. They are well prepared for whichever way they decide to go. But, once they get into the diplomas, the retention rate is actually pretty good, and their success rate is at a similar level to other students. That preparation really sets them up for success if they choose to go down that path.

MS BERRY: I think that is one of the connections that could work with the University of Canberra and the CIT, because it still holds its Canberra College of Advanced Education banner proudly—as it was before it became the University of Canberra—and so it operates differently. It has a different vibe.

Prof Lincoln: Yes. To your point and adding to what Bill said, we are talking about students moving between CIT and UC, and UC and CIT, but, in a joined-up entity, we have the opportunity to actually integrate them. Students could do a practical diploma while they are doing their degree at the same time. There are lots of examples where that would work nicely. Particularly, we had a trial where we had our psychology students doing a certificate in mental health, for example, or in children and adolescents, and we had one in drugs and alcohol. At the end of the degree, it makes students much more practically prepared for the workforce, if they can do both at once. While we are separate, there are, of course, a lot of logistical challenges to allowing that to happen, and there are financial challenges for students as well.

MS BERRY: On another program, there is the Affiliated Schools Program with the ACT government. How is that tracking for you?

Prof Lincoln: It is absolutely going strong. It won a national award last year for universities as an example in the sector of how to do preparation of teachers really well. We are really proud of it.

MS BERRY: I am proud of it too.

Prof Lincoln: The research is moving on to address the thorny issues around AI, both in schools and in universities, and doing that together, and a range of other things. The research component has always been incredibly impressive.

MS BERRY: Because it is unique. It does not happen anywhere else, as far as I am aware.

Prof Lincoln: It does not.

Prof Shorten: We had a celebration of that last week. Twenty-five schools get to do it. Forty-two applied. Of all the work placements for all of our teachers, Affiliated Schools takes 40 per cent. I was there last week and saw the work of our students. It is nation-leading.

MS BERRY: Congratulations.

Prof Lincoln: Our challenge is to expand it to meet the ever-growing demand we have for teacher education.

MS BERRY: Thank you.

MISS NUTTALL: This is a follow-up from the Connect Up program. Can I confirm that you are no longer involved in monitoring the progression of the Capital Region Community Services pilot? I think they are the other ones that took up the Connect program. Are you still involved in any way in funding or monitoring that project?

Prof Lincoln: Sorry—I would have to take that on notice. I am very happy to do that.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you so much.

MS CARRICK: I have a supp on the 2617 project. I understand that was a pilot and does not have any further funding. Should you get funding for it? It was terrific. Would you consider looking at areas of Canberra where there are very limited third spaces—for example, Molonglo?

Prof Lincoln: That is—

MS CARRICK: Thank you. My question is around the financial statements. You said that you moved from a $45.1 million deficit to a $4.3 million deficit, so that is good; it is going in the right direction. There were $15 million in redundancy and termination costs. How much of the financial recovery depended on those staff reductions and redundancies rather than revenue growth?

Prof Shorten: I will ask Geoff to supplement, but it was part of it, because you have to get your expenditure under control as well as work on revenue. At the time, in financial year 2024, we were spending 66 per cent of our expenditure on staff. What happened, to put it nicely, is that there had been some degree of hiring optimism—that, by hiring more and more people, the people would come. That did not happen. We tried to reduce the ratio of staff as part of the total expenditure. Maybe it is sitting around 63 per cent, so it is a portion of it. But there have been other significant expenditure reductions and also revenue growth. It is an important element but not the only element. Geoff, do you want to add to that?

Mr Drummond: I echo that it is both. We need to make sure that our expenses are in line with our revenue. They were not. Long story short: it was both, to make sure that our staffing costs were in line with the sector, but there were also some financial

sustainability benchmarks.

MS CARRICK: Thank you. There were $16 million in borrowings. That is the first borrowing for a while, as far as I could see. I think the bank account balance went up. Why did you need to borrow $16 million?

Mr Drummond: The $16 million was to cover any short-term—the end of the financial year, which is December for us, is a period when we do not actually get any money in. We have to wait for about a month between the payment that occurs earlier in December and the first one in January. When I say "payment", these are funds that are remitted by the Department of Education. Because we manage our cashflow really conservatively, we ended up borrowing just to make sure that there is absolutely no reason for us to have any potential working capital freeze or misalignment over the Christmas period. So it was done for very conservative reasons.

