

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

(Reference: Appropriation Bill 2003-2004)

Members:

**MR B SMYTH (The Chair)
MRS H CROSS (The Deputy Chair)
MRS V DUNNE
MR J HARGREAVES
MS K MacDONALD**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 21 MAY 2003

**Secretary to the committee:
Mr Derek Abbott (Ph: 6205 0199)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry which have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the committee office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

The committee met at 9.02 am.

Appearances:

Mr B Wood, Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services, Minister for Urban Services, Minister for the Arts and Heritage and Minister for Police and Emergency Services

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Ms S Lambert, Chief Executive

Dr C Adrian, Executive Coordinator

Mr I Hubbard, Chief Financial Officer

Ms B Overton-Clarke, Director, Policy, Corporate and Community Services

Mr B Hutchison, Executive Director, ACT Housing

Ms P Brown, Manager, Child Health and Development Service

Ms H Fletcher, Director, Housing Services

Ms L Ford, Executive Director, Disability ACT

Department of Urban Services

Mr G Davidson, acting Chief Executive

Mr B MacDonald, General Manager, Road Transport

Mr A Phillips, Director, Finance

Mr J Thwaite, acting Executive Director, Customer Service and Information

Mr T Elliot, Director of Canberra Connect, Customer Services and Information Group

Mr H McNulty, acting Executive Director, City Management

Mr T Bartlett, Director, ACT Forests

Department of Justice and Community Safety

Mr T Keady, Chief Executive

Mr M Castle, Executive Director, Emergency Services Bureau

Mr K Paulsen, Director, ACT Ambulance Service

Mr P Lucas-Smith, Director, Bushfire and Emergency Services

Mr D Prince, acting Fire Commissioner, ACT Fire Brigade

Mr B Lenihan, Director, Resource Management

Ms E Kelly, Executive Director, Policy and Regulatory Division

ACT Policing

Mr John Murray, Chief Police Officer, ACT

THE CHAIR: Good morning ladies and gentlemen and members. I call the Estimates Committee to order. Before we begin I need to read the following advice. You should understand that these hearings, which are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, are protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. The giving of false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

Ministers and departmental witnesses, your evidence today is being recorded by Hansard to prepare the committee's transcript of proceedings. It is, therefore, necessary for you to speak clearly into a microphone when you answer questions. Officers who are seated at the back of the room should come to the main witness table if called on to respond to

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questions. Please do not speak from the back of the room. It would assist the committee staff and departmental officers if witnesses could also state clearly when a question is being taken on notice. It would also greatly assist in the preparation of the transcript if witnesses would state their full name and the capacity in which they are appearing on the first occasion that they give evidence. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Wood: Thank you, Chair. This is the first budget developed by the new department which was established by the government on 1 July 2002. The 2002-03 budget was an amalgam of budgets developed by the giving agencies. Successes this year include: the government response to the board of inquiry and the comprehensive steps to reform, with details as tabled in the Assembly, including the work of those five productive working groups; the government response to the review of therapy services for school students with a disability; the establishment of the Disability Advisory Council; the report of the Affordable Housing Taskforce and the government response; the development of the Community Housing Framework; work towards the development of an ACT homelessness strategy and establishment of the Homelessness Advisory Group; work towards the development of a carers policy and establishment of the Carers Advisory Group; managing the review of statutory oversight and community advocacy agencies with responsibility to the Chief Minister; and significant new staff appointments—a very different approach by the new department.

I should also highlight the programs undertaken in the department to respond to the needs of those affected by the bushfires and their re-housing. The 2003-04 budget demonstrates the government's commitment to addressing disadvantage, and priorities for the department. During this budget process 11 initiatives were supported providing the department with over \$30 million in new funds for the 2003-04 financial year and the three forward years. Overall budgets through outputs 1.1 Disability, 1.2 Community Development and 1.3 Single Therapy Services, all increased significantly in 2003-04 and in outyears.

It is important to note the variations in the statement of financial performance on page 221 of Budget Paper 4, which are also detailed on page 224. In particular, integration of the department continues the trend established in 2002-03 when disability policy and disability services were combined. In 2003-04 there was a transfer of output 1.4, Housing Policy and Planning, to Housing Services, outputs 1.1 and 1.2. The previous estimates committee made a number of general commitments about the utility of the performance measures included in the department's 2002-03 budget outputs. The 2003-04 measures have been revised to better reflect the department's activities and more closely identify the relationship with clients and providers. Mr Chair, I table replacement pages 249, 250 and 251 for Budget Paper 4, which should be circulated.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. It might have been better if they had been tabled somewhat earlier so that we had time to go through them.

Mr Wood: They just arrived.

THE CHAIR: No doubt we will struggle through. Minister, you would be aware by now that a document that has been circulated—at least in the department of health—was a cheat sheet for officials to avoid answering questions or stymie the estimates process.

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Have you checked to establish whether or not this document was distributed through your department?

Mr Wood: No, I have not. I do not believe it has been circulated.

Ms Lambert: It has not been circulated in our department.

THE CHAIR: The committee will be taking this whole issue quite seriously. I think the document will figure somewhat prominently in our report because of its tone and some of the suggestions in it—for example, if you do not want to answer a question you should simply take it on notice, which is a great undermining of the estimates process. If we find evidence that the document has been distributed to other departments we will be taking that issue seriously.

Mr Wood: What we did last year and over the years will speak for itself. We have been responsive at all times. However, from time to time we have to come back to you on a number of issues.

THE CHAIR: I understand that. Minister, the department got through its first year and I note that you have had an increase in your budget of \$8.2 million. Well done. Could you detail any programs that have been terminated or that will not be continuing in this year's budget?

Mr Wood: I am not aware of any programs terminating in this year's budget.

Ms Lambert: I am not aware of any programs that are terminating as such. We are in the process of evaluating things, particularly in the disability area. But at this point in time we have not terminated anything.

THE CHAIR: Are any programs being changed? Last year in the estimates committee hearings reference was made to making services more available for older respite care recipients, which actually led to the closing of the Dickson and Narrabundah respite units. Are there any changes of that nature?

Ms Lambert: We are not responsible, as you would be aware, for respite units. There are changes. One of the changes that the minister referred to is the breaking down of the purchaser-provider relationship across the department, which will have an impact on structural issues and on our structure. The second one that was also referred to by the minister is the combination, if you like, of the team of professionals we have in the department from the multidisciplinary team and the child health and development service. We are now in the process of linking those teams into one service. So there are changes in that sense. I am sure as you work through the outputs you will see some of the others.

MRS CROSS: A theme that I will be pursuing with every minister is that of empire building. Has the expansion of the public service within your area of responsibility applied to both the senior executive service and to the service at large?

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Mr Wood: There have been significant changes to the upper echelons of the department, which is a reflection of the response to the Gallop report. Empire building does not occur. People come into departments to do specific jobs and we ensure that they do them efficiently and well. Sandra might give you some details about how well they do that.

Ms Lambert: The departmental structure that was given to last year's estimates committee remains. That structure was established in response to the Gallop report. So we created two executive positions in disability, which had not been there before, although an interim executive position was created in the disability reform group area. The other executive position in housing already existed. We then created three other positions as well as the chief executive position. One of them was a deputy position, the other was a director of finance—Mr Hubbard's position—and the third was in the corporate structure and policy area.

We have since looked at creating another executive position in the new structure, which you will see in the ownership agreement. We have a fairly lean executive structure for a line department. That executive will have a community development function; he or she will pick up the strong community services function that we have. So we have one more executive position than we had last year. I think the rest of the department is fairly stable. We always experience some churn, particularly around some of the service delivery areas, but you would appreciate that we have some tough service delivery areas and sometimes the numbers of permanent staff fluctuate.

MRS CROSS: Page 226 of Budget Paper 4 states:

The Department received a capital injection of \$1.2 million for office refurbishment with the establishment of the new department.

Minister, do you think this departmental office refurbishment was a higher priority than the coalface capital needs of people with disabilities, extra housing, and community services, which are your prime responsibility?

Mr Wood: Let me put it this way. We established a new department because we did not want our employees working out on the street. We had to have a place for them. There was a considerable search for the most suitable place, which was located. We provide frontline services and we also provide appropriate work conditions for people in the department.

MRS CROSS: Why does the \$1.2 million not appear on page 232 under capital works? Are you trying to keep it separate from community expenditure?

Mr Wood: I do not know.

Mr Hubbard: I can answer that question. The \$1.2 million comes in as a capital injection directly from Treasury for that specific purpose. It is actually a capital transfer from the DUS. It appears in the balance sheet and it is depreciated from that moment on.

MRS DUNNE: So why is it a capital injection? Why is it not listed under capital works?

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Mr Hubbard: That is a good question. I do not know why it is a capital injection. My understanding is that it is a shift from the capital works budget of the DUS. In order to make that shift we had to do it as a capital injection.

MR HARGREAVES: I have a couple of questions on housing issues. I noticed a reference in the budget to support—and I am not sure of the exact extent of this support—for homeless men and their accompanying children. We know that the department manages the grant to the Canberra Fathers and Children Service. I was interested to see whether or not there was any further support for homeless men and their accompanying children. I would then like to follow that question with a question relating specifically to women. One question that occurs to me relates to older women escaping domestic violence. Would you like to cover those two problems in one hit?

Mr Wood: As you will notice in the budget, a significant amount has been allocated for homelessness, which is much needed—the first real increase in funding in the territory for a long time—and which will be spread over a few areas. Bronwen might like to give you the details.

Ms Overton-Clarke: That \$2.4 million in the first year is actually made up of a number of components. In the statistical information we have we recognise that the highest demand for the utilisation of refuge accommodation is single men and single men and families. A significant portion of that funding—50 per cent in the first year—will be available for additional support and brokerage for other priorities. That will include women and young people because we recognise that the refuge system does not actually properly and adequately meet their needs. Part of that funding will be available for the investigation of the youth shelter work and also recognising specific needs, such as women with complex needs issues. So whilst a component of the money that we have got through the budget is for those high priorities—families and single men—a large component will be to investigate other options and priorities and to give support to other high needs groups, such as women with complex needs.

MR HARGREAVES: What about specifically homeless men with children? That is what CANFACS is all about, but it is a limited service. I think we produced a report on it that suggested we could have a south-side focus.

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is right. In fact, the highest utilisation for families is on the south side. Currently, there is no crisis accommodation for families. Part of the funding will actually be able to be accessed by families headed up by men with children.

MR HARGREAVES: I just wanted to be a little more specific. I recognise that families use those services but I am concerned about men who have left the family home, or who have had it sold out from under them, and there is no female on the scene. As I understand it, the numbers are not screamingly large, but they are significant. I suggest to you that one homeless man with kids is one too many. Do you have a specific approach to that problem?

Mr Wood: That can be said of all areas. We could go through each of the categories that Bronwen has referred to and say that one homeless person is one too many. There has been a significant allocation of new funds. It will still be a squeeze and we will still not

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be able to cater for every demand, but we will be working through it and doing our very best.

Ms Lambert: As chair of the Homelessness Group, the complexity of the issue has really impacted on me. We need to do a number of things and we need to prioritise carefully. Certainly, the evidence we have shows that we need to pay a lot more attention to single men and to single men and their families. We are committed to doing that. We will release a strategy this year. We have the money to underpin it and we will be doing some things with it. Another thing that we intend to do is to go to homeless people who have been experiencing these services and ask them to give us information about what they would like. Sometimes I am quite daunted by the complexity of the issue.

MR HARGREAVES: I wanted to get your view on another issue, but I do not know really know—it is one of those conundrums—into which portfolio it fits. I refer to young people being brought before the courts. Because they have nowhere to go, each year about 90 young people, or thereabouts, end up in Quamby for the night. Does anyone in your group of portfolios focus on it, or do we need to search elsewhere?

Ms Overton-Clarke: The other component of homelessness funding will be used to look at youth night shelter work and to explore other alternatives and options. The youth SAAP sector works closely with youth justice, but we recognise what you say. Often they end up back in Quamby. So part of the work is to look at different models and to identify what might work for these complex cases.

MR HARGREAVES: What sort of time frame do you have on that research? You are looking into it. How long will it take?

Ms Overton-Clarke: As Sandra was saying, our draft homelessness strategy will be underpinned by some specific actions, accountabilities and time lines, which will be prepared by September. We will use the two months after that to verify with the community that these actions are the right sorts of actions to take. So the final strategy will be ready by the end of the year. But before that we will be working in parallel to ensure that the money gets out the door. Whilst the strategy is underpinned by specific actions, the funds that have been allocated will also be spent.

MR HARGREAVES: Would I be correct in saying that, predominantly, the funds that are available now are in two streams? The first stream of funds will provide relief and support for people whose disasters we are trying to address, while struggling with pressures. At the same time, a significant amount of money has been allocated to enable us to identify where we are going, given the size of this problem.

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is right. We are committed to working with all sectors and with existing organisations that we fund. Next financial year we will allocate \$4.2 million to youth SAAP. In addition to working in partnership with the community and with these organisations in relation to this strategy, we have made it clear that we want to work with them to identify new models. So we are committed to working with them on this.

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Ms Lambert: You also mentioned women. We have been talking to Toora about some of the models that are being used in Victoria. Victoria is not using the refuge model; it is using interesting models in which people are placed and they are helped to sustain tenancies. We are working as closely as we can with the private sector to identify new models. We also funded the Outreach project, which Bronwen can tell you more about. We continue funding the Access, Resources and Support for the SAAP Communities project—a pilot project. Bronwen might want to mention how that one operates.

Ms Overton-Clarke: The ARSSC project, which is auspiced by Toora at the moment, will be able to be assured of ongoing funding because of the funds that we are receiving. We are not saying at this point that it will be with Toora in the long term; we have to examine that. Last year, while working with women with complex needs, it grew from a project that was looking specifically at mental health issues. We now recognise that, because of the complexity of issues, it covers a broader spectrum. These people work with individual refuge workers to ensure that they deal with women appropriately.

MR HARGREAVES: I will continue to pursue this matter because it is something that came out of our reports. One of the issues that were brought to the attention of our committee—I am not sure of the size of the problem—is the housing needs of people suffering from elder abuse. Take, for example, an elderly couple, one of whom is being abused by a younger person who is being housed by that couple, and they both leave. As I understand it, we have accommodation for women and for men but we do not have any accommodation for, say, an elderly couple that decides to flee from domestic violence. Is it part of your brief to deal with that issue?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes. The community services area is working closely with housing. An eight-unit older women's boarding house, which will be established at Chapman, will be operational at the end of 2003. Part of its mandate is to deal with family breakdown, including elder abuse.

MS DUNDAS: Has a decision been made on the future of Currong apartments?

Mr Wood: No, but it is getting close. A survey was conducted—which I think must be almost completed—to establish the views of tenant and to determine what they would like to see happen. I have not yet had the results of that survey. When I have that result I will weigh it up with all the other data I have received and a decision will be forthcoming.

MS DUNDAS: When did that survey commence?

Mr Wood: About two months ago—something of that order.

MS DUNDAS: When you appeared before the estimates committee in July last year I asked the same question. You said then that a comprehensive study was under way. Do you have the results of that study? Has it been completed? If it was not a study, what was it?

Mr Wood: Relying on my memory, we conducted a number of physical studies to establish what was needed to fix up the building. I assume that is the study to which you were referring. That work was done quite a while ago.

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MS DUNDAS: So that comprehensive study has been completed. Are the results available?

Mr Wood: From memory, one of the tenants FOIed that material and it was released in that way.

MS DUNDAS: When you say that it will be completed soon, what do you mean?

Mr Wood: About nine months or a year ago I recall saying that a decision would be made within six months. We have gone beyond that. I would say that soon means that it will not be long. I will get myself into trouble if I get too descriptive. I will not put a date on it. Basically, there is no data left to collect and no more views to be sought. It is a matter of me getting a consolidated amount of material from officers and sitting down and looking at it.

Mr Hutchison: I entirely support the minister's views.

MS DUNDAS: Has any of the money in the Treasurer's Advance or the money allocated in last year's budget for fire safety upgrades in major units been expended on the Currong apartments? Do you plan to spend any money on the Currong apartments?

Mr Wood: Not much money has been spent on the Currong apartments for a long time. Was there some emergency immediate work?

Mr Hutchison: The Currong apartments, like all apartment blocks, have been maintained in the fire safety regime. We have extensive maintenance of those regimes to ensure that they remain safe. In relation to your specific question about the \$10 million for fire safety in multiunit sites—

MS DUNDAS: Plus general money that was in the budget as opposed to just the Treasurer's Advance. From memory, it ended up being \$16 million.

Mr Hutchison: Yes, but that was over two years. ACT Housing recognised at the beginning the complexity of these issues and how we had to engage expert advice to provide the appropriate response to enhancing fire safety. We expect to spend \$2.1 million this financial year.

MS DUNDAS: So by June 2003?

Mr Hutchison: Yes, by June 2003.

Mr Wood: That is across a range of properties.

Mr Hutchison: Yes. We have scope work for approximately \$9 million and we would expect that work to be completed by the end of next financial year. While that work is being carried out we will be scoping the balance, which is about \$4 million. All up we originally thought that about \$16 million would be the overall cost. It depends on decisions like Currong as to whether that figure will be realised.

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MS DUNDAS: So the answer to my question is that none of that \$16 million has been spent at Currong apartments?

Mr Hutchison: Yes.

THE CHAIR: How much of the \$16 million all up has been spent? Will it be only \$2.1 million by the end of this financial year?

Mr Hutchison: Yes. We never intended to spend the second \$6 million until the next financial year anyway because we had that \$10 million. So a lot of the work has been done is on scoping, getting technical advice and engaging appropriate fire services to determine the best enhancements for fire safety.

MRS CROSS: Why was \$10 million put into housing the TA if it was not going to be used?

Mr Hutchison: It is being used.

MRS CROSS: You just said it was there to scope, or you were going to determine what it was going to be used for.

Mr Wood: If we go back to our discussion about the purpose of the Treasurer's Advance I will restate those arguments if you wish.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hutchison just said that they never intended to spend that money in this financial year.

Mr Wood: No, it was always made quite clear that it was a two-year program.

MRS CROSS: Why did you then move money over to the Treasurer's Advance?

Mr Wood: Let us go back to the discussion that you had, mostly with the Treasurer, about the use of the Treasurer's Advance. I will repeat the words that he has given you at various times.

THE CHAIR: I am sure that you would repeat those words, Mr Wood. I understand that the \$10 million was taken out of the Treasurer's Advance initially for social housing. That then changed and it was to be used for fire safety. Neither of those issues was urgent or unexpected, and neither of them should have been unknown to cabinet, given that you had put in cab subs for about \$2 million early in the process.

Mr Wood: You have already picked up on what become urgent—something that has been mentioned by the Treasurer. In view of the reports and legal comments that we got we needed to be absolutely clear that we were committed to attending to a problem that had been pointed out to us. That was the reason that mechanism was used.

THE CHAIR: The Under Treasurer contradicts that in his letter of 4 June, in which he states that Housing first needs to put together its management plan and fund upgrades from funds that it had at that time.

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Mr Wood: The advice that I received from the chief of my department at that time was that a serious problem had been identified, through the legal advice, and we needed to act. That was when I became interested. That was, and it remains, the background to it.

THE CHAIR: When did the \$10 million Treasurer's Advance change from social housing money into fire safety money?

Mr Wood: I would have to look at what Ted told you about that.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I am asking you what you understood the change to be; not what the Treasurer's understanding is.

Mr Wood: At the time all this was happening I did not see the Under Treasurer's advice. It might have been what you read out earlier. I saw the other advice and that is what I was focused on.

THE CHAIR: The Under Treasurer's advice is the same advice.

Mr Wood: The advice that I saw stated that the liability might well change, that we needed to act and that we needed a commitment. We needed to know, for a number of reasons, that the government was able and willing to respond, and we needed a commitment in the budget.

THE CHAIR: That is not exactly what the legal advice states. The legal advice states that there is no compulsion to comply with the BCA. There may be a moral obligation to do so, but there is actually no legal compulsion to comply with the BCA. In fact, what you needed to do to show good faith was to set up the management plan which, of course, is the advice of the Under Treasurer on 4 June.

Mr Wood: I read it differently.

THE CHAIR: Why is it then that as late as 12 June Treasury is still planning to give half the \$10 million to community housing?

Mr Wood: That is going back a year now. You can ask Ted that question.

THE CHAIR: No, Minister, we are asking you.

Mr Wood: I am responding to the situation as I see it. That is the way that I will respond.

THE CHAIR: Minister, the email from Treasury to Housing quite clearly states how you are going to expend the \$10 million and what proportion is going to community housing. The original intention was for half that money to go to community housing. What changed? Why did community housing not get that money? Why was the money diverted from a use for which you would not reasonably use the Treasurer's Advance—for example, from building more houses, which is certainly not unexpected because we all know the dilemma there, to fire safety. Was it just that a better excuse came up?

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Mr Wood: I would want to go back and look at the documents. As far as I am concerned I announced at some stage—and I do not know the date right now—that the \$10 million was going to fire safety, which was certainly what I had established as being urgent. I announced on 21 June that it was for fire safety.

THE CHAIR: As late as 12 June—

Mr Wood: You are following two strands. Let me tell you about my strand.

THE CHAIR: All right, when did it change? When did the \$10 million Treasurer's Advance change from being money for social housing to money for fire safety?

Mr Wood: You say that that is the case. I was not interested in some aspects. My interest was in fire safety and I stuck to that line.

THE CHAIR: Surely you were the minister who received \$10 million for social housing. Were you not interested in social housing?

Mr Wood: I received money when it was in the budget.

THE CHAIR: According to documents that we received under FOI you received that money on or about 23 May for social housing. When did it change from money for social housing to money to fire safety, and why?

Mr Wood: It stayed in my mind as fire safety.

THE CHAIR: So you have no knowledge of the fact that you were receiving money for social housing?

Mr Wood: I was focused on all sorts of housing. In this instance I was focused on fire safety.

THE CHAIR: You received a \$10 million bonus for social housing, to build more houses. You berated me for many years for not building more houses, but you got \$10 million to build more houses and you have no recollection of it at all?

Mr Wood: I will go round in the same circle. I was focused on fire safety, on what ultimately finished up in the budget and what I said at the time.

THE CHAIR: Minister, you are avoiding the question. When did it change from social housing to fire safety?

Mr Wood: I am not responding to that question.

THE CHAIR: Unfortunately, Minister, you are obliged to respond to that question.

Mr Wood: I will go back and look at my documents because I do not have times and dates in my head. I have nothing more to tell you other than the statements I have already made. I will see whether my records can tell me anything.

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MRS DUNNE: There is a possibility that Mr Wood will have to be recalled next week to finish what we do not finish this week.

THE CHAIR: There certainly is.

MRS DUNNE: Could we ask the minister to bring those documents to the committee hearing next week so that we can explore this issue?

Mr Wood: I think you have all the documents. So far as I know they all came out through FOI.

MRS DUNNE: The estimates committee does not have those documents.

THE CHAIR: But you now continue to deny that you have any knowledge of them.

MRS DUNNE: I think we would like to see those documents and obtain an exposition of them.

Mr Wood: I will again give you what you received through the FOI process. That is not a problem.

THE CHAIR: Did you receive \$10 million for social housing through the budget process?

Mr Wood: My receipts and all my statements refer to fire safety, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: As minister for housing you have no recollection of receiving \$10 million for new houses for ACT housing tenants?

Mr Wood: We can go round in circles and say the same thing six times over.

THE CHAIR: It would be much easier if you answered the question, Minister.

Mr Wood: I will bring back all the documents, Mr Smyth.

THE CHAIR: All right. We will take up this issue next week.

MRS CROSS: I am fairly new to this process and I do not have a bone to pick with you, Minister. For me this is simply a straightforward process.

Mr Wood: As it is for me.

MRS CROSS: My understanding is that, when someone gets money from the Treasurer's Advance, it is for things that are urgent, is that correct?

Mr Wood: Yes, it is for things that are unexpected.

MRS CROSS: A significant amount of money like that coming out of the Treasurer's Advance is not something that would not be noticed; it is a lot of money. If that money has been allocated for fire safety and/or community housing why do you not know about

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it without having to refer to documents? I do not understand that. That is a significant amount of money.

Mr Wood: Let me repeat the answer that I have given you on two or three occasions.

THE CHAIR: The committee notes that you refuse to answer the question.

Mr Wood: I am not refusing to answer the question.

MRS CROSS: Are you taking that question on notice, Minister?

Mr Wood: I have indicated that I will again table all the papers in the FOI documents.

MRS DUNNE: You also said that you would have to refer to your records. Next week I would like you to come back with your records.

Mr Wood: I do not know what they will be; they will probably be the same records that you have.

THE CHAIR: Let us see. Ms Dundas has a final question.

MR HARGREAVES: At the risk of being a tad rude, I wish to ask a question about the fire safety issue. We have been down this line so often that the trains are colliding. In light of Mrs Cross' question about access to the Treasurer's Advance, it is my understanding that anything requiring access to the Treasurer's Advance needs to be unexpected and/or urgent. Was the fire safety issue for public housing tenants in those flats of sufficient urgency to warrant that provision?

Mr Wood: That was the comment I made earlier. Once again, on receipt of the letter I believe that circumstances changed.

MRS CROSS: But it was not used.

MR HARGREAVES: The Treasurer's Advance is available for just that sort of thing.

Mr Wood: Yes.

Ms Lambert: I wish to comment on the statement that the money was not spent. You would appreciate that I am not aware of circumstances before the end of June, but I am aware of circumstances since June. My understanding and clear advice is that, when you need to undertake fire safety requirements, you have to go through quite a complex process. You cannot just barge into all the units, in particular, the multi-units, and put in alarms and so on. You have to go through quite a complex process. That scoping has been done and we are expecting to expend that money in the two-year time frame that we were given.

MRS CROSS: Do you not get money from the Treasurer's Advance after you have done scoping rather than before?

Ms Lambert: No.

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MRS CROSS: Why not?

Ms Lambert: Because, as Mr Hargreaves just said, it is for unexpected expenditure. There was a clear instruction to us to make sure that we did a good scoping of and planning for the work.

THE CHAIR: Ms Lambert, is it not true, though, that the TA is for expenditure in the year in which it is given?

Ms Lambert: I will not comment on that at this point.

Mr Wood: I do not know. It is for unexpected items.

THE CHAIR: Is it not for the payment of bills that become due in the year for which the TA is issued?

Mr Wood: You had this long discussion with the Treasurer.

THE CHAIR: We are now having it with you, Mr Wood.

Mr Wood: I will assert that, since that money was not spent in the year it was allocated, it does not have to be spent. You might go back to the manuals, but the fact is that it was not spent.

THE CHAIR: That might be the fact, but it might also be why the Auditor-General is calling it a misuse and why he is stating it is possibly illegal. You are now not telling us your side of the story because you did not refresh your memory before you came to the committee.

Mr Wood: My side of the story is very simple. It is my understanding that all the discussions between officers and Treasury were about fire safety. That is my understanding of it.

THE CHAIR: So you have no memory whatsoever of social housing?

Mr Wood: It came as a surprise to officers when the Under Treasurer's comments related to social housing, because that did not appear to be a part of the discussions that they had been having.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hutchison, are you aware that you had received \$10 million worth of social housing money from the Treasurer's Advance?

Dr Adrian: Perhaps I can answer that question. Extensive discussions, which were held over a number of months regarding housing issues, included issues about social housing, public housing in general and fire safety. The arguments that we put forward resulted in Treasury making a decision regarding the \$10 million Treasurer's Advance. We were always of the view that the most urgent priority was the fire safety issue.

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THE CHAIR: Were you in the department when these negotiations were being undertaken, Dr Adrian?

Dr Adrian: Yes, I was.

Mr Wood: He was in a different department.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hutchison, as the head of housing were you aware that you had received \$10 million for social housing, at least half of which was to go to community housing?

Mr Hutchison: The advice that I got was similar to the advice that Dr Adrian got. We sought funds for fire safety. We were advised that we were to get \$10 million by way of the Treasurer's Advance. Our understanding was that it was for fire safety.

THE CHAIR: The emails that I have from DUS, on behalf of housing, clearly indicate that the money could not be spent in the year. That advice caused the same problem that it had caused the previous year; the money could not be expended in the year. That still gets back to this point: You are saying you were not aware that the money had been allocated for social housing?

Dr Adrian: We were aware, through correspondence, of the view expressed by the Under Treasurer. At the time there was a lot of discussion regarding the \$10 million and the bids that were being put forward in finalisation of the budget. It was our view that the \$10 million was a priority for fire safety. At the same time negotiations were going on regarding other issues in public housing and in the broader context of social housing.

Mr Wood: That is the view that came through to me, and that is what I have been saying all morning.

MRS DUNNE: Dr Adrian, what is your understanding of the Treasurer's Advance? When will a decision be made?

Dr Adrian: It is not something on which I would wish to comment. That issue should be addressed either to the minister or to Treasury. The decision on the Treasurer's Advance is really one for the Treasurer.

MR HARGREAVES: I wish to ask Mr Hubbard, chief financial officer, a question about the Treasurer's Advance.

Mr Wood: Bear in mind the fact that Mr Hubbard was not around at that time.

MR HARGREAVES: I hope somebody in Mr Hubbard's position understands this question, which is academic. When access is given to the Treasurer's Advance, a cheque is not drawn up, handed to a department and that money then has to be given back. In a sense, it is a line of credit, part of which you would expend if you needed to expend it, and part of which remains where it is.

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Mr Hubbard: Yes, that is pretty accurate. We draw down any funds appropriated fortnightly. A lot of traffic that goes between Treasury and the department is about balancing up the immediate working capital needs of the department and determining how they reflect against the entire appropriation. So at any one time we do not have more than we expect to be able to expend in a fortnight or a month and we draw down those funds on a regular basis.

MR HARGREAVES: So access to the Treasurer's Advance enables the provision of funding for an urgent and unexpected need. If that urgency either ameliorates or dissipates you would not need access to that fund. Does that seem to be the case in this instance?

Mr Hubbard: I am not 100 per cent sure how the funds were transferred and what the discussion around need was at the time. It varies slightly in relation to housing. Money appropriated to housing actually goes to housing because it is a PTE. Those enterprises actually have funds available from the start of the year, which is when the money is appropriated. So it is a little different.

MR HARGREAVES: In this instance it was from the Treasurer's Advance. However, that was not the case, was it? The money was actually put into a contingency fund for fire safety.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, it was appropriated for a specific issue and it could only be spent on that issue.

MS DUNDAS: Yesterday we were having discussions with the Treasurer about the return investment coming out of the home loan portfolio money. He said that he was discussing with you and the department putting that investment into housing. Do you have any comment on those discussions?

Mr Wood: That is right; we are having those discussions.

MS DUNDAS: When do you think they will be completed?

Mr Wood: I do not think the discussions necessarily will be lengthy. It is a matter of looking at what is economically responsible, determining what might be accessible without causing any difficulty to the fund, deciding what that amount is and deciding what might be done with it.

MS DUNDAS: What do you think that money should be spent on?

Mr Wood: As you could imagine, I have some ideas but, at this stage, I want to keep those options open. I have a lot of talking to do with Mr Quinlan.

MS DUNDAS: Do you expect that money to be expended this financial year or in the next budget?

Mr Wood: I cannot say that yet.

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MS DUNDAS: I note that one of the highlights for your department in the year 2003-04 will be the implementation of the government's response to the review of therapy services for school students with a disability. How is your department working with DECS on that?

Mr Wood: There is quite a deal of activity. I think that connection is done or it close to being done.

Ms Lambert: Yes, it is close to being done. I will ask Pauline Brown to talk to you about the detail of that. Pauline is the senior manager of the combined therapy services for children and adolescents. One of the things we will be able to address by combining the multidisciplinary team with the Child Health and Development Service will be to focus a bit more on the high school years. I will let Pauline give you more detail about that.

Ms Brown: At the moment I am manager of the Child Health and Development Service, which on 1 July is to be called Therapy ACT.

Mr Wood: TACT.

Ms Brown: Yes, TACT. I ask Ms Dundas to repeat her question.

MS DUNDAS: I was asking about the implementation of the government's response to the review of therapy services for school students with a disability, which is what the minister for education has been talking about. How is that being run across the departments?

Ms Brown: The therapy services to be provided to students with disabilities will be provided through this new service that we are putting in place in Disability, Housing and Community Services. We have a strong link with people in education in delivering those services. We meet regularly with people in the special needs area to plan those services and to look at various issues that need to be addressed along the way.

MS DUNDAS: Taking into account the responsibility of each of the departments after that split and the restructure last year, is there any need to revisit that split, possibly move CHADS, or look at how the departments are set out?