MS CARRICK: Last Christmas?

Mr Drummond: Yes.

MS CARRICK: When are you going to pay it back?

Mr Drummond: It has been paid back. It was paid back in January. We have a really strong cycle within our cashflows, and this is an example of one.

Prof Shorten: There are many other universities that have a bigger size or indicators that we would like to have in the future, but we carry no debt.

MS CARRICK: That is pretty good. I will go to my revenue risk questions. What would happen if you had a reduction in international student numbers? There are 3,149 of them and they are a significant part of the revenue—25 per cent. What happens if we get overseas student caps, migration policy changes or new overseas student commencement limits? How are these risks to your—

Prof Shorten: I will ask Geoff to go first and then I will supplement his answer.

Mr Drummond: By rights, it is happening at the moment. It is something that we are planning for. The policy positions that have been put in place by Home Affairs and DFAT mean that we are going to have less international student revenue next year than this year. That is planned for. We have been able to grow some of the other revenue lines to supplement that, but it is something that we are working with and experience. It is our reality.

Prof Shorten: To supplement, regarding our strategy, going up to 30,000 feet, there is the perception of overseas students being rivers of gold, and there has never quite been a river of gold for UC. Our share of overseas students at the Bruce campus is about 23 per cent, whereas, if you take our friends at UNSW, they are at 48 per cent. So we are not quite as dependent on overseas students, but we value them coming. What we are looking at doing is a T&E strategy. That means delivering education—UC-quality international education—overseas. So, rather than relying on students to come here, we seek to deliver it over there. We have had some very successful programs over 20 years:

partnerships with three universities in China and one in Vietnam, and we are exploring T&E. We have a strategy to balance out and perhaps have a reduction in the future, but we have never really had that same reliance.

At the same time, we are very focused. We are a domestic player. Under the legislation which governs us, our job is to provide opportunities for people to get a uni education, find jobs and do applied research. We are pleased with the fact that we have grown our domestic share. Last year it was 3.6 per cent. This year—in our annual report—we probably grew the fastest in the first semester of any university in Australia, domestically. We have a domestic play. You might recall our ad campaign: "U CAN @ UC". Traditionally, there has perhaps been a bit of snobbery—that somehow UC is where you go if you cannot get into the ANU. We have a different take on that altogether. We run high ATAR admissions for some of our courses, but we think someone's background should not define where they go or what they do, and we are seeing that beginning to pay off.

As a micro example, two years ago, in 2024, our open day had roughly 3,000 registrations. This year we had 8,700 registrations. They do not all turn into students, as people come to just look. We see our strategy as T&E, still do our international education, and stronger domestic outreach. I see tertiary harmonisation, which is not a particularly romantic term, but it is described as greater working closely with TAFE and uni—voc ed and uni.

The other thing is that we are very committed—but it is still early days—to delivering adult re-learning for unis. There is a really good philosophy in voc ed and TAFE about, "Come back," and having adults relearning constantly. We think that, for uni, we have to start being a lot more agile and getting adult re-learners coming back. The final thing is that we are delivering more online courses than we did. So we have a number of strategies to deal with.

MS CARRICK: What about research? There is an anticipated decline in research income, so how is that going to impact on staff?

Prof Shorten: I will ask Michelle, who is the head of our research, to answer, and I might supplement.

Prof Lincoln: As was said, we have already seen a reduction in the number of our international students this year. We have coped with that by increasing our domestic enrolments so that we will be at a point where we are breaking even or a bit better by the end of this year. Appreciably, there is not a big impact. One of the things that is challenging us in research is the competitiveness for funding in the external environment. There are the success rates of schemes, like at the National Health and Medical Research Council. Eight per cent to 10 per cent of proposals are funded. That is pretty devastating for our researchers.

We have a strategy around research funding. We have seen a drop in our research funding in the last couple of years because of that competitive environment. We will be doubling down on actually submitting tenders and industry engagement around research. That fits nicely with what we do. We see ourselves as being practical and solutions orientated, and we want to walk together with industry to solve their problems

through a research framework. We will be working much harder in that space, and, to some extent, pulling back a bit from chasing that national competitive funding, because our researchers waste hundreds of hours of time every year putting in grants that have a very low success rate. Even though they are brilliant ideas, it is just really hard to compete.

MS CARRICK: I have one last question about property. You have quite a big property base. You have aged care and student accommodation. Regarding the redevelopment of Arscott House, is that something that you are looking to redevelop to provide a new revenue stream?

Prof Shorten: We would like to get optimal use out of that, but I might hand over to our chief operating officer.

Ms Moore: We are definitely looking for mixed use. It is a balance, Ms Carrick, as we talked about last week. For us, it is about: "What could we put there? What community space could be in there? How could we support our education?"—in terms of work-integrated learning. That is part of the north-west health hub that we are also developing at the moment. That has independent living units and it has aged care, but it also supports the university by providing placements and important collaborative work for our educational purpose as well. It also delivers community spaces.

MS CARRICK: I have one other question on property. Is the cost of maintaining the property portfolio an issue?

Ms Moore: I think maintenance is an issue for all universities, to be fair. We have a strong focus going forward on asset replacement, because it is such an important part of keeping our students and our buildings safe. I would say it is always a challenge for universities, which do not generally receive external funding for repairs and maintenance or capital, to find the right balance in how we utilise that funding.

Prof Shorten: To supplement, CIT faces the same challenge. If we do nothing, everyone has to try to replenish that building stock. But I would like—for example, in a merger—for us to deliver university courses on the south side, using that fantastic Woden facility. Also, further south, in Tuggeranong, CIT has a leased operation. My vision is a spine of post-school education from Gungahlin to Bruce to Woden and down south. "Educational desert" is too much in post school down south, but it could do with more resources. The fact is that all our unis are congregated in the centre and in the north. We think delivering for Canberra in a merged entity will allow more CIT courses, partnerships with industry down south, and uni courses.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. 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*.

Hearing suspended from 11.08 am to 4.35 pm

Appearances:

Orr, Ms Suzanne MLA, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Minister for Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water, Minister for Disability, Autism and Neurodiversity, Minister for Housing and Homelessness, and Minister for Equality

Health and Community Services Directorate
Robey, Ms Lisa, Executive Branch Manager, Gender Equity and Safety

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the public hearings of the Standing Committee on Social Policy for its inquiry into annual and financial reports 2025-2026. We welcome Ms Suzanne Orr MLA, Minister for Equality, 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. As we are not taking opening statements, we will just go straight to questions.

I would like to ask about employment targets across the public service, if that is okay. The Auditor General put out a performance audit report on diversity, equity and inclusion in the ACT public service, and of course there are whole-of-government employment targets that support equality and inclusion, which include three per cent representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by the end of this year, and nine per cent for people with disability—which, at the time of the audit, were two per cent and three per cent respectively. So, obviously, there is some work to be done. What involvement do you as Minister for Equality have in this work? Are you involved in working to meet those targets?

Ms Orr: Mr Emerson, as you have already picked up on, the responsibility for the public service and the targets does not sit with me; it sits with the Minister for the Public Service. I think the majority of your question would be best put to the relevant minister. I think the specific part you are after is what role I have in supporting or setting the targets. It was quite a long question. Was it about what role I have in supporting or setting the targets?

THE CHAIR: I am curious as to the second question as well—setting and achieving the targets, I suppose. What role do you as Minister for Equality play in, I suppose, pursuing equality within the ACT public service?

Ms Orr: Mr Emerson, my input would primarily be through cabinet processes and input to the Minister for the Public Service portfolio and what they are taking forward as far as policy and objectives go. Again, this will sit with not just this portfolio but also other areas where my portfolios will intersect with public service and inclusion. I guess those comments go to the setting of workforce representation targets as to making the workforce more inclusive or supporting people from the LGBTIQA+ community. Again, the majority of the work would sit with the Minister for the Public Service, but I would be able to have input through the cabinet processes in shaping up policy and shaping up directions.

A lot of the work that I have been focused on and the office focuses on around

supporting inclusion is actually looking at services and programs across government and how best we can continue to make those more inclusive. Given that this really does sit with the Minister for the Public Service, that is probably the most I can give you.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Do you have a view on whether there should be specific targets for recruitment of, say, culturally and linguistically diverse employees and, of course, LGBTIQA+ staff as well? Do those targets exist and, if not, should they, whether across the ACT PS or perhaps in HCSD?