Ms Lambert: It is really a matter for the government to determine. My view would be—

MS DUNDAS: I am asking what is the government's view, Ms Lambert.

Ms Lambert: I know. One of the advantages of having the two teams together is that you get a group of professionals working together. That is a really significant advantage of having the two therapy services together. Pauline and her service have developed a close relationship with teachers. You will see in our performance measures, at which we had a good look this year—a commitment we made to you at last year's estimates committees—that we measured teacher satisfaction in a more effective way than we have done in the past. So we have a formal measure for judging how well we have done in that area.

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Dr Adrian: One of the themes in the creation of the new therapy service—Therapy ACT—is to establish the provision of service essentially from birth through to the end of life. It might be worth Pauline just taking us through that. A mixture of services is provided in the early years prior to school, through the school years and hopefully into some form of employment, and then through the rest of life. The whole idea is to have those therapists, as a group, working together in particular areas—be they schools or other areas such as employment—right through the life of the individual.

MS DUNDAS: The therapy that is being provided through schools is being managed by DECS, not VINE.

Ms Lambert: No, it is being managed by the new department.

MRS DUNNE: Can you give a brief summary of the relationship between your organisation and CHADS?

Ms Brown: At present I am manager of CHADS. The therapy component of CHADS transferred into the new department of Disability, Housing and Community Services on 1 July last year. The early intervention education programs that were previously part of CHADS remain with the department of education and are now called the early intervention program in the Children Services Branch.

MRS BURKE: I indicate to the committee that I have asked several questions to which I have not yet received answers. I understand that some of the questions I asked were restrictive. If I get an opportunity I will be asking a further line of questions next week.

Mr Wood: I think there are a number of questions.

MRS BURKE: Yes, I understand that, but I have not yet received any answers.

Mr Wood: I think the answers are on their way.

MRS BURKE: My question follows a question Ms Dundas asked earlier about Currong apartments. This is a distressing and destabilising time for people. I appreciate the fact that you are undertaking a survey. Can the minister confirm or deny that tenants were given a scratchie to encourage them to return their survey form?

Mr Wood: There might have been something like that. We were anxious to get every tenant to respond.

Mr Hutchison: Yes, there was an inducement for them to participate.

MRS BURKE: I am alarmed and distressed about that. I have had comments made to me by people who have an issue in relation to gambling. However, I will take up that issue at a later date. They found it quite challenging to receive that sort of thing as an enticement and inducement. However, there are some good capital works, such as Windeyer and other programs, around the place. That is good to see. But noticeable by its absence is Currong. What is the future of Currong, Minister?

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Mr Wood: My response is the same as my response to an earlier question that was asked by Ms Dundas. We are close to making a decision about it.

MRS BURKE: I did not hear your answer. How far are we from getting that survey so that people can get some closure on this?

Mr Wood: I state again that we are not very far from getting that survey. I did not mention a specific date. I said that all the survey results have probably been collated, that we have all the technical and cost data and that it is now a matter of getting one consolidated brief on it and discussing it. That matter will go to cabinet, which is another process. That is the sort of time frame.

MRS BURKE: Minister, do you have some timeline? As minister you are directing this.

Mr Wood: I repeat what I said earlier. Nine months or so ago I said that it would take six months.

MRS BURKE: Yes, but do you have a time now? Where do you stand on this issue now? People need to know and your department needs to be able to act on your advice.

Mr Wood: If you want to push I would say by 30 December this year. Of course, it will be much sooner than that.

MRS BURKE: That is good. I am sure that tenants will be pleased to hear that. I turn now to the government's renewed interest in addressing unsavoury criminal activities and unruly and unwelcome behaviour at a number of public housing locations. Can you direct me to that part of the budget paper that shows the government's commitment to resources for that aspect of the housing portfolio? I am sure that the joint operations we have seen working effectively—and I welcome them—have impacted on the ACT Housing administration. Where in the budget have those figures been included?

Mr Wood: I dispute your use of the words “renewed interest”.

MRS BURKE: The government's continued interest.

Mr Wood: There are a number of aspects to this question. ACT Housing has a strong commitment to, and responsibility for, its tenants. Lawlessness really is a police matter. However, on many occasions other government agencies are called in. ACT Housing is not an all-embracing entity that provides a range of health and welfare services and all those sorts of things, so all government agencies become involved. In response to your question about what ACT Housing would do, you just have to take into account the various programs, the number of housing managers, the role of specialist housing managers and the funding for the community linkages program.

MRS BURKE: Do you have an allocation for resources anywhere in the budget papers?

Mr Wood: There is an allocation for the community linkages program.

MRS BURKE: I am referring to an all-up income. I am happy to take that question on notice.

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Mr Wood: I do not think there is a specific budget allocation for managing difficult circumstances in buildings. There is no specific budget allocation for that.

MRS BURKE: You are alluding to programs that have been implemented to alleviate the problem. I was wondering what resources have been allocated.

Mr Wood: It is part of the work of ACT Housing.

Ms Lambert: The community linkages program has a focus on safety and on other things, such as managing finances and so on. It is an issue to which we are directing a lot of attention at the moment. We are looking at doing a few things that will be part of our general administrative program. We can take on notice your question relating to the separation of dollars. Helen Fletcher, director of public housing, is responsible for examining what we are doing at the moment.

MRS BURKE: That would be helpful.

Ms Lambert: I am also trying to work more closely with Commissioner Murray to establish better ways of improving our relationship with the police force so that we can work in unison with them. I am particularly interested in having a good look at some of the tenant participation models that are operating in other jurisdictions and restarting a process that was discontinued several years ago. I would like to have another look at that. That would give tenants some security when raising issues rather than that being done, if you like, by individuals.

MR HARGREAVES: Does ACT Housing have any greater legal responsibility to its tenants than it has to private real estate companies?

Mr Wood: There is a legal responsibility in the contract between ACT Housing and its tenants.

Ms Lambert: Looking at our community service responsibilities in a whole-of-department sense, ACT Housing, which has the responsibilities of a landlord, has to operate within the law. There are other things we can do in relation to our structure—which, if you like, is more about inclusion and participation—which might lead to some other outcomes. I do not denigrate what has happened to date; I think some terrific work has been done in the housing complexes, in particular through the community linkages program.

MR HARGREAVES: What you are doing is providing more—

THE CHAIR: Mr Hargreaves, come to order please.

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Chairman, I am seeking an answer to the question I just asked. My question has not been answered.

THE CHAIR: I am simply asking you to direct your remarks through the Chair. You interrupted Mrs Burke's line of thought.

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MR HARGREAVES: The question Mrs Burke asked has not been fully answered. That is why I wanted an extension.

MRS BURKE: You can explore that matter later.

THE CHAIR: Let Mrs Burke finish her questions.

MR HARGREAVES: My question relates to the same issue.

THE CHAIR: Let Mrs Burke complete her questions.

MRS BURKE: Minister, what is now happening to tenants in Strathgordon Court as a result of the programs that you are developing—an issue that been in the news recently? Are those tenants continuing to enjoy the peace and quiet of their homes under their tenancy agreements?

Mr Wood: The program continues, as we broadly outlined.

MRS BURKE: What would that program be? Can you flesh it out a bit for us?

Mr Wood: Because some concerns were expressed ACT Housing sent housing managers out there and the police were there the other day on a routine issue.

MRS BURKE: Yes, I saw that, which is good. I was there when the police were monitoring it, so that is good.

Mr Wood: That is routine. Those things happen in other complexes as well.

Ms Lambert: Housing managers are doing a lot of intensive work at the moment in Strathgordon Court. They are there now.

MRS BURKE: That is good. I am glad that there is that activity. The minister would be aware that I had suggested that ACT Police and ACT Housing should work together. You have a prime opportunity if you are wearing two hats. We are in a unique situation here, so that is good.

Mr Wood: There is nothing new in those bodies working together.

MRS BURKE: No, but it is only the second time since self-government that a minister has held both the police and housing portfolios. That is unique for you and us at this time.

Ms Lambert: We need to seek to maximise that.

MRS BURKE: We do, that is absolutely right. Just one other issue is a challenge to me—and I am sure Ms Tucker will refer later to some of these questions—that is, affordable housing. Excluding people with a disability and people with other special and complex needs, can the minister advise the committee as to the tenure of current tenants in ACT Housing, giving us a breakdown of people who have been tenants for up to five

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years, five to 10 years, 10 to 25 years, and over 20 years? I appreciate that you might have to take that question on notice.

I asked this question because in the estimates committee hearings last year a statement was made to the effect that, as a result of a number of residents staying in public housing—some of them up to 20 years and a lot around the sort of five-year mark—those statistics feed into our data collection and distort it disproportionately. What has been done, if anything, to give those figures a more useful meaning? Are we working on security of tenure? How long will we support these people in our public housing sector when people at the lower end of the market are crying out?

Mr Wood: That issue has been a large part of the debate. This government decided that security of tenure would hold. When other people were ministers I said in debates in the Assembly that it was 6½ of one and 7½ of another.

MRS BURKE: Have you revisited that issue as a result of the pressures that have been exerted on housing?

Mr Wood: I have revisited it and we have offered security of tenure. That is the decision that we have taken.

MRS BURKE: How many people have been in public housing for a period of more than 10 years?

Mr Wood: A very large percentage. The number would be considerable. A more reasonable figure to pull out would be the number of new tenants each year so you can see the amount of change that is occurring. Someone might have that figure. Roughly, the figure is 600 or 700.

Mr Hutchison: We anticipate 900 new tenants next year.

MRS BURKE: Yes, I noticed that. What mechanisms are in place to ensure that we have a smoother flow through our system? How long do we continue to support people? How is that judged? Obviously, it is based on income; we get them to pay and they creep up as their circumstances change. But my great concern is the affordable housing issue in the ACT now. What new initiatives are there, or what energy has been put into trying to move people through our system? Have you revisited this issue? Perhaps those people could move into a wider market. I realise that that is an issue. I just wonder whether you could comment on it.

Mr Wood: That is an issue of principle. We have said that, if someone wants to stay in a house forever, he or she may do so. Obviously there are questions relating to appropriateness, the size of the house, diminishing family numbers, and all sorts of other issues. It has been proposed at various times that we look at the rent that is being charged and, if people are well able to afford rents in the private rental market, something could be done. That proposal, which has been floated, has never been taken up. Nothing is under consideration at the moment in relation to that issue.

MRS BURKE: Are you revisiting that issue again?

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Mr Wood: No, not at the moment.

MRS BURKE: You do not think there is a need to revisit that issue, given the crisis?

Mr Wood: We have in place a process that works in some respects. We charge market rents, although that is then discounted because people should not have to pay more than a quarter of their incomes on rent. Every time that rents go up you have an opportunity to carry some cases. Given the continuing and rapid rise in house prices and rents, a lot of people will be unhappy when rents go up again. They are—and this is something of a contradiction—full rent-paying people, even though their rents are still discounted in a sense, and they would complain.

MRS BURKE: What mechanism is in place to help those people move forward?

Mr Wood: The statistics show that, even when people are unhappy about having to pay a higher rent, they still do not move on.

Mr Hutchison: I wish to add to the minister's response. There are incentives for people who are in a position to buy their own home. The department facilitates that and enables them to buy their own home. Concessions are made for stamp duty and for improvement.

MRS BURKE: I understand that about 70 are moving on this year?

Mr Hutchison: Yes, that is right. In addition, the normal turnover of vacant properties—the churn factor—is about 10 per cent.

MRS CROSS: Minister, my first of three questions, which are linked to Mrs Burke's question, relates to page 26 of BP3. ACT Housing improved its budgeted 2002-03 result by \$13 million. The reason given is:

... mainly as a result of recognising extraordinary revenue of \$11.8m in the 2002-03 estimated outcome which represents the estimated insurance payments for cleanup and replacement of ACT Housing's properties destroyed and damaged in the January 2003 bushfire.

The government announced an extra \$13 million for housing in the budget. Is this not housing money, not new government money?

Mr Wood: What page are you referring to?

MRS CROSS: I am referring to page 26 of Budget Paper 3, ACT Housing operating result. My concern is that there appears to be a misrepresentation of this money. The \$13 million was actually housing money; it is not a new \$13 million allocation from the government. I am concerned about the apparent lack of honesty on the part of the government. The government promised that it would be open and accountable.

Mr Wood: Experience tells me that this is an accounting procedure. When you see figures and wonder about them it is usually because of the way in which the accounting is done.

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MRS CROSS: Are you saying that the \$13 million was actually housing money—which is what it appears to be—rather than a separate government allocation of \$13 million?

Mr Wood: No, I am asking the accountants to provide a response.

MRS CROSS: Do you not know, Minister? This is your department.

Mr Wood: No I do not.

MRS CROSS: Why?

Mr Wood: I do not.

MRS CROSS: But this is your department.

Mr Wood: This is bookkeeping.

MRS CROSS: Minister, \$13 million is a lot of money. Why do you not know the answer to my question? This is a significant amount of money. It concerns me greatly—a rookie in this Assembly—when a minister who has been in this place for 10 to 12 years tells me that he does not know the answer to my question and that he has to refer it to the accountant.

Mr Wood: You may be concerned, but when it comes to reading the way in which accounts are done, members with more experience—

MRS CROSS: There is a perception of misrepresentation here.

Mr Wood: No, I am sure it is not misrepresentation; I am sure it is all in the accounting treatment.

MRS CROSS: Mr Hubbard, did you want to answer this question, given the fact that the minister cannot?

Mr Hubbard: The minister is right; it is an accounting treatment. The majority of that money is insurance revenue expected for the replacement of houses that were lost during the bushfires and all bushfire expenses, which you will see throughout the department's accounts. Treasury asked us to recognise any costs that are directly attributable to the bushfires as extraordinary revenue and expense in the accounts so that it can calculate the total cost of the bushfires. So the majority of that \$30 million is in recognition of insurance moneys that will be paid to us via the ACT Insurance Authority.

MRS CROSS: So that amount of \$30 million is housing money that will come from those areas. It is not a new allocation above and beyond the amount that is allocated in this budget. The budget implies that this \$30 million comes from housing; it is not a new government allocation of \$30 million. So it is not above and beyond the \$30 million that is in housing. Is that correct?

Mr Hubbard: What you are saying is correct. It is not new money, in a sense, to build new capacity.

MRS CROSS: So there has been a misrepresentation of this allocation.

Mr Hubbard: No. This is actually pretty straightforward accounting speak.

Mr Wood: That is the way Treasury wanted it.

Dr Adrian: The statement in the budget papers is headed “Factors Influencing the Operating Result”. As Mr Hubbard outlined earlier, it is a quantum of money coming in this financial year. It is an extraordinary item because it is an estimated insurance payment as a result of the bushfires. So we are not trying to make out that it is a new initiative; it is just an extraordinary factor that is affecting the operating outcome for the end of this financial year.

MRS CROSS: That leads me to my next question. I congratulate the minister on the five lofty and strategic objectives on page 219 of BP4, which I think are quite good. They are as follows:

1. engaging and involving our clients
2. improving outcomes for our clients
3. building better community partnerships
4. serving and contributing to good governance
5. performing as a best practice organisation

It is nice that we occasionally have something good to say. However, the operating result shows a \$1.549 million deficit. Surely such a deficit is a strange aim in your second year of operation.

Mr Hubbard: That result comes about from the accounting presentation. We are shooting for a negative operating result, which is what it is. The target operating result is minus \$1.5 million out of \$72 million or, as you can see previously, it was out of \$100 million revenue coming into the department. We expected to make a loss of \$1 million. We show that as a loss because the figure for depreciation and amortisation is not funded.

While we run depreciation through our accounts for accrual purposes to give you an indication of what an asset is worth each year, we roll that through our accounts, but we are not funded by Treasury for that amount. So, while it is shown as an expense, we aim at a loss equal to the unfunded part of depreciation and also the unfunded part of employee liabilities, such as long service leave and things like that.

So in any year we are not out to show a profit; we are actually trying to spend moneys that we have been given for specific purposes. When we have not been provided with funds for a particular accounting item—in this case depreciation and unfunded liabilities—we can hit that as the target we are going for. Normally we would go for nought—we would try to hit a target of a balanced budget—and here we go for a target of a negative to equalise two accounting amounts.

MRS CROSS: That leads me to my final question, which relates to the operating result on page 221 of BP4 under the heading “Statement of Financial Performance”. I note that you were expecting an outcome of nearly \$3.5 million more than you budgeted for. So

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the figure increased from \$0.988 million to an outcome of \$2.418 million, which equals \$3.406 million. Surely you should have spent that sum of money on improving disability and community services instead of hoarding it, or were you not able to drive your department to deliver the goals that you had set?

Mr Wood: No, not at all. The department does not need driving. It has plenty of thrust and drive and it is a great department.

Ms Lambert: Thank you, Mrs Cross, for acknowledging our strategic imperatives. They were actually reached after a long period of consultation with staff, so they received endorsement through that process. We will work hard to meet those imperatives. Mr Hubbard will answer the detail of that part of your question that related to overspending. Essentially, when the department was created we were operating from, if you like, many different parts of Canberra.

Some of us remained within the Chief Minister's Department, so it was not until the end of last year that we were able to finalise our corporate structure. Some of those dollars relate to the fact that we did not get people on board as quickly as we would have liked, expending the money that had been allocated. That means that we were following the proper recruitment processes; we were filling a corporate structure that did not exist; and we were doing a whole range of things.

So a significant amount of that money was allocated to get the department established and to get it up and running. The government gave us money right from the beginning to establish the support structures that we needed in a new department. We did not have those structures. We had to bring three areas together and build that up. So it has taken us a while to expend that money. At the end of the financial year we will have to determine where some of our cost pressures are. There are some cost pressures that might impact on that, such as workers compensation.

Mr Hubbard: What you have pointed out is correct. We will not hit our target this year; we are approximately \$3 million over at this point in time. I refer you to page 224 of BP4 and to the first dot point under the heading "Statement of Financial Performance". We tried there to summarise the major movements in and out of the accounts over the year. As you can see, we got some increases due to the finalisation of some of the agreements the department has with the Commonwealth.

Another significant amount that moved around relates to the shifting of housing policy back to the housing department to cease the purchaser/provider relationship. The other thing was the build up of, and recruitment for, the department. We were given quite a bit of money to do that. The accounts on page 221 of BP4 show that the numbers that are drifting—that are not being met in a sense—are the employee expenses. They have gone up during the year, which represents an increase in wages.

MRS CROSS: A small amount, yes.

Mr Hubbard: That represents \$2 million of the \$3 million. The next figure is for administrative expenses of about \$1 million. So, essentially, there is a \$3 million difference around recruitment, starting up the department, getting a full complement of staff on board and payments for wage increases during that year.

MR HARGREAVES: I refer to page 221 of BP4 and to the operating result for 2002-03, which is a nice, positive \$2.4 million. Would I be correct in assuming that the major contributor to that increase of \$3.6 million is the recognition of the Holder Primary School property? If that amount had not been included the figure would probably be slightly reversed. You said something along those lines in the second dot point on page 225 of BP4:

... the increase of \$3.6m in the 2002-03 estimated outcome from the original budget relates to the recognition of the former Holder Primary School property.

If we took out that figure your books would be pretty square.

Mr Hubbard: No, that actually comes in as revenue during the year.

MR HARGREAVES: Total ordinary expenses are \$103 million against total ordinary revenue of \$105 million. That is where your \$2.4 million comes from. You have done a good job on Holder Primary School, which is why your books are pretty square?

Dr Adrian: That certainly contributed to the higher than projected revenue. So, to that extent, more money needed to be spent. The fact that that item came onto our books did contribute.

MR HARGREAVES: That means, overall, that you have a variation of only \$1 million or so out of \$105 million. Your variation is 1 per cent, if that, which is a fairly reasonable yardstick in accounting terms. If you come in plus or minus 1.5 per cent you are doing pretty well. You guys have done pretty well.

MS TUCKER: I refer to the proposal to remove the purchaser/provider model from housing. I am a little confused about how that works. I refer to page 236 of BP4, output class 1, Housing Policy and Planning, and to page 249 of BP4, Public Housing Services and Policy. What exactly is happening in relation to that restructure?

Dr Adrian: Page 236 of BP4, output 1.4 relates to Housing Policy and Planning

MS TUCKER: Is that in your department?

Dr Adrian: Yes, it is in the department. Housing Policy and Planning, which was part of the department books, was separate from ACT Housing in Urban Services and then in the initial transfer to the new department. As part of the integration process with the new department—and that shows up in these figures—Housing Policy and Planning was, in essence, transferred into the housing area instead of having the purchaser/provider split. That is why output on page 236 of BP4 only shows figures to the end of 2002-03. There are no targets for 2003-04. All those dollars are picked up under the new outputs which are shown for ACT Housing on pages 249 through to 251. Those are the new pages we distributed earlier in the session.

MS TUCKER: I have a general question on affordability and the housing budget this year. How much of the \$3 million that went to community housing is actually spent on housing and how much is spent on administration?

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Mr Wood: Are you talking about the 2002-03 financial year?

MS TUCKER: I do not know. It is the \$3 million that you said you are putting in this year for community housing.

Ms Lambert: We have had two amounts of \$3 million. This financial year and next financial year we have \$3 million as well.

MS TUCKER: I am talking about both. How much of that is actually going to housing?

Dr Adrian: You are referring to the full amount of the two lots of \$3 million. The \$3 million that we distributed this financial year went to the community housing sector. We are in consultation with the sector about how we might allocate the \$3 million for the upcoming year. The sector indicated an interest in revisiting the process that we used this year, but it is our intention that the full amount will go into the sector in some way.

MS TUCKER: I understand that it is going into the sector in some way.

Dr Adrian: There is no administrative component in it.

MS TUCKER: What do you mean when you say that it is going into the sector in some way?

Dr Adrian: In determining how we would provide the money in the current financial year we went through an extensive process of seeking expressions of interest from the sector. In the main they were items of a capital nature. So we were looking at community housing providers providing some form of community housing. For example, Billabong Aboriginal Corporation put up a proposal to purchase two new dwellings.

The proposal went through an assessment process and we paid the corporation some money to do additional feasibility work. A panel of three people assessed that proposal and we made a decision on the allocation. In that case there has been an allocation of \$430,000 to Billabong to purchase two dwellings and to provide community housing to the Aboriginal community.

MS TUCKER: I understand that you are using the money to buy houses, basically.

Dr Adrian: Yes.

MS TUCKER: But I am still not clear when you say that it will be used within the sector. What could the money be used for if it is not for houses?

Dr Adrian: No, that money would be used for capital items, for houses. We had a certain amount of money in the current year and we have another quantum of money in the upcoming year for feasibility work to be done. But all that feasibility work is around expanding the stock of community housing.

MS TUCKER: So is that within the \$3 million, or is it a separate amount?

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Dr Adrian: No, it is a separate amount. In last year's budget there was \$150,000 for feasibility work and there is a similar amount in this year's budget. That figure grows to \$400,000 in the two outyears.

MS TUCKER: I am still not quite clear. Are you telling me that both amounts of \$3 million will be spent on purchasing houses?

Dr Adrian: It will certainly be spent on capital. The arrangements could include the leasing of houses in some shape or form. I would not want to be categorical and state that it will be spent on purchasing houses.

MS TUCKER: But it is about houses.

Dr Adrian: Yes, it is capital for houses.

MS TUCKER: It is not general development of the community housing sector?

Dr Adrian: No, it is about expanding the stock of community housing. We have other money in the indigenous sector, for example, where we are currently in the process of assessing some applications for capacity building in that area. That money would not be used for capital purposes; it would be used to assist that sector in tenant management issues, financial management issues, skills training and so on.

MS TUCKER: Was that within the \$3 million?

Dr Adrian: No, it is a separate quantum of money altogether. It is \$350,000.

MS TUCKER: So it is separate, which is good.

Dr Adrian: It is a separate amount of \$350,000 in the current year's budget.

MS DUNDAS: So a total of \$6 million is being expended on community housing. Are those properties or tenancies reflected in the output figures?

Dr Adrian: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: So both amounts have already been factored in as targets and estimated outcomes for this financial year?

Dr Adrian: Yes.

MRS CROSS: On the housing issue, I note on page 231 of BP4 that \$29.853 million has been identified for the transfer of housing policy to ACT Housing. Could that \$30 million be spent on delivering housing services rather than being spent on creating yet more policy?

Mr Wood: That function, which is separate from ACT Housing, has been taken over and that amount of money has been put into ACT Housing.

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Dr Adrian: In the past, moneys that came to the ACT from the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement flowed into Housing Policy and Planning and were then allocated out. So it includes the Commonwealth component, which is actually spent on operations within ACT Housing.

MS TUCKER: I still have questions relating to the restructure of the department. What is the critical difference now? You say that you have removed the purchaser/provider model from housing. So you have moved a bunch of people who were in the policy department across to ACT Housing—the provider. ACT Housing is still a provider. How does that work in practice? How will it change the way in which ACT Housing works? In the past when I have had issues and I have raised them with ACT Housing it has said, “We are just the provider. Go away and talk to the landholders. We would do it differently, if we could.” What will this mean in practice?

Ms Lambert: That is precisely what it is about. It is about making the policy and program arms work more closely together. I will make a general comment about the whole department. This has not just happened in housing; it has happened also in the disability services area where we brought the program and the policy arms together. The point of that is to get the policymakers close to the deliverer so that you are working in tandem. It is also to determine whether you are focusing the appropriate amount of resources at the delivery end and making sure that you work hard to support that delivery end.

So, obviously, your focus in this department is human service delivery. It is about making sure that the back end of the department, which often is policy, data and all those things that contribute to good policy development, are working together and not in isolation. I will let Colin answer the more specific questions about housing. That is what it is about. I think Mrs Dunne said that it was so no-one could blame anyone else anymore, which is very true. When you are all together you have responsibility for the complete package; there is no division in it.

THE CHAIR: There goes the blame game.

Dr Adrian: There will be a core set of functions in the central area of the department. The department will have overarching responsibilities for disability, housing and community services. In addition to including policy and planning we will include programs such as those we were talking about earlier—refuges, supported accommodation programs and some outreach services.

That is the simplest way of explaining that the housing and community services area of the department will be looking at the social housing system, which will include public housing, community housing, specialist housing areas, such as Aboriginal housing, and both crisis and emergency supported accommodation. That will involve some asset management issues and a suite of tenant-associated services across the group. That area of the department, which will report to Bob, will have two executive positions underneath Bob and, as Sandra indicated earlier, one of those positions is new.

Mr Hutchison: The physical presence of officers in our housing office in Belconnen has led to some real advantages, for example, better liaison and a better understanding of the issues. Housing maintained its role of looking after community housing as well.

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However, the challenge for us was to ensure that we maintained community housing interests during this purchaser/provider model change.

I think there was a natural apprehension that the absorption of housing policy into the housing provider would result in a diminishment of focus on community housing needs. I think you are aware that the budget allocation of \$6 million and other things that we are doing demonstrate that that is not the case. We have to try to respond to that apprehension by delivering for the community housing sector.

MS TUCKER: I will be watching with interest.

Mr Hutchison: I know you will be.

Ms Lambert: One of the good things that happened as a result of the whole department being brought together was the work that was done on our disability homes. I think some really good work has been done to improve those properties and to ensure that they are part of one department and not separated out.

Dr Adrian: A number of the properties managed by Disability ACT, through the supported accommodation program, or managed by the community housing sector, are on ACT Housing's books. In the past they have been managed by totally separate areas, in some cases with quite peculiar relations between the owners of the asset and the area responsible for day-to-day operations. What we are proposing will change that or bring all that social housing stock and associated services into one area.

MS TUCKER: I have just one more question on this issue. When the purchaser/provider model was introduced five or six years ago the estimates committee was told that it was about outsourcing, having the capacity, without a conflict of interest, to look at other providers in the field and making judgments based on the outcomes. The language is the same no matter what model is being proposed and the quality of the outcomes are supported by the same claims. How would you respond to that issue now that those areas have been merged?

Mr Wood: The Gallop report recommended getting rid of purchaser/provider model. I made those comments in opposition. One of Mr Quinlan's reports, as chair of the PAC, examined critically this purchaser/provider issue. In a competitive field there are good aspects and there are negative aspects. We determined that there were too many negative aspects and we preferred a different system.

MS TUCKER: I understand that. I was one of the people who criticised the purchaser/provider split. I am interested to know how you will reassure people that you will not have that conflict of interest.

Mr Wood: We will do that by addressing issues of professional management and ensuring attention to detail. There is always pressure on departments to deliver efficient services. We have to front up to estimates committees at various times.

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MS TUCKER: Dr Adrian, you referred earlier to a group in the department that has overarching functions. If you are dealing with some kind of competitive tendering—and I do not know how you will manage it—you have community service providers in the area. Who in the department handles that?

Dr Adrian: To some extent that is part of the core function in the central area of the department. There certainly will be issues about benchmarking, service provision requirements and comparability across jurisdictions, a lot of which will be handled in the central area of the department.

MS TUCKER: Will there still be a purchasing section?

Dr Adrian: I would not call it a purchasing section. Most departments have some coordination mechanisms in the central or core parts of their departments. That is true of departments that ensure consistency and co-ordination across all parts of their portfolios. That is simply what it is. I would not give it the term “purchasing function”, but it certainly has some oversight responsibilities. That would be one way of wording it.

MRS BURKE: I have a general question about the SACS award that should probably be addressed to Mr Hubbard. Is this a flat figure? In the outyears how is the CPI factored into it?

Mr Wood: I will respond quickly on a political note, which I do not do too often. We put SACS into the budget, which did not happen in earlier years.

MRS BURKE: I think it is a good measure, Minister. I am not knocking that.

Mr Wood: After CPI increases groups have had to battle to get money.

MRS BURKE: I think I asked a fair question.

Mr Wood: I think I made a fair point.

THE CHAIR: Minister, you said that you put the SACS award in the budget. I notice that you have included \$480,000 in your initiatives on page 168 of Budget Paper 3, but that does not appear in the summary table on page 166. Is there a reason for that?

Mr Wood: It might be an omission.

Dr Adrian: It is not shown on page 166, but it is shown on page 168.

Mr Wood: It is there.

THE CHAIR: On page 147 the SACS award funding for the Department of Health and Community Care is part of the total capital initiatives. Does that mean that you are \$480,000 short?

Dr Adrian: No.

THE CHAIR: Where is it shown then?

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Dr Adrian: I think it is an omission on page 166. It is an initiative that is just not shown in the summary table on page 166.

THE CHAIR: When the summary of initiatives is transferred into the whole budget is that amount of \$480,000 carried across?

Dr Adrian: Yes, it is.

Mr Hubbard: It goes into the base budget for the department.

MRS BURKE: To get back to my original question, it was not a political question, Minister.

Mr Wood: I know, but I gave a political answer.

MRS BURKE: I asked a reasonable question, even though people behind you are looking aghast. It is a flat figure, so can you explain?

Mr Hubbard: It is. When the SACS award was granted the government allocated 2.5 per cent across all agencies to allow the catch up to current award status. Our department was allocated 0.480 per cent of that amount of 2.5 per cent, which came in as revenue to the department. From this year onwards that figure will grow in line with the growth in our administrative dollars because it comes in as part of our base budget.

MRS BURKE: So will it be shown somewhere else?

Mr Hubbard: No, it will come in as revenue and it will then grow by 2.5 per cent per year. That is what will be allocated to groups that receive the SACS award.

MRS BURKE: I was just wondering why it was not shown. If you know that now why was it not shown? Do you understand what I mean?

Mr Hubbard: Yes, I do understand what you mean.

MRS BURKE: It just seems really odd.

Mr Wood: It might well be that we have taken the in-principle position that this is a routine part of the budget and it should be seen that way. Other departments have a different view.

MRS BURKE: I just wondered why it was not reflected or accounted for in the budget papers.

MRS DUNNE: I seek clarification. Mr Hubbard said that these figures were in the budget. Can you take this question on notice and let the committee know just where we are?

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THE CHAIR: In 1999 Housing stopped using Australia Post for the taking of payments from housing tenants because Australia Post costs were too high. Page 181 of BP4, Urban Services output, states that the number of transactions through the shopfront will go down from \$660,000 to \$610,000 because it reinstated the use of Australia Post. How much will that cost and when did it commence?

Mr Wood: I cannot tell you that, but someone might have the answer to it.

Mr Hutchison: It was reintroduced for the convenience of our clients because, basically, there are a lot more post offices. It does cost a little bit more but we balance that cost against convenience for our clients. The principal objective of the department is to try to persuade as many tenants as possible to go and do automatic deductions. Some people, by virtue of their circumstances, are not prepared to do that. They now have the option of continuing to go to the shopfront and also to the post office.