Ms Orr: Mr Emerson, bear with me, because I think that is bordering on asking me to share a personal opinion; so I will be considered in how I answer this one. Ultimately, the targets will be determined by the relevant minister in consultation with the public service and the Head of Service as to where they direct the workforce. There is one thing that I would note with targets—and this comes up across the board. Certainly the Labor Party are not opposed to a good target, particularly one that helps with representation and increasing representation of underrepresented people—but what I would caution whenever I am having these conversations is to also make sure that we do it in such a way that does not require people to disclose or provide information that they do not feel comfortable in disclosing while still making sure that people who do not want to disclose are still supported and have opportunities. So I think it is a little bit more nuanced than just having a target—and that is across the board. I think it is fair to say that that is the input I would have—I think probably well received. Those issues are also live to my colleagues.

THE CHAIR: One of the priorities within the Capital of Equality Strategy is to provide guidance and training to ACT public service employees to ensure inclusive policymaking. I am wondering how that intersects with ACT PS employment policy.

Ms Orr: They are two slightly different things. I will pass to the directorate, because they will be the ones doing this on a day-to-day basis and will be able to give you far more granular detail.

Ms Robey: In the Office of LGBTIQA+ Affairs, one of our important things is to promote an understanding and eliminate barriers for the LGBTIQA+ communities. We do that in a variety of ways through the public service. An important way has been in the publication of the *Inclusive communications guide*, which provides guidance to all ACT public servants on inclusive terminology and ways to work with diverse communities. We also provide strategic evidence-based policy advice to the minister and also broad whole-of-government advice on a range of things—bills and potential work. We get consulted on everything from legislation to, for example, "Is this picture an okay one to use in this publication?". The office is really responsive and supportive across our public service colleagues to support representation of LGBTIQA+ people and issues.

THE CHAIR: Thank you

MS BARRY: I have a question around the Capital of Equality Strategy delivery. On page 29 of the annual report, it describes implementation of the Capital of Equality Strategy first action plan, which contains 37 actions and finished in June 2026. In August this year, it was publicly reported that, when asked which actions remain

unimplemented, the government said it was still reviewing the process and would release the final report. How many action plans were fully delivered by 30 June 2026?

Ms Orr: So, Ms Barry, just to check I have understood the question correctly: it is the first action plan on the Capital of Equality and how many actions under that—

MS BARRY: Were delivered. Not the new one; the first action plan.

Ms Orr: Yes; the first one and not the second one—and how many? I am actually running through a cabinet process at the moment to provide a final implementation report on the first action plan. I will respect my cabinet processes and I will not pre-empt those. What I would say in answer to your question right now is that several recommendations in the first action plan have been implemented but a lot are ongoing. They will turn into business-as-usual work, which means that they were not necessarily "point in time—that is done"; they turn into business as usual and it continues to keep going. That is part of what we are looking at in all of the reporting we are doing and is also part of what has shaped up the second action plan and looking at building on a number of those actions from the first. You could take that as they are not completed, because they are ongoing, but that was always the intention. They were not meant to be done and then cease to exist.

MS BARRY: So, if I get it correctly; the first action plan has completed; you have a second action plan; and you are currently finalising a cabinet process that tells us where the 37 actions from the first action plan are up to. Were any of that 37 carried into the new action plan or they just terminate and then you have a new plan?

Ms Orr: This is going to be hard to explain without being able to point to the tangibles. The second action plan builds on the work of the first action plan—so there is a continuance there. That does not mean the actions in the first one have not been completed; it means that that there is a continual need to do exactly that—build on the work that is there. In the second action plan, of the 36 actions, 11 are new and 25 continue or expand the work commenced through the first action plan. The implementation report that I am bringing forward is the final implementation report for the first action plan when it was finalised—so to pick up one after the other—to provide that completeness as to what was achieved through that first one.

MS BARRY: And this report is going through a cabinet process.

Ms Orr: Yes.

MS BARRY: Is there a timeframe?

Ms Orr: Subject to cabinet's agreement, I am looking to table it by the end of the year.

MS BARRY: So this last sitting?

Ms Orr: Yes; so it is not far off, Ms Barry.

MS BARRY: Okay.

MISS NUTTALL: I am hoping to ask about police liaison, if that is okay. When I asked last year about ACT Policing's relationship with the LGBTIQA+ community, the government pointed to their LGBTIQA+ Liaison Officer. This position did not get a mention in either the HCSD or ACT Policing annual report. What specifically is the liaison officer doing to engage with the Canberra LGBTIQA+ community?

Ms Orr: Sorry, Miss Nuttall, can I just clarify; is this the ACT Policing Liaison Officer?

MISS NUTTALL: Yes.

Ms Orr: Those questions are going to be best put to ACT Policing, because that position sits with them. I can give you my own experiences and where I have seen them turn up. I know that they have been reaching out to parts of the community and my ministerial council advised me that they were going to be meeting with them soon. I think if you need a more full list of what they have been doing, I would encourage you to speak to ACT Policing.

MISS NUTTALL: Okay. In that case, I might try a different question. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Advisory Group helped develop the *For us, by us: Culturally-led solutions for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SBLGBTIQA+ people* report, and I understand from annual reports that the government is committed to working with the advisory group to implement their recommendations. It says so on page 145 of the HCSD annual report. Can I confirm that this means that the government is fully committed to implementing all 72 of the report's recommendations? Do you have a timeline for when those recommendations might be implemented by or key indicators on the progress?

Ms Orr: Miss Nuttall, you were talking very faintly. Can I just get the last bit of your question again, please?

MISS NUTTALL: Sorry. Absolutely. Can I confirm that the government is committed to implementing all 72 of the report's recommendations, and do you have a timeline or key indicators for that implementation?

Ms Orr: The report that has been put forward has been developed by the advisory group and is quite extensive in the recommendations it does make. What we are now looking at is how the government might respond or where things might be prioritised. But decisions have not been taken beyond that ongoing discussion to work through what is in the report.

Ms Robey: I can expand a little bit. In the spirit of self-determination and co-design, we will be undertaking the development of an implementation road map with that group. It is intended to become an overarching policy framework that is going to set out those high-level principles for action to improve the outcomes. It is really an ongoing co-design process over the next few years.

MISS NUTTALL: Okay. But, when you say you are developing a road map, do you have any idea when that road map will be complete—even if there are going to be iterations afterwards?

Ms Robey: We are just about to commence that work with the committee, and we will be working with them over a number of years on the road map. They are kind of long-term outcomes as well. So it is going to be a staged process. We are aiming for 2027, but I hesitate, when it is a co-design self-determined process, to put a hard deadline on it, because we really do need to be led by community to fully embrace that commitment to self-determination.

MISS NUTTALL: In the meantime, I understand recommendation 1.6 calls for the advisory group to receive funding beyond June 2026. Can you confirm that the body continues to be funded? Is the government committing to funding this body indefinitely, at the very least throughout that road map process?

Ms Robey: The 2026-27 budget committed $88,000 to extend the advisory group for three years to develop the road map and commence implementation.

Ms Orr: That was until 2028. That was under the second action plan that came through.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you. Last year, the government confirmed that it was consulting with First Nations and queer communities on incorporating First Nations identities into formal terms for the queer community, such as adding to the LGBTIQA+ acronym. Recommendation 3.9 of the *For us, by us* report calls on the government to replace the standard use of the acronym LGBTIQA+ with SBLGBTIQA+ to include sistergirls and brotherboys. Is the government beginning to roll out this updated acronym?

Ms Orr: Miss Nuttall, again, I point to our previous point, or whatever we refer to it as: that we are working through a co-design process with the community and, in answering questions to say if we have already decided something, the answers at this point in time for all of them are going to be that we are working with the advisory group to determine how we implement those.

MISS NUTTALL: Gotcha. As the consultation process unfolds, given that, as you have mentioned, it may take a fair while in line with commitments to self-determination; are there particular points where you will be able to say some of this information for certain and when we could expect to see that?

Ms Orr: This goes to the road map that is being developed, which is to look at the timing and the progression. Some of the recommendations in this are very complex and require iterative work over a sustained period of time; whereas others, it is probably fair to say, are a little bit more focused and can be done at more individual points in time. That is what we are working through. I cannot pre-empt when the advisory group will say, "We are happy with where we have got to." That is exactly the point that Ms Robey was making: that there is not a predetermined outcome or a set deadline per se. Nobody wants to delay or draw this work out, but we do not want to put a date in place that also makes people feel that they are rushed.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you.