Ms Fletcher: At the time we withdrew the use of Australia Post the costs were considerably higher than using the shopfront because we were not being charged for the use of the shopfront at that stage. We now have a transaction charge and a new bar-coding system is available to tenants for both their sundry and rental accounts, which has brought down the cost. It is now cheaper for our clients to use Australia Post than it is for them to use the shopfront.

THE CHAIR: What is the cost of using Australia Post? Where would I find that in the budget papers?

Ms Fletcher: I need to take that question on notice as I do not have the exact figures.

THE CHAIR: All right, thank you.

MRS CROSS: Towards the top of page 220 of BP4 under the heading "Budgeted Financial Results" is the following statement:

Section 31 of the *Financial Management Act 1996* (FMA) advises that Chief Executives are responsible for achievement of financial results. For the purpose of Section 31 of the FMA, key budgeted results are specified in the Budget Papers to improve accountability. An outcome of the increased accountability will be the requirement for Chief Executives to explain material variances from specified budgeted results.

However, a statement on page 90 under Central Financing Unit includes the words "was possibly not fully compliant with the FMA". Minister, are you confident that this department has remained fully compliant with the FMA?

Mr Wood: Yes. I am confident that it has done a very good job. You might want some detail as to the last point you quoted.

MRS CROSS: I said to Treasury yesterday that I had great concerns with that comment. As a new member of this Assembly I found that comment to mean that someone had been something other than honest.

Mr Wood: I cannot point to what it would be. Your rigour is commendable.

MRS CROSS: Is that a political answer or an estimates answer?

Ms Lambert: What is the quote on page 90?

MRS CROSS: Page 90 of BP4, Central Financing Unit, under the heading “Notes to the Budget Statements”, reads:

It was determined that previously the CFU was possibly not fully compliant with the FMA in relation to the Territory Banking Account.

Ms Lambert: I am not aware of breaching the FMA in any way. The advice from my financial people is that I operate consistently with the FMA.

MRS CROSS: Thank you.

Dr Adrian: I wish to respond to a question asked earlier by Mrs Dunne relating to the location of the SACS award in the budget papers. It is actually spelled out on page 231 of BP4 under the headings “Changes to Appropriation—Departmental” and “Government Payment for Outputs”. It is located on the bottom line of the first part of that table.

MRS CROSS: I refer to page 233 of BP4, output 1.1, Disability Services and Policies and to the number of public housing properties that are being managed. In centre-based respite you show a lower than expected outcome which you explain in the note on that page. However, your target for next year is 314 bed nights less than the target for this year. Minister, you waxed lyrical about the extra money you have spent on disability services but you seem to allow the delivery of fewer services. Can you explain why to this committee?

Ms Ford: The output class respite and home review is the additional service provided during the bushfire emergency. We enabled people to access a higher proportion of respite than normally would be required outside an emergency situation. Therefore, we are anticipating that output class to be higher. The figures for that will come in during the fourth quarter.

MRS CROSS: The situation with regard to home-based respite is, in one sense, even worse. You achieved an extra outcome of 1,923 hours beyond target, so you know you can deliver this level of service. But next year’s target is a reduction of 940 hours over what you achieved. Minister, I direct this question to you again. Are you happy presiding over this reduction of services for people with disabilities?

Mr Wood: Do not jump to conclusions about reductions. I will obtain a response to the detailed part of your question.

MRS CROSS: I am only going on the figures that are in the budget papers; I am not jumping to conclusions.

Mr Wood: There are always arguments against and reasons for figures.

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MRS CROSS: I am here to listen.

Ms Lambert: Are these the in own home numbers?

Mr Wood: Yes. The figures are \$22,017, \$23,940 and \$23,000.

Dr Adrian: The figures for in own home are \$22,017 and \$23,940. As Ms Ford indicated, the explanation for the increased outcome relates to the extraordinary demands associated with the bushfires. So the target for the upcoming year is a more normalised target, if you like, based on normal growth. It is an extraordinary outcome this financial year due to the bushfires.

THE CHAIR: That is inconsistent with the centre-based respite figures. Ms Ford said that we would get the estimated outcome for centre-based respite in the fourth quarter and that it would be higher. Why do we have the in own home figure but we do not have the centre-based figure?

Ms Ford: I apologise. I thought you were referring to the in home figures.

MRS CROSS: No, the first question I asked related to centre-based respite.

Ms Ford: Yes, I apologise for that.

MRS CROSS: The second part of my question related to home-based respite.

Mr Wood: Perhaps the more reasonable figure to look at is the 2002-03 targets and the 2003-04 outcomes. The estimated outcomes may well be impacted by those special circumstances.

THE CHAIR: Except in one case, Mr Wood, they go up, and in the other case they go down. So it is either an inconsistent answer or there is something wrong with the figures. Would you like to take that question on notice and get back to us?

Ms Ford: No, I will attempt to explain it. The shift represents a shift in figures from centre-based care to in-home-based respite. So we are providing less centre-based care respite and more in-home-based respite.

MRS CROSS: Did you put a note in the budget papers to explain that?

Ms Ford: There is a note at (8), which reads:

The variance in this figure has arisen from two factors: (a) from a temporary reduction in capacity, directly arising from the impact of the January 2003 bushfire ...

MRS CROSS: It does not state clearly that it is from one to the other. It simply states that there has been a reduction.

MRS DUNNE: I think we will need a breakdown of those figures.

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MRS CROSS: It does not clearly explain that in note (8), which I have just read. However, I am happy for you to take that question on notice and get back to us with a breakdown.

Mr Wood: We will do that.

MRS CROSS: My last question in this output relates to timeliness. On page 233 of BP4 you show that 95 per cent of payments are disbursed within the times agreed by contract. Are you concerned about the other 5 per cent, which appears to be a breach of your contractual obligation per se?

Mr Wood: Ninety-five per cent is a very high target.

MRS CROSS: So a breach of 5 per cent is acceptable?

Mr Wood: It may be inevitable. I could theorise about why you picked 95 per cent, since payments are based on communications and the like. I am theorising.

MRS CROSS: I would have thought that any contractual obligation had to be met 100 per cent of the time. A breach of 5 per cent is unacceptable in any situation.

Mr Wood: I think it is a high level of service. It sets a high target.

Dr Adrian: I can answer that question in general terms. Obviously two parties are involved in a number of contract payments. In some instances it might be due to a lack of information provided or there needs to be clarity in relation to the information provided. So there is a backwards and forwards process between the department and the provider of the service, which can lead to delays in the payment. In some instances organisations do not put in a bill for the service. That is why you always get at the margins some cases where the contract payment might not be disbursed in the normal time frame.

MRS CROSS: I did not see an explanatory note explaining why that 5 per cent is there. Could you provide this committee with any costs related to that breach of the 5 per cent if there are any? If they are based on administrative hiccups and delays let us know that too, given that there is no note in the budget papers.

Dr Adrian: There are certainly no additional costs associated with any of those delays in payment.

MRS CROSS: Will you provide the committee with some sort of explanation?

Mr Wood: I do not know.

MRS CROSS: I would like that explanation.

Mr Wood: That is a high level. I have observed the budget papers over the years and I think the footnotes are extensive and full of explanations. You could ask questions ad infinitum on this issue if you wish.

MRS CROSS: Thank you, Minister.

MRS BURKE: My question relates to page 233 of BP4, output 1.1, under the headings “Quantity” and “Community Support”. There has been a collapsing, discontinuing or combining of numbers, which I need to understand a bit more. Some services have obviously moved to other output measures, which I am sure you will meet. Has this been a significant cost to the sector? Has it been a big improvement? What initiated these changes within? What prompted that to happen? It is good to see these changes.

Ms Lambert: I will broadly answer your question and I will ask Ms Ford to answer specifically. We are looking across the department at standardising measures to hours of service rather than occasions of service, because occasions of service can be a variety of times—it can be five minutes or it can be two hours. We have endeavoured across the department to standardise that measure to hours of service. That then enables us to do more effective benchmarking with other jurisdictions and so on.

MRS BURKE: Have these measures been in place long enough for you to benchmark?

Ms Lambert: No, they are just for the next financial year. I am not aware for how long there were occasions of service prior to the establishment of the department.

MRS BURKE: Thank you. Would you address the issue of cost? I did not get an answer to my question relating to the actual cost to the sector. Has it improved the outputs? Will they significantly improve?

Dr Adrian: In essence, that is simply a new way of measuring the delivery of the service. There is no additional cost. So rather than saying, “We have delivered 54 occasions of service”, we measure it in actual hours. So it does have some benefits as we are able, for example to look at the hourly rate of providing a service and we are able to benchmark across services.

Ms Lambert: This new number includes broader hours of service rather than just recreation. It is meant to be more of an accurate reflection of the range of services and community support that we provide.

MRS BURKE: Obviously we will see that as we move on to the outyears.

Ms Lambert: Yes.

MS TUCKER: I think I just heard you state that the level of service is staying the same, but that you are just measuring it differently.

Ms Lambert: No, I think it has grown.

Ms Ford: It has grown.

MS TUCKER: So we will not see an increase in community support?

MR HARGREAVES: They just said that it has grown.

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THE CHAIR: Ms Tucker, I think Ms Ford just indicated that it has grown. Perhaps we could have a written reconciliation of where the services are and how many occasions of service are provided. I also find it difficult to flick through the budget papers.

Ms Lambert: We understand that these are new measures. As you will recall, the committee asked us last year to revisit measures so that they were more meaningful. We have endeavoured to do that, to benchmark, if you like, across the department and to have consistent reporting. When we pulled all the areas together we had quite different ways of reporting. We are trying to get consistent reporting across the department.

THE CHAIR: So you will take that question on notice and give the committee a written reconciliation of the occasions of service from different areas and the total number of services?

Ms Lambert: Yes, we will take that question on notice.

THE CHAIR: I propose to suspend the sitting of the committee for morning tea. After morning tea we will move to Urban Services and recall the department to finish the output classes next week.

Short adjournment

THE CHAIR: Given that we have a new department here, I have to do the formal piece. Ladies and gentlemen, you should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections, but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

Minister and departmental witnesses, your evidence today is being recorded by Hansard to prepare the committee's transcript of proceedings. It is therefore necessary for you to speak clearly into a microphone when you answer questions. Officers who are seated at the back of the room should come to the main witness table, if called on to respond to questions. Please do not speak from the back of the room.

It would assist the committee's staff and departmental officers if witnesses could also clearly state when a question is being taken on notice. It will greatly assist in the preparation of the transcript if witnesses state their full name and the capacity in which they appear on the first occasion that they give evidence. Thank you for that.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement on behalf of the Department of Urban Services?

Mr Wood: I would. I'd like to congratulate them. The second half of the year in particular has been an extraordinarily busy one and an unusual one as all agencies of Urban Services have been much involved in the fire and its aftermath and the recovery process. That has completely absorbed a great deal of time and received very efficient attention. I put on the record my congratulations to them.

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THE CHAIR: I trained them well, didn't I?

Mr Wood: You did, yes. I have no complaints about that.

THE CHAIR: Minister, the Department of Urban Services may or may not be aware of a document that was circulated, at least through ACT Health, which instructs public servants on how to be evasive at the Estimates Committee. I was wondering if you had inquired with the department whether such a document had been distributed through Urban Services.

Mr Wood: I haven't actually inquired with them. I don't think they need that sort of inquiry or advice.

Mr Davidson: I can advise that I'm not aware of any such document existing in the department.

THE CHAIR: Have you undertaken inquiries to see whether it was distributed throughout the department, Mr Davidson?

Mr Wood: You say throughout the department. Mr Davidson's email is one of those. I don't know about an inquiry; it's pretty obvious when one of those gets widely disseminated or even slightly disseminated. Mr Davidson can answer that.

Mr Davidson: No, we didn't do a specific investigation.

THE CHAIR: Would you please ask? The committee certainly takes the matter seriously, particularly when one of the dot points is that, if you don't want to or can't answer a question, put it on notice. That sort of evasion is not acceptable. I just ask that you make inquiries throughout the department as to whether such a document has been circulated there.

Mr Davidson: Can do.

THE CHAIR: Mr Davidson, what programs have been cut in the department for the coming financial year? Are there any programs terminating and are there any programs that have been stopped by the government?

Mr Davidson: No, there have been no specific budget cuts applied to the department's budget as part of the 2003-04 budget. At the output class level, there may be some variations up and down between successive years, depending on priorities, but there are no specific programs ending or cut.

MRS CROSS: In quality effectiveness, in the middle of page 234, you have a satisfaction measure with quality as assessed by annual surveys. The result is 80 per cent. What I'd like to know, Minister, is why it is you set a goal where one-fifth of your clients are dissatisfied. How does this fit with the lofty goals set out on pages 219 and 220?

Mr Wood: I could say that it would be wonderful to have 100 per cent satisfaction with every government service.

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Mr Davidson: Minister, could we just clarify which page of which budget paper?

MRS CROSS: Page 234 of BP 4.

Mr Davidson: That's not the Department of Urban Services.

MRS CROSS: A good pick up. Who was that? You deserve a brownie point.

Mr Wood: We went looking.

MRS DUNNE: Are we starting with general questions?

THE CHAIR: Yes, just general questions. Perhaps, Mrs Dunne, if you have a question while Mrs Cross gets organised.

MRS DUNNE: I'll go to a hardy perennial, parking. You introduced in last year's budget the concept of paid parking in Belconnen and Tuggeranong, which has not yet been implemented, although it was supposed to be implemented in March and June. None of it has been implemented. What's the implementation time for paid parking?

Mr Wood: It has slightly slowed down. June, I think, for Belconnen and September for Tuggeranong or the other way round. It is all systems go.

Mr MacDonald: There has been a revision to the implementation date for pay parking in Belconnen and Tuggeranong. At the moment, it is scheduled for 1 July for Belconnen and for 1 September for Tuggeranong.

MRS DUNNE: So that's a three-month setback on both.

Mr MacDonald: Correct.

MRS DUNNE: In looking at the introduction of paid parking in Tuggeranong and Belconnen, we had a discussion here last year, after we got over the discussion about whether it was desirable, which I said it wasn't and the minister said it was, about the type of mechanism used for extracting the money from people. Are you going to use a boom gate system or are you going to use a voucher system?

Mr MacDonald: In the government car parks it will be ticket machines, as it is elsewhere.

MRS DUNNE: So this is entirely a revenue-raising exercise, because I go in and I think I need to park for an hour and a half, but I get delayed and I'm there for 2 hours, so I pay for an hour and a half's parking, but I'm half an hour late and somebody has come along and given me a ticket, so in addition to paying for parking, because I've been delayed, I get a ticket as well. So this is a revenue-raising exercise, whereas if you had a boom gate operation, you would pay for what you use.

Mr Wood: It does raise revenue. It's not primarily or solely a revenue-raising exercise. We'll talk about the virtues of boom gates versus the other.

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MRS DUNNE: We had a long discussion here and Mr MacDonald nodded and said, “Yes, Mrs Dunne, I understand the point,” but when it came to deciding on boom gates over ticket machines and whether people paid for what they used or, in estimating what they would use, they would overestimate because they didn’t want to get a parking fine, whereas if they underestimated they would get a parking fine, why did you come down in favour of ticket machines rather than boom gates, which is a more equitable system?

Mr Wood: Relevant or not, I’m not sure there’s a boom gate system anywhere in the government car parking area.

Mr MacDonald: I guess it’s a matter of consistency. We don’t have boom gate parking in any other parking area under government control and, as we mentioned at the last hearing, the amount of parking under the control of the government in Belconnen, for example, was about 23 per cent. Clearly, the private sector car parking will be predominantly boom gate parking, as it is in other areas of Canberra. So customers will have a choice between the private sector car parks and the government car park, depending on the nature of the business and the way in which you need to purchase those parking services.

MRS DUNNE: So that what this boils down to is you have an inequitable system, you had an opportunity to introduce a system which was less inequitable and you thought, “Blow it, we want to be consistently inequitable.”

Mr Wood: They’re loaded words. We have a long-running system in the ACT which we are continuing.

MRS DUNNE: Why wasn’t voucher parking introduced in the first place, rather than boom gate, or why was boom gate phased out, because it was phased out in lots of areas?

Mr Wood: That’s going back in history a bit.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I know.

Mr Wood: I can’t answer that question, I don’t know if anybody can. When were the first machines installed? I don’t know.

MR HARGREAVES: When Pontius was a trainee Pilate.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cornwell has a supplementary on the parking issue.

MR CORNWELL: Minister, you and I have been getting some correspondence in relation to the students of Lake Tuggeranong College and whether they will have to pay for this parking that my colleague Mrs Dunne has been talking about. You have advised me that there is no reason why they shouldn’t, why students at Lake Tuggeranong College should be treated differently from other users of public car parks in Tuggeranong. That raises the question in my mind that if a college is unfortunate enough to be located next to a CBD, presumably they’re going to have to pay for parking, or—and I would like an answer to this—is it your intention to install pay parking at all colleges in the ACT?

Mr Wood: I haven't considered that option. I haven't considered that and I think it would be unlikely to be considered. It is the case that Lake Tuggeranong College is adjacent to a town centre. Erindale is next to an area where there are currently no parking machines and I'm not proposing it. I'm not suggesting that for a minute at this moment; don't run a story on this. If parking machines were introduced at Erindale, the same problem would arise. Generally, other colleges are a little more distant. Every college, from what I can recall of them, has pressure on parking and there's a deal of extended parking and parking nearby, but the particular problem at Tuggeranong is that it wasn't allocated sufficient parking when it was built and now we inherit that problem.

MR CORNWELL: You may not be able to answer this, because it is a matter perhaps that doesn't directly affect the government, but in relation to the pay parking at Tuggeranong and Belconnen, I know that at weekends at the Woden parking areas there is no charge made by agreement, I understand, with whoever runs the parking areas. Has any consideration been given to Tuggeranong and Belconnen? I repeat, it may not be a government matter.

Mr Wood: In the government areas, certainly it is.

Mr MacDonald: I guess the first point is that the government will not be charging any parking fees on Friday night, Saturday or Sunday.

MRS DUNNE: Friday night?

Mr MacDonald: Will not, it's my understanding. The parking fees will go from 8.30 in the morning till 5.30 weekdays. In relation to the private sector car parks—and in this case, I assume you're referring to Westfield—our understanding would be that, consistent with what's happening in Woden, they would provide two hours free parking, the first two hours free.

MRS DUNNE: I get back to the issue of college parking at Tuggeranong College. There was a lengthy discussion here in estimates last year on this subject and there seems to have been a complete volte-face by the minister and the government on this, because there were undertakings made that, because there was no dedicated parking at Tuggeranong College because they didn't feel the necessity to build any because they were next to a free car park, there would be some provision made so that Tuggeranong College students and teachers would not have to pay for parking because people who go to Narrabundah College or Dickson College are provided with parking. I want to know what has happened between the undertakings made by the minister here in estimates and now.

Mr Wood: Matters have proceeded. Substantial car parking will now be provided on site. It won't cover, I would expect, absolutely every teacher and student. There will be some overflow from that. In some measure, perhaps in a considerable measure, we might encourage students and others to utilise the "three for free" process that will be a part. These students do tend to travel in company, so that will alleviate it.

THE CHAIR: But is not the "three for free" predicated on taking a bus trip?

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Mr MacDonald: No. You're confusing it with "park and ride," I think.

Mr Davidson: There is a "three for free" area just outside, opposite the main entrance to the college. There's an additional car park being built on the college grounds by the department.

MRS DUNNE: What's being taken away on the college grounds to build a car park?

Mr Wood: I've walked over that land, an area that the school agreed could well be utilised as a car park, down at the side/back of the college on the side of the skateboard park.

MRS DUNNE: How many spaces are to be there?

Mr Wood: I think about 70 was the number—75.

MRS CROSS: Minister, I've got three questions on this output. My first question is on pages 157 to 180; these are general questions. The first is: could someone—perhaps you, Minister—explain the logic to me behind the purchase of the Magistrates Court and the Dame Pattie Menzies Building in Dickson?

Mr Wood: Explain the what?

MRS CROSS: The logic behind the purchase of those two buildings. Are you saying you didn't buy those buildings?

Mr Wood: Look, they're history, those buildings.

MRS CROSS: Can you tell us why you bought the buildings?

Mr Wood: That's ancient history, I think.

THE CHAIR: I think this is an 11G.

MR HARGREAVES: I think it is, too.

THE CHAIR: Blame the previous government.

MRS CROSS: We will go on to the next question, then.

Mr Wood: Okay. The Chair wants to rapidly bypass this question.

MRS CROSS: From your explanation about capital works on page 165, Budget Paper 4, it would appear that the only capital works you can manage on time is the refurbishment of offices for public servants. How much in dollar terms of the capital works has been allowed to depart from the original time lines? You also refer to the deferral of the IDMS project of \$2.038 million. Could someone please tell me what is the IDMS project, since it is not in the glossary of terms in either BP 3 or BP 4?

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Mr Wood: Integrated document management system. I'll get someone to explain that, someone who knows, but first of all let's take the question about the—

MRS CROSS: Refurbishment and capital works.

Mr Wood: Keeping the running through. The Treasurer also asked me to do all we can to see that the public works program is implemented in full. Probably most years it doesn't get implemented in full. Processes are always time consuming—tendering, all sorts of that activity. So we do regret when we can't substantially fulfil the program. That, again, is the case that will be occurring.

MRS CROSS: Minister, in the operating result and total ordinary expenses of the department, the figures are a little like a roller-coaster ride. How much of this is accounted for by the bushfires and how much is due to other factors?

Mr Wood: I'll pass that question to the accountant. Have you got a page there?

Mr Phillips: Page 159, I think you've been referring to. Total ordinary expenses, is that what you're making comparisons on?

MRS CROSS: Yes.

Mr Phillips: We've got a budget figure for 2002-03, an estimated outcome for 2002-03 and a budget figure for 2003-04 which run from \$360 million to \$366 million, down to \$346 million?

MRS CROSS: Yes.

Mr Phillips: The main reason is that Planning and Land Management have departed the fold. Planning and Land Management are now, as of 1 July, becoming Planning and Land Authority. Therefore, there's \$30 million-odd that comes out of our books and forms part of their books. But it's also impacted by bushfire initiatives in the estimated outcome this year and also flowing through to next year.

MRS CROSS: So it's a combination of both the bushfires and other factors.

Mr Phillips: Exactly.

MRS DUNNE: Are there are any factors apart from the bushfires and the new planning authority?

Mr Phillips: New initiatives.

MRS CROSS: Such as?

MRS DUNNE: Actually, it might be easier if we have a breakdown of the discrepancies.

Mr Phillips: There are no discrepancies.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, what accounts for the marked stickdown?

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Mr Phillips: Because you're really looking at about 40 or 50 variations. You've got new initiatives, you've got bushfire initiatives, you've got administrative arrangement changes.

MRS CROSS: Are the new initiatives in here? Could you tell me where they are?

Mr Phillips: Budget Paper 3 is the best place to look for them, page 155.

Mr Wood: IDMS, we'll get a statement of what that is all about.

MRS CROSS: Did you get that from the book? Can you tell me where that was explained in the book, because we couldn't find it under the glossary of either book?

Mr Wood: I know about it.

MRS CROSS: Given that we don't know what you know, where would we find it in the book?

Mr Wood: It was actually next to where it said IDMS. I've lost the page.

MRS CROSS: When you find it, can you let me know, Minister?

Mr Wood: What page did you indicate to me first, 159?

MR HARGREAVES: Page 165.

MRS CROSS: Page 165 just refers to IDMS.

Mr Wood: Page 163, at the beginning of the section on notes to the budget statements, that first dot point.

THE CHAIR: Is Mr Thwaite going to explain the delays in the IDMS?

Mr Wood: Yes.

Mr Thwaite: The integrated document management system is currently a project to look at the storage and processing of information electronically. It is to address in a very sophisticated way the collection and storage of documents. The project that is about to begin, or in fact has begun, is in Planning and Land Management, where documents can be scanned, therefore captured, and passed electronically to agencies for approval processes, et cetera. It's a very efficient way of doing things. It's a very structured process that ensures that information or documents are carefully stored in a very strict hierarchy and it addresses the requirements of the territory records legislation.

MRS CROSS: I suggest, for the record, that in future you include acronyms like that in the glossary. We shouldn't have to go fossicking through the book.

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THE CHAIR: Mr Thwaite, as a supplementary to that question, I recall this project starting in about 2000 and we're now in 2003 and we're looking at the 2003-04 budget. If I've read the papers right, \$496,000 has been rolled over and further money goes out into 2004-05. Does this mean you do not expect to have this project done until the year 2005?

Mr Wood: And there have been some significant issues around that.

Mr Thwaite: Yes, there has been a delay. The actual project will be commencing, in part, in September and then there is going to be a full evaluation of that, and then the government will make a decision on whether to proceed further.

THE CHAIR: On page 175 of BP 4, it looks like another \$2 million has been rolled over as well. What are these significant problems? The National Archives have set up the system that they developed back in 2000 and, I think, implemented it in about 15 months. What is it that they can do that we can't?

Mr Thwaite: The preparation for this project is very significant. It's not just simply buying a system off the shelf and installing it. About 80 per cent of the process is, in fact, re-engineering and about 20 per cent is information systems. We want to ensure that this process which, if is successful, will be rolled out whole-of-government, is, in fact, done correctly, so that's why it is taking time.

THE CHAIR: The nation's premier storage body, the National Archives, which is responsible for all the documents that the federal government finishes with and wishes to store, has been able to do this in what looks like under a third of what we haven't been able to achieve it. Why?

Mr Thwaite: Mr Smyth, I don't know whether the Archives have done the whole lot, the total set of records that they hold, whereas we are doing the whole lot.

THE CHAIR: Except that it sounds like we haven't started on the project.

Mr Thwaite: We have started. We have started collecting. All plans are being scanned now at PALM and that process is under way. The directory hierarchies have all been established and the final stage is actually installing the equipment or the software, which is in the process of being done as well.

Mr Davidson: Mr Chairman, the reason for the delay was that there was some delay during the tendering process. We have now finally let the contract. However, we haven't been sitting on our hands while those tendering processes have been taking place; we have actually been doing the process re-engineering within PALM while that's been happening so that, now that the contract's let, the process of implementation will proceed more quickly and more smoothly. The other point is that this project is being conducted as a pilot within PALM and needs to be evaluated before any consideration is given to rolling it out in other departments. So it's at the point now where we're moving into an implementation phase, having let the contract.

THE CHAIR: Three years after it started.

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Mr Davidson: It's been a long process to get this far.

THE CHAIR: This project was to be the cornerstone of an electronic government system, link up with things like Canberra Connect, and was really part of the whole drive to see Canberra as an environmentally friendly and e-government, e-service delivery system. Isn't it unacceptable that the pilot program for the basic component of the storage of the data has taken three years longer and will take another two years to complete?

Mr Wood: Well, it's not good that we've taken that long, but that's the process. It has to be got right. I like the idea of the electronic age in Canberra and not everything that has been introduced in that has worked just brilliantly first up. This is taking careful time and when it gets up and running that should, I hope, ensure that it runs well.

THE CHAIR: What timeframe would you now put on it? What guarantee will you have the pilot up and running and accessed by so that we can roll this out across the government?

Mr Wood: Well, with the tender the way it is.

Mr Thwaite: As I said, September is the answer. September is when we turn the system on.

THE CHAIR: All right. And how long will you let it run before you assess it and then roll it out across the government?

Mr Thwaite: We need at least about six months or so to evaluate how it goes and then we will be putting a report to government.

MR HARGREAVES: I've got a question on motor vehicle registration.

THE CHAIR: I'm so pleased that you will ask this question, Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: I thought you would be thrilled. I'm as interested as you are. It is actually a question for the minister, but I'm sure he has capable lieutenants. In the last Assembly, I had quite a lot to say about continuous registration and opposition to it.

MRS CROSS: And many other things.

MR HARGREAVES: And many other things, mostly complimentary of the former government, I might say. What I would like to know, and it's largely for the record, is what is the fundamental difference between the system that we're providing now and the one that was projected last Assembly which would mean that it's a good idea at all?

Mr Wood: I think the move to continuous registration has been inevitable. In every circumstance, it has to apply in that way. It's not enthusiastically received in every quarter, but I think the measures we are taking on this occasion will ease many of the concerns; perhaps not all, but they will certainly soften it. But the overwhelming point is that we had to go to this system. But the question was: what's the difference? I think the

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process of the seasonal registration as now defined is that difference. Mr MacDonald might give you the finer detail of it.

MRS DUNNE: Could I just interrupt. The minister said we had to go to this system. I think Mr Hargreaves is actually asking why.

Mr Wood: No, he didn't. I'm happy to answer that.

MR HARGREAVES: No, I didn't, actually. Thank you very much for helping me out, Mrs Dunne, but I didn't ask that question at all. I asked what were the fundamental differences between the two. Quite frankly, I don't give a bugger about that question; I'd like to hear the answer to this one.

MRS DUNNE: Right. Well, I put you on notice that I will come back to that.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cornwell, do you have a supplementary question?

MR CORNWELL: No, I want to join Mrs Dunne in asking why.

MS TUCKER: And I was going to ask it, too, so it's going to get dealt with.

THE CHAIR: Back to the minister.

Mr Wood: The detail.

Mr MacDonald: As the minister has said, the major difference this time around is we have a concept called seasonal registration. It accepts and acknowledges that there are some people in the community who only need and only require their vehicle at certain times of the year and want to register for that period only. For example, someone who goes cherry picking and has a vehicle for that purpose will, in the future, choose to register it for that season.

THE CHAIR: But there was seasonal registration in the last scheme.

Mr MacDonald: Yes. It was a very limited concept. This time the approach will be that you can have seasonal registration for a minimum of three months, but up to, I think, nine or 11 months, I can't quite remember. The finer detail is being worked out, but there is a much more generous range where any vehicle that is currently registered can have access to seasonal registration.

THE CHAIR: You started by saying that we have now developed the concept of seasonal registration. It's just an extension of what the previous government put in place.

Mr Wood: Significant.

Mr MacDonald: If I recall, it was a much narrower thing where only certain vehicles would have access to it. Now it's open to the whole fleet. So anyone who has their car registered may now opt for seasonal registration.

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MS TUCKER: My first question, a supplementary question, is: why do you feel you have to do it?

Mr Wood: The very simple but clear statement: it is unacceptable to have unregistered vehicles on the road, which is where many of those vehicles are driving, and that's the simple statement on that.

MS TUCKER: What's the evidence of that?

Mr Wood: Well, quite a few. The insurance premium is not being fairly shared. I think something like 6 per cent of motor vehicle claims are paid by the Nominal Defendant, so that people who are registering their vehicles are picking up that extra amount.

THE CHAIR: How will this stop people driving unregistered and uninsured vehicles?

Mr Wood: Well, you can not encourage them to do it, Mr Smyth.

MRS CROSS: But that happened before. The complaints that I'm getting from people that are repairing cars that are on the road is that the quality of—

THE CHAIR: No, let Ms Tucker finish. You're moving on to a different area. Keep going.

Mr Wood: The scanning, the speed cameras, police surveillance, all reveal too high a level of vehicles for which the registration doesn't fit, and there are complex reasons, numbers of reasons, around that. But broadly for control of motor vehicles and for sharing the load, vehicles on the road should be registered. I think that's self-evident.

MS TUCKER: The question I have is: why do you think that this will be an incentive for people to register their cars? What's the thinking about that? You already have a fine for driving an unregistered car. How much is that? What's the amount of the fine for driving an unregistered car?

Mr Wood: I can't tell you. It's quite substantial.

MS TUCKER: Yes, it's quite substantial. What you're doing now is basically requiring people to back pay for a period of time. I don't have the figures in front of me, but I know I did the calculations. It was a much smaller amount of money than the current penalty for driving an unregistered car. So the question has to be: why do you think this requirement to back pay will actually change the behaviour of people who are driving unregistered cars?

Mr Wood: Because you're removing the statement that says it's okay to drive an unregistered vehicle on the roads. You're removing that tolerance, that allowance. That's primarily what it is, and I think that's a very strong statement.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wood, these are the same reasons and excuses that we gave that your people knocked off. Is it not just revenue raising? Pure and simple, it's revenue raising.

Mr Wood: In fact, the amount of revenue isn't all that much.

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MRS CROSS: Then why change the system?

MR CORNWELL: No, I'm sure it won't be.

Mr Wood: The question doesn't follow the statement. You were going to say something.