MS BERRY: I have a couple of questions. I want to better understand the support

systems for Canberra schools that have been put in place around the Safe and Inclusive Schools Initiative under the first action plan and also in the second action plan. Maybe it is just not available at this stage because you are developing the road map. I am wondering about how sports are being engaged through this process. We have the wonderful Pink Tennis and we have female-only or female-identifying sports clubs. But I feel there is this massive gap—when it is still a surprise or it is still a front-page news story when somebody comes out in sport.

Ms Orr: Thanks, Ms Berry. Safe and Inclusive Schools is addressed by education and the Office of LGBTIQA+. Decisions would not come to me. I do not know if the office have anything they can input. But we can always take it on notice and come back to you.

Ms Robey: I think we will take it on notice.

MS BERRY: It is okay. It was just because it was written in your progress report.

Ms Orr: It is there and it is one of the first actions, but I think that it has moved from us—I guess, initiating or supporting—to being administered by Education now. We might initiate for them, but it becomes business as usual and continues on. Just to clarify: the particular report that was put forward by the advisory group for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community was not to the broader action plan. With the broader action plan, that one is published, and we have all of those actions there.

I can get Ms Robey to run through a little bit more on sport. There is quite a bit of work that has gone on previously and a lot of the individual sporting codes will be looking at their own inclusion policies. It is not necessarily something that the government will be involved in across the board. We will have targeted areas, though, where we will provide support. Previously, there has been work by A Gender Agenda, which I believe is going back quite a while—so I am testing my memory here; previous to when I held the portfolio— and other community organisations focused on LGBTIQA+ issues to look at, particularly, trans sports and inclusive guidelines. Ms Robey, did you want to add anything?

Ms Robey: I might note a couple of things. I think one of the important things about a strategy of this nature is that it provides a whole-of-government considered perspective on a particular issue. In this case, it is really about bringing a whole-of-government focus to issues affecting our LGBTIQA+ community. But not all of that is administered by the Office of LGBTIQA+. We do reporting of the strategy. CMTEDD are the lead through the sport and recreation area. Our Capital Of Equality grant fund has also funded sport projects over time and looks, in particular, at ways that we can create those environments that are open and welcoming.

MS BERRY: I think it is great to have it condensed in one spot where people can see it in the report. There has obviously been a lot of progress made. Will those grants continue through the second round, that Capital—

Ms Robey: They are not linked to the fund.

Ms Orr: Ms Berry, I think this is looking at the grants that the ACT government gives out to sporting associations and how within those grant guidelines we can promote inclusion and have more inclusion activities. So, rather than have a specific stream, it is looking at taking that focus far broader. I am happy to take it on notice, and we can come back to you with a bit more info from CMTEDD if you would like.

MS BERRY: That would be great. Thanks.

Ms Orr: I would just add that, with the second action plan, they are actions that happen across the whole of the ACT government. So some of them would sit with the office of LGBTIQA+ Affairs and be administered by us—and we will have a lot more information on those. Some of the others will be administered in various directorates. That is where I think it makes it just a little bit harder to give you the most up-to-date information.

MS BERRY: That is okay.

THE CHAIR: An issue that has come up in this committee—and it is raised in both of the action plans for the Capital Of Equality Strategy—is healthcare access disparity. Given this is obviously an issue, I am curious about the specific actions that have taken place to improve access to responsive health and wellbeing services, particularly mental health services, for our LGBTIQA+ community since the strategy was launched.

Ms Orr: I think this goes to the point I was just making about whether it sits with the office or where it might sit with the line area. So, while it is a key focus of the second action plan, focus area 2.3 "enhancing health"—it is quite literally there—I think the specific initiatives that go to the line areas that would not necessarily report to me would be best placed to them. We will provide reporting. That will come in to us and we will provide those reports. That is when I will have the most up-to-date information for you. I would note, though, that the section action plan came out quite recently in comparison. So, going to your question of what has been implemented since then—

THE CHAIR: No; since the strategy was launched.

Ms Orr: The strategy, not the action plan?

THE CHAIR: Yes, the strategy. It comes up in both action plans.

Ms Orr: Okay. I can get Ms Robey to run you through some of the detail. But, again, I think that this is one where there are going to be answers across all of government to this question.

THE CHAIR: Maybe I can ask a different question. This action plan indicates that one measure of success for this focus area is evidence of improved access pathways. I am wondering what that evidence would look like.

Ms Robey: I might have to take that one on notice, I think.

Ms Orr: I think this one would go to ACT Health, but we can take it on notice and come back.

THE CHAIR: But, for you to report, you will need to know what we are looking for at the start of laying out the strategy for the whole of government. I understand the implementation responsibility sits within Health—and that is fine—but you will want to know if there is evidence of improved access pathways. We have heard this is a priority. We have heard it in the male suicide inquiry that we did. We have heard it in the pelvic pain conditions inquiry. So, as the office, do you have a monitoring framework or something for these different actions to be able to say, "Okay, improved access pathways would look like this, and that way we will be able to say action ticked or not"?

Ms Orr: I understand what you are saying now is: how is the implementation monitored? I will take the question on notice. I will need to get input from other areas, because this cuts across a range of different services and programs. If you are asking if there is one indicator per se, I think the answer is that it is unlikely to be a single indicator; it is going to be depending on specific programs. Again, Mr Emerson, this is an area where, as you rightly pointed out, there is a lot of work and a lot of reform to occur. We are engaging with the complexity of that, and that is where we see the advisory committee and the work that they have done. You can see within that and the recommendations that there is a huge amount to go there. Having one indicator for that is not going to be a neat fit. We are doing a lot of work. We are progressing it. But, in doing my due diligence in expectation management, I am not sure there is one indicator or monitor that will distil all of that down and capture it.

THE CHAIR: That is fine. In taking it on notice, I am just asking what would be evidence of improved access pathways—not whether there is a specific indicator. I would love to understand how these action plans are developed and what informs a decision like, "That is going to be our outcome." But then, importantly, what is embedded from the outset to know at the end of this action plan that we achieved that or we did not. It might be that you have got 10 things that you are looking for as evidence of improved pathways or it might be one—I am not sure.

Ms Orr: We will come back to you.

MISS NUTTALL: I have another question—I think probably the one most relevant to this session. The *For us, by us* report notes that at the core of its recommendations is addressing core needs for the SBLGBTIQA+ mob, such as housing, utilities, transport, food, internet and health care. How involved is your office in actively tracking these outcomes for community? If it is not your office, do you know who is actively tracking those outcomes?

Ms Orr: Sorry; when you say "the office", are you talking about the Office of LGBTI IQA+ Affairs?

MISS NUTTALL: Yes.

Ms Orr: Not my political office. I will hand it to Ms Robey.

Ms Robey: As I said, we are in the process of developing the road map. As part of that, we will be looking at those measures and the ways that these will be identified.

MISS NUTTALL: Would the responsibility sit with the Office for LGBTIQA+ Affairs to monitor that on an ongoing basis?

Ms Robey: We would have reporting requirements, but we work with our colleagues across government to feed in. Often those line areas are best placed to identify how to measure, because they know their own dataset they have to measure.

Ms Orr: I think that we would be the coordinator of all the line areas.

MISS NUTTALL: That is helpful. As part of that, do you currently measure the gaps in outcomes between SBLGBTIQA+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as compared to the broader LGBTIQA+ broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and general populations? Do you have that?

Ms Robey: Not yet.

Ms Orr: I think the office does not specifically do that.

Ms Robey: No.

Ms Orr: There might be line areas and programs that might have some level of reporting that looks at that, but you would have to ask on a case-by-case basis. Miss Nuttall, I would add that part of the work in having the advisory group and having that report is because there is an identified service being provisioned—so to actually start to respond to that.

MISS NUTTALL: Thank you.

Ms Orr: I would add; Miss Nuttall, that the other thing that we just need to be mindful of, particularly when we are looking at the cohort that you have been referencing, is that it is a really small number and we do need to be careful that we are not inadvertently identifying people in the data that we are putting out.

MISS NUTTALL: Fair. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I thank you for your attendance today. For questions taken on notice, please provide your answers to the committee secretary within five business days of receiving the uncorrected proof *Hansard*. On behalf of the committee I would like to thank all of our witnesses who have assisted us through their experience and knowledge. We also thank Broadcasting, Hansard and the secretary 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.

The committee adjourned 5.06 pm.