Mr MacDonald: I was going to say something. If people are paying late, what they're doing now, they're getting the financial benefit of paying late so there is an incentive to delay your registration. On average, we have 10 per cent of people paying up to two weeks late. We have another 5 per cent of people who are not registering their vehicle between one month and three months of it becoming due. Ten per cent of the people are paying two weeks late. That's the major concern. That's where the major revenue is falling short.

But, importantly, we have another 5 per cent of people out there who are driving their car, we assume, unregistered. I say "assume" because we have some information from the police about their own surveillance. Recently, the police did a scanning exercise on one of Canberra's roads and found that in a period of 50 minutes they detected nine unregistered cars. So we have a problem we need to deal with. We believe this system will help us with that, will help us control better number plates, rebirthing, all those other problems. This is a national system. We are the last jurisdiction to implement it.

THE CHAIR: The question is: how will it help? You say that this will help with those problems. How?

Mr MacDonald: Firstly, there's no financial incentive any more for registering your vehicle late. That's the first point.

THE CHAIR: Will it therefore encourage people not to register their vehicles? You could make the case equally that the system will lead in the other direction.

Mr Wood: You mean and still drive them?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Wood: I guess there will always be some people who will still drive that way. But for the up to 10 per cent of people who can see, "Well, I don't have to register today, I'll drive carefully and I'll cut a week, a fortnight or so off what I have to pay," it's simply not a system that's sustainable. That has been recognised around the rest of Australia.

THE CHAIR: Yes, and we made exactly the same point when we brought in the national road rules which the Labor Party agreed to knock off.

Mr Wood: Well, thanks for agreeing with me.

THE CHAIR: These are the same cases. I can't see any change in what you're proposing. The question is, though: does the insurance policy run out the day the registration runs out, or is there a period of grace?

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Mr MacDonald: I understand that NRMA does provide a short period of grace. I think it might be up to two weeks, but that's about it. However, we have found that the Nominal Defendant is picking up 6 per cent of the ACT CTP costs, which indicates that there are a lot of unregistered vehicles involved in accidents round Canberra.

MRS CROSS: Was this new system created in the ACT or did you base it on a system from somewhere else, either nationally or round the world, and you have statistics to prove that changing from the system we had to what we have now is better?

Mr Wood: In the debate thus far, I've indicated the information, the data, on that.

MRS CROSS: Where is the data from?

Mr Wood: Well, police.

MRS CROSS: Local police?

Mr Wood: Let me go back, then, if we want to go back and repeat what we've said. From police—

MRS CROSS: I heard what you said, Minister. I'm asking whether this system exists elsewhere.

Mr Wood: I said from NRMA.

MRS CROSS: Does it exist elsewhere?

Mr Wood: I'll answer that question, then. The answer to that question is that I believe every state and territory has adopted this continuous registration.

MRS CROSS: You believe. You're not sure.

Mr Wood: I'm pretty sure. They have.

MRS CROSS: And the statistics that you have from every state and territory show that the system that they have adopted, if in fact they have, is better than the system that we had. You can provide this committee with those statistics.

Mr Wood: I don't have data from every state, no. We've got data from the ACT.

MRS CROSS: No, if you say that you believe that every state and territory has this system—

Mr Wood: And they've looked at their facts.

MRS CROSS: Then you must base your decision to change the system on better results than what we had before.

Mr Wood: No.

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MRS CROSS: Can you provide this committee with those results?

Mr Wood: No, we've based our decision on two things: on consistency with national rules and on the data that we have in the ACT.

MRS CROSS: Can you please define to the committee what you mean by national rules that were different from what we had in Canberra before?

Mr Wood: Mr Smyth can do that. He's been down that path many times.

MRS CROSS: No, Mr Smyth doesn't have to because he's on the committee. I'm asking you, as the minister, to explain that.

Mr Wood: There's an extensive process through ministerial councils of establishing national road rules and an enormous amount of debate and time goes into it. I've got a few on my plate at the moment to consider, some difficult issues. Like this continuous registration, we say, "Will we or won't we?"

MRS CROSS: Do those road rules have anything to do with your changing the system that you have implemented compared with the system we had before?

Mr Wood: Yes.

MRS CROSS: Can you provide, then, to the committee statistics that show that in other states and territories the system they have, which you say you've followed, but you're not sure—

Mr Wood: Do you recall the answer I gave you?

MRS CROSS: I recall exactly what you said, Minister. You said, "I believe that this is what"—

Mr Wood: No, I said to you that we relied on the consistency and on the data. It's the ACT data we've been looking at.

MRS CROSS: Could you provide to the committee an explanation, if you have tangible reasons why this new system is better, why we, the taxpayers, should accept this system as a better system, if in fact you're providing us with a better service and better security?

Mr Wood: I can only go over the ground I've gone over.

THE CHAIR: The answer is no, he's not going to.

MRS CROSS: So you're not going to provide anything?

Mr Wood: I have. You haven't accepted it. I've provided it.

MS DUNDAS: My question moves on to motor vehicle registration more broadly, so I will let Kerrie finish.

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MS TUCKER: I would like to finish on the continuous registration, just in response to your comment that it's the national road rules. We do have exemption to the national road rules when we want to, so we could have that.

Mr Wood: And we don't have too many of those.

MS TUCKER: No, but we can do it if we want to.

Mr Wood: A couple more are coming up. I might even flag them with you one day.

MS TUCKER: I would like you to respond to the concern that is being expressed about this continuous registration, which is that it will impact on people in the community who are disadvantaged and who would not necessarily be driving an unregistered car. I would like you to comment on that concern.

Mr Wood: I would say it very likely will.

MS DUNDAS: To pick up on the question of those facing disadvantage in motor vehicle registration, page 171 of Budget Paper 4 shows that you have had an increase of \$1 million from short-term motor vehicle registrations. My understanding is that to get a motor vehicle registration for three months costs more than it would if you were paying for the same period over 12 months, but it's people on lower incomes who are accessing shorter term because they don't have the same pool of money altogether, so you're actually making money from those who are suffering disadvantage. Do you think that's a good path to be following?

Mr Wood: It's a point that's much under discussion.

Mr MacDonald: The government does have in place a concessions policy to help people who are most in need. The first point is that people on a pension or concession card do not pay registration at all; they're not subject to any of that quarterly admin fee. People on a health care card do not pay the \$25 in admin; they pay only \$10. So the government has, through its concessions policy, assisted people on low incomes.

MS DUNDAS: But they're still paying more. The admin fee aside, if you're buying three months worth of registration because you don't have the money for 12 months worth of registration, over the 12 months you will end up paying more because you never have that amount of money in your back pocket, which means that you're living on a very low income.

Mr MacDonald: By virtue of the admin fee you're paying more, otherwise the registration fee is pro rata-ed.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, but if you pay quarterly you end up paying \$100 a year more in registration and fees.

Mr Wood: If you're doing it four times a year, and I think that's pretty unlikely.

MRS CROSS: But people that are socially disadvantaged have to pay that way.

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Mr Wood: No.

MR HARGREAVES: How long has that admin fee been in force?

Mr MacDonald: I think about three or four years.

MR HARGREAVES: Three or four years. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: What happens to somebody who gets a temporary permit over, say, two weeks? You said 5 per cent of people don't register for two weeks.

Mr MacDonald: Ten per cent.

THE CHAIR: It sounds to me that that's people who are waiting for the next pay to come into their bank account so they can pay their rego. Currently, they would take out a short-term permit. Are they penalised in any way? I think it's \$32 for a week.

Mr MacDonald: I'm not sure what you mean, sorry. I'm not following you.

THE CHAIR: You can currently take out a two-week extension of your registration at \$32. No?

Mr MacDonald: Not that I know of, sorry.

THE CHAIR: Could you inquire and find out if you can currently take out a short-term extension? I'm told you can.

MR CORNWELL: You can't get a cover, in other words, like insurance.

THE CHAIR: You can get a temporary permit to drive the vehicle.

Mr Wood: You can get a very short-term permit to shift your vehicle, take it to a repairer or something like that.

THE CHAIR: It's \$32 for two weeks. But some people use that to extend their rego until they can pay the full amount. Are they now disadvantaged because you then backdate the rego?

MR HARGREAVES: You are just saving \$32, aren't you?

THE CHAIR: No, because they pay the \$32 and then they pay for the full year. Is that double-dipping?

Mr MacDonald: On average, registration costs about \$12 a week, so if someone delays their registration two weeks they're saving themselves \$24 under the current system. So yes, if we backdate it, as we're proposing to do, they'll be paying \$24 that they currently don't pay.

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THE CHAIR: But if they do the right thing if they can't afford to pay the full amount and they go and get a temporary two-week permit for \$32, would the registration start from the end of the two weeks or is it backdated to the date on which it was originally due?

Mr MacDonald: I'll take that on notice, I think, that one.

Mr Wood: I'm not even sure you get that for two weeks. I think it's more likely two days or something; it's very short term.

MS DUNDAS: Can I just quickly follow up? I think at the last Estimates Committee you were able to provide a breakdown of the number of people getting 12 months rego, three months rego, six months rego and nine months rego. Can you take it on notice to provide that information again?

THE CHAIR: Can we see the maths that determines that this will bring in \$250,000? I have a sneaking suspicion it might be a little bit more than that. Can you tell us how you determine that it will raise a quarter of a million dollars? Take it on notice.

Mr MacDonald: Sure. Yes, I'll take it on notice.

MS DUNDAS: You are also expecting to have an increase of \$1 million in motor vehicle registration this financial year. Can you explain why that is or take it on notice?

Mr MacDonald: That's simply as a result of the increase in the registration fee. We have aligned ourselves with New South Wales. The increase is in the order of between 3 and 4 per cent.

MRS CROSS: Could you also let the committee know how much it has cost to implement this new system? If all you're expecting to generate is a quarter of a million dollars, it sounds like the cost of an advertising campaign to me, too, which is usually double that if you're going to go wide. Could you let us know the cost of implementing this?

Mr MacDonald: Sure.

MS TUCKER: I have a general question. I can't see money in the Urban Services budget for SACS award pay rises for organisations that are funded through DUS, but there is for the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services and Education, Youth and Family Services. Does the SACS award apply in Urban Services?

Mr Wood: DUS used to have Housing and a couple of groups out of Housing.

MS TUCKER: Is there some community organisation?

Mr Wood: Is there anything left for SACS in DUS?

MS TUCKER: What about the conservation council? Where do they fit? They'd fit in DUS, wouldn't they?

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Mr Phillips: Under Environment, which is another day.

MS TUCKER: So in Urban Services you don't have any community organisations.

Mr Phillips: No.

MS TUCKER: In your highlights on page 157 you refer to commencing the detailed design and construction of a new library at Kippax. I was at a meeting there the other night and I would like clarification. Was the money put in the budget on the assumption that the design that's being presented is going to happen or is that money in the budget for whatever we end up seeing at Kippax?

Mr Wood: The money's there to say we're going to build a library. The site has not yet been finally determined, so that it's indicating roughly the level of money we would anticipate.

MS TUCKER: So it doesn't have to be the model that was presented to the community.

Mr Elliot: I could help there, Minister. The figure that was put into the budget is based on architect design for the space, identified in the services study. What was indicated in the services study was 850 square metres of library space. Based on knowledge of how or what goes into the construction of a library, there's been an estimate put forward of \$2.5 million. That is an estimate and it's based on our best assumptions about what it would take to build such a building. The issue at Kippax is really about where we build it, not about how you design it, et cetera.

MRS DUNNE: Is that 850 square metres of library space or 850 square metres of space?

Mr Elliot: It is 850 square metres of space, 640 square metres of library. So there is facility in the design, and this was made quite clear in the consultant's report, that there was a base library of 640 square metres, and the rest is broad community space to enhance community facilities in that precinct.

MRS DUNNE: Could you take on notice and give the committee an analysis of the base library space in the other libraries in Canberra?

Mr Elliot: In terms of?

MRS CROSS: A comparative analysis.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. It is to be 640 square metres in Kippax. What is it in Erindale, Dickson, Woden?

Mr Elliot: I would have to take that on notice and bring it back.

MS TUCKER: In your highlights, you've got improving air quality by introducing a subsidy scheme for the wood heaters. I understand that was originally intended for next year, but now you have brought it back to January. Is that correct?

Mr Wood: Yes, I think Mr Stanhope put out some comment the other day about that.

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MS TUCKER: So that's Mr Stanhope's area, is it?

Mr Wood: Yes. I can answer a fair deal of it, but I'd better leave it to Jon.

MS TUCKER: Well, that was my question, except I would like to know why you're not making it available for this winter. Is that something for Jon Stanhope to answer?

Mr Wood: Talk to Jon, yes.

MR CORNWELL: On page 163 of BP 4, the user charges dot point refers to a decrease of \$7 million in the 2002-03 estimated outcome from the original budget, due mainly to a revised assessment of work undertaken within the department's fee-for-service areas. Could somebody elaborate a little bit more on that? That seems a fairly substantial amount.

Mr Phillips: The major component of that reduction is because, I think, a component of the work is now done in-house and therefore is not counted at the whole-of-government level.

MR CORNWELL: What sort of work are we talking about?

Mr Phillips: Well, it could be fee-for-service user charges from Cityscape to sports grounds or the like.

MR CORNWELL: Could you find out a little more for me?

Mr Phillips: Yes, sure.

MR CORNWELL: I don't need an answer immediately, Minister, but just a little more of a breakdown as \$7 million does seem to be a fairly substantial amount.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, do I ask you about the Gungahlin Drive extension or do I ask Minister Corbell?

Mr Wood: It's not mine yet. I understand it becomes mine when—

MRS DUNNE: After the sod is turned.

Mr Wood: There's a bit of a process yet. We might arrange a formal handover ceremony or something.

MRS DUNNE: I'll save that for another day and go back to the issue of parking and ask about the implementation of paid parking on the streets in Barton. Is this going to be another initiative that goes out on the never-never—it's there, it's money in the budget, but it's not going to be implemented? You have to square this away with the National Capital Authority before you put parking in.

Mr Wood: And I think there's a parliamentary committee looking at it as well.

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MRS DUNNE: I don't want to have a debate about whether there should be paid parking in Barton. I'm actually asking: why do you have an initiative in here that you don't have a snowflake's chance in hell of implementing this year?

Mr Wood: I don't know whether it's quite as tough a task as that indicates.

MRS DUNNE: Come on, you couldn't implement paid parking on land that you own and control. How can you possibly expect to do it in the parliamentary triangle?

Mr Wood: There are issues there. It's a simpler process, mind you, putting parking metres on streets. Mr MacDonald might have some explanation there more deeply.

MRS DUNNE: What is the implementation program, Mr MacDonald?

Mr MacDonald: Clearly, there will be further dialogue with the Commonwealth about that. We have to date had in principle agreement about the concept of pay parking in the area and we'll obviously have to await some further initiatives by the Commonwealth so we go hand in hand with this proposal. The option, of course, is to put nothing in the budget and not be able to move with it. This is clearly consistent with the government's sustainable transport plan, so I think the government has shown some courage in actually putting its money there and saying, "Right, we're ready when you are."

Mr Wood: And it's also a case where there's pressure from the other side over there. It's not quite unilateral action on our part.

THE CHAIR: Is it the thin edge of the wedge, though, in that it will then extend to the parliamentary triangle, into Parkes itself? Is that the intention?

Mr MacDonald: That's not our say; that's the Commonwealth's. We own on-street parking in Barton and it's up to the territory to decide what it wants to do there. Obviously, we'll do it in consultation with the NCA.

MS DUNDAS: Mr MacDonald, you said that this was in line with the government's sustainable transport plan. Can we have a copy of that plan?

Mr MacDonald: I think you'll have to ask Mr Corbell about the progress of it.

Mr Wood: That's Mr Corbell's; he's progressing that.

MS DUNDAS: But you already know what it says, to the point that you can implement pay parking in Barton.

Mr Wood: It's long been part of our comments that—

THE CHAIR: No, this is the first time we've heard this; this has not long been part of your comments. It's the first time—

Mr Wood: You haven't heard me before.

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Mr MacDonald: I think you'll note there are a number of what we would call sustainable transport initiatives in this budget and most of those are in Minister Corbell's portfolio, so I'm sure he'll have a chance to explain those.

MS DUNDAS: So it's not necessarily in line with the plan, it's in line with the ideal.

Mr MacDonald: It's in line with the principles of encouraging people to use public transport.

MS DUNDAS: I think this is a question for you; correct me if I'm wrong. There's been a lot of talk recently, and it's been reported by the *Chronicle*, about the redevelopment of the Benjamin Offices in Belconnen. The *Chronicle* reported today or yesterday that a new walkway is being provided by the ACT to link the Churches Building to the North Building. What is actually being done to address the flow of pedestrian traffic across Chan Street? I understand that the department has actually been approached by people who work in the offices there asking for a pedestrian crossing across Chan Street because the walkway has been closed. Are you looking at progressing that?

Mr Wood: That's a pedestrian crossing on the ground, not an overpass, you're talking about?

MS DUNDAS: I understand they've approached you to look for solutions because there is a constant stream of people across a busy road in Belconnen.

Mr Wood: And a difficult bit of a cross there, too. Businesses, I understand, are very concerned about the impact on them.

MS DUNDAS: The people I've been speaking to are very concerned about the impact of a car hitting them as they try to cross Chan Street.

Mr Davidson: There's some suggestion that this has been discussed with officers in PALM. We just have to follow through on that and advise you.

THE CHAIR: All right. So you'll take that one on notice.

MS DUNDAS: And I should perhaps raise it with Minister Corbell again tomorrow.

Mr Wood: Yes, I've had some comment on it coming through to me, but it's only pointing to the problem, not necessarily how it might be solved.

MR HARGREAVES: I'd like to ask the minister a question about libraries, particularly the initiative that you talk about in BP 4 at page 175 and BP 3 at 162 concerning the upgrading of the mobile library service. Having recently become aware of the actual impact of the mobile library service on people who are housebound, I'm rather interested to see that the government is getting rid of one bus, a larger one, and putting on two smaller ones. When is that likely to occur and are there any other changes to the service that are likely to enhance it?

Mr Wood: I might indicate that it wasn't a bad budget for libraries this year—Kippax; Woden, lots of money; the mobile library.

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MS DUNDAS: What about the Civic library?

Mr Wood: Well, that's carrying on, too.

THE CHAIR: Let's see if you can deliver on it in the timeframe, Minister.

MR HARGREAVES: That's why it's a mobile library; they're going to be delivered on time.

Mr Thwaite: The mobile library, if I can give you a little bit of background. The current bus is over 20 years old, so we need to replace it. Rather than just simply replacing it, we looked at some alternatives and the alternative we came up with was providing two buses; so they're smaller, they'll be more capable of getting into and out of aged persons' facilities and predominantly the current bus visits aged persons facilities and has large print books.

What we propose to do in fitting out the new buses, we are going to have modular arrangements in them so that we can take the large print books out and put other books in and give us more flexibility. In addition, they won't need qualified bus drivers to drive because they're smaller and we're going to look at providing more services. We are looking at things like a trial to look at other than aged persons' facilities but other facilities where there's a need. We'll be putting a proposal to the minister about looking at possibly some Housing Trust properties as well. So we're going to broaden the services as much as we can.

MR HARGREAVES: I think that's a fabulous initiative. On behalf of the old bloke I went to see the day before yesterday, that's great. I'm sure he will look forward to it. Most people know that you can go into the Kippax Library, if you like, and have a great time.

MRS DUNNE: Not in the Kippax library.

MR HARGREAVES: Of course you can. You can have a great time. You can swing a cat in it. I'm interested in knowing if you could give us some details about the call centre. How does that work? What sort of response has that had from the community?

Mr Thwaite: The call centre initiative has been a very good one. One of the benefits has been that there's a central point for library customers to make contact with libraries. It's been helpful for the library officers in the respective libraries because they can pay attention to the customers coming in the door rather than answering inquiries at the counter. It's also been useful for people to be able to do over-the-phone renewals, et cetera. So it has been a very popular service.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cornwell has a supplementary question on libraries.

MR CORNWELL: Yes, on the mobile procedures. You're going to have two buses. I'm not sure whether you're going to put the first half of the alphabet in one bus and the second in the other or whether one's going to be fiction and the other non-fiction! But it's a question of capacity. Will you be able to guarantee that the capacity of these two

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smaller buses will equal that of the first one, because people want to be able to borrow a range of books.

Mr Thwaite: I alluded to a modular arrangement. The current bus doesn't really allow for that, but you've probably seen large aircraft loading and unloading pallets. We have a system like that. You can take the large print books out and put in, say, children's books and target your audience and you'll be able to do it faster.

THE CHAIR: What sorts of buses will they be?

Mr Thwaite: We haven't decided on that, Mr Smyth. We're looking at what's available and the cost. It will be based on price and functional requirements.

THE CHAIR: The \$160,000 in the coming year's budget will purchase the two buses and set them up.

Mr Thwaite: Plus the sale of the old bus.

THE CHAIR: Offset by the sale of the old bus. And the \$28,000, say, in 2004-05 for the full year effect is the cost of an additional driver?

Mr Elliot: The operating cost plus any running costs you've got on the equipment itself.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, the \$28,000 is just the cost of additional fuel and that sort of thing.

Mr Elliot: It is the standard operating cost, because you're operating a piece of equipment, so that might be any running costs.

THE CHAIR: Where's the extra driver coming from? Is that person coming out of the library?

Mr Thwaite: They'll be library staff, because they don't need to have a qualified driver to drive it. So it could be a library person.

THE CHAIR: Okay, so the offset is that you lose the driver but that position will now be taken by a librarian.

Mr Elliot: I guess we're looking at how we deliver broad-based services to older persons, and that's been part of the older persons' strategy which has been around, and I think people have had some opportunity to look at that coming through. This is, I suppose, a part of a proposal to provide more generic and improved services to elderly citizens or older people. The library component and the mobile library are just an element of that. Within library services, there's a whole range of strategies that are being looked at. This is just one of them. We expect to get some synergies through moving into this particular way of delivering mobile library services, and some benefits.

In terms of the logistics of the older bus, we do need to have a trained driver at the moment. We don't need that any more. What we are hoping is that we can put technically and professionally trained library staff into the mobile buses, into the new

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mobile library service, to provide value-added services to the customers they're going to visit.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned an older persons strategy. Is that a government-wide strategy or a library strategy?

Mr Wood: It is a government-wide strategy.

Mr Elliot: It's government wide.

THE CHAIR: That is coming. When would that strategy be due, Minister?

Mr Wood: I'll have to talk to the Chief Minister, I think.

MS TUCKER: I don't know if I'm going ahead of myself here; tell me if I am. I have a question on output 1.3. Can I go there?

THE CHAIR: We'll go to the outputs in a minute. Are there any more general questions?

MS TUCKER: I've got a general question. I don't know where it comes in, but it's probably under outputs.

THE CHAIR: If you don't know, you might ask, but be quick.

MS TUCKER: All right. I just don't know where to find the cyclepath work. Which output is that?

Mr Davidson: It will be in roads.

MS TUCKER: I looked in roads and I just saw "community path maintenance". Is that it? Is that bike paths?

Mr Davidson: Yes.

MS TUCKER: Okay, thanks. I'll deal with that when we get to it.

MRS DUNNE: I have two questions. One relates to the growth of the city urban parks and places initiative, which is \$1 million over four years, to provide additional funding for the delivery of horticultural, cleaning and asset maintenance services to meet the city's growth requirements. Does this mean that up until now, as we've expanded our suburbs, we haven't been funding maintenance services in the suburbs? In what sense is this an initiative?

Mr Davidson: Over a period of time, that area of operations has been undergoing significant reforms—when we went through purchaser/provider, market testing and so on, and respecifying all our services. During that period we got significant efficiencies from the system and were able to absorb it, and now we've gotten to the point where we can't absorb it. So now it's recognised that the city's growing and, as we provide additional services, they need to be funded.

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MRS DUNNE: In what sense is this a new initiative, because what you're doing is providing to people in the far-flung areas services that you provide to people in Ainslie, Evatt or whatever? In what sense is this a new initiative?

Mr Davidson: It's a new funding. It's just a means of funding the money.

MRS DUNNE: It's a filler, okay. All right, as long as we know that. There was a lot of money in last year's capital works program for bridge upgrades. How are we going with bridge upgrades and, more specifically, how are we going with taking away the diversions out of suburbs?

Mr Davidson: We can deal with it now or we can do it when we get to the output, one or the other, but Hamish is here anyway.

Mr McNulty: That work is proceeding in accordance with the program we had set for it. Actually, \$2.7 million in the recurrent budget last year was diverted to bridge upgrading. A number of the detours on residential streets have been removed and a number will remain until those works are completed.

MRS DUNNE: Could you provide the committee, on notice, with a rundown on what the program is and where we are on the program and where we are on the program with taking the diversions off?

Mr McNulty: Absolutely.

MS DUNDAS: Kerrie has already asked about the implementation of the wood heater rebate scheme. The money goes through until June 2005 and it looks like it's \$300,000. Considering that there are, from my figures, about 25,000 wood heaters out there in the community, do you expect that the money will cover the buyback of all of those and do you actually think you can get all of them back by June 2005?

Mr Wood: We might defer this until Mr Stanhope gets here in Environment; it comes under that heading.

MS DUNDAS: Even though it's an initiative of DUS?

Mr Wood: Yes. That's DUS, you see. DUS has got Minister Corbell to do certain areas and me, and now with Environment it's got the Chief Minister.

THE CHAIR: Mr Cornwell has a couple of general questions. We then might go to ACT Forests before we do the output classes. Mr Bartlett has just joined us and he has to go overseas. To make sure that we do Forests appropriately, we will cover it after the last couple of general questions.

MR CORNWELL: I can wait.

THE CHAIR: All right. I've got one final question. There's \$700,000 for the armour cable replacement program. Is that not a responsibility of Actew?

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Mr Davidson: No, we own the streetlighting; it's our asset.

THE CHAIR: Shopfront transactions are going down from \$660,000 to \$610,000, about a 10 per cent reduction. Will there be a reduction of staff in the shopfronts?

Mr Elliot: The reduction is based on the shift of a housing payment, which has been shifted due to, I guess, the dismantling of the old kiosk system and moving that particular transaction. The effect of that has been to reduce the number of housing payments wanting to come into an ACT government shopfront. They tend to be using Australia Post now; so we're estimating a reduction in overall transactions.

For that particular transaction, I don't expect to see a reduction in the number of staff located in the shopfronts, however, in relation to that. We're tending to see a shifting around in the sort of business that is being undertaken in the shops and we are having a look at how we manage different transactions through different channels and using our market research to, in fact, do some analysis around that. But at this point in time, I wouldn't be suggesting there is any reduction in shopfront staff.

THE CHAIR: Your average target for the queues in the shopfronts is about seven minutes. In the motor registry it's about 15 minutes, I understand. Why the disparity and are we working towards bringing down both of those waiting times?

Mr Elliot: I'm certainly interested in having some discussions about aligning those queue time measures. But predominately the difference is that a standard ACT government shopfront does a wide variety of transaction types, including motor vehicle types. The Motor Vehicle Registry only undertakes motor vehicle-type transactions. They tend to be longer, more complicated and therefore take more time. Also, I guess, the performance measures have been developed from two different perspectives and therefore you see some misalignment between the two at this point in time.

THE CHAIR: We will move to Forests. I welcome Oscar 5, Mr Tony Bartlett, to the chair. I might just give you a couple of minutes to update committee members on what Forests are doing and how the work is progressing and then Mrs Cross will have a question.

Mr Wood: Yes, and I thank the committee on Mr Bartlett's behalf for tolerance in seeing he fits in today. An update would be useful and, of course, there's a whole heap of as yet unanswered questions.

Mr Bartlett: Thanks for giving me a special hearing because I am going to represent all the state and territory governments at the United Nations forum on forests for the next two weeks, generously funded by all the states and territories. It's not costing the ACT much.

THE CHAIR: On behalf of the committee, I would like to congratulate you on being picked for that role. I think it's a measure of your knowledge of forests. I don't know whether it's a small measure of recompense for what you and the foresters have been through but, for the information of the committee, Mr Bartlett is Oscar 5. He is one of the senior fire controllers. I have to say that I followed him through a few bits and pieces for a couple of weeks in January and he did an absolutely wonderful job.

Mr Bartlett: Thank you. I'll just give you a brief update. I'll comment on two things. Obviously, it's a very large clean-up task and salvage operation that we've got to deal with. At the last estimates I commented on some aspects of that, but this task will be ongoing for a long period of time, stretching into years, because of the magnitude.

I often say to people that we've got in the order of 6 million to 7 million burnt trees to get rid of in one way, shape or form. We're looking at a whole different range of techniques to achieve that, ranging from commercial salvage operations of the sawlog material that was burnt. That's still going on, but the scale has been reduced. We actually salvaged about 50,000 tonnes of sawlog, which was a pretty good outcome, and earned about \$1 million worth of revenue from that. It was a race against time and we eventually ran into a problem with a blue stain fungus that degrades the appearance of the timber, but not the strength.

However, working with our customers, they're still taking a proportion of those blue logs, which is quite helpful, and expect to be able to continue to do that until the weather warms up again in the spring. They're mixing green and burnt timber. The green timber's coming from sources outside the ACT. So that's a pretty good working partnership we've got with our customers and with other forest growers around the region.

In terms of actual cleaning up, because even after salvage harvesting operations we still end up with a lot of debris on the sites, we've apparently got a consultant helping us to scope the whole of the clean-up operation and how we might best achieve that. But the techniques range from mulching young burnt trees, just with a big mulcher that chews them all up and spits them out again on the site, through to some other techniques where we might chip the material and sell it for product, for biofuel, if somebody wants to buy it.

At the other end of the spectrum we've got bulldozers which would just push over all the trees into heaps and we have to dispose of the heaps by burning. So we're looking at a strategic approach to that. We've almost completed the area around the Duffy interface, the clean-up there which is being done by chipping the trees. That should be finished this week. That was part of the extra appropriation money we got to do that.

The second aspect that I'll give a quick update on is the development of a business case for future commercial forestry in the region. We met with the consultants yesterday and with the ACT Forests board of advisers and we got to a point where that report is getting very close to final form and we're reasonably on target, I think, to get that report presented to the range of people who are interested, which is a lot, at the end of this month. That's the target we've been working to.

All I can say in relation to the detail in that report at this time is that we will be putting forward a strong case for continued investment in commercial forestry, with a mix of what I'd call urban forestry, which is prime focus on recreational activity close to the suburbs, and commercial activities further away.

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MRS CROSS: I suppose I should direct this question to you, Mr Bartlett, but, Minister, intervene if it's not the way to go. You've given us a lot of information and I've tried to memorise as much as possible, but I'm going to ask this anyway. Budget Paper 4 at page 211 says that of the first 2,500 hectares of the 10,000 hectares that have been burnt you've identified that you will prepare a plan. How much of that work is under way now, how long do you have to reap the burnt softwood, such as the radiata pine, before it can no longer be used commercially, and does it vary from use to use? That's the first part of my question.

Mr Bartlett: The answer would be: just taking them one by one, the reason that we've assumed a clean-up of about a quarter of the area each year is that there is about \$10 million of insurance money available for clean-up operations and, as I said, it's a large area to clean up, equivalent to 10 kilometres long by 10 kilometres wide, so a lot of area to clean up. We just made an assumption based on our experience from cleaning up after the 2001 fire that that's about how much you could do in any given year in terms of the contractors you can actually find from around the country to do it. That's the rationale.

As I said, we've got a consultant engaged to try to help us to take a strategic approach to how we might make best use of that money, and that work's not finished yet, but we started actually cleaning up right from virtually the first day of the fire. That, as I said, involves the salvage timber harvesting operations, mulching operations and chipping operations, so a range of techniques.

How much have we done already? Well, we've covered about 500 hectares in salvage logging operations. That's taking the sawlog off, but about half the burnt trees still remain on the site after you do that. We've covered another couple of hundred hectares in mulching operations, the very young previous plantations, say up to about age eight or nine. Those ones, we've got about 200 hectares done that way. We've got about 60 hectares in the Duffy area treated with the chipping-style operation. They are the figures as of now.

In terms of how long we have got to salvage timber, from a sawlog point of view we are running on borrowed time already. By that I mean if it wasn't for the goodwill of our customers, they could already under the specifications in the contract reject the burnt timber, because it's too blue to meet the specification. But we had a meeting with our major customers about two weeks ago and they've both given us a strong indication that they'll continue to accept those logs probably up until about September, when they expect then that there'll be further degrade in the quality of that timber.

Just to finish off the thing, because it's not the end of the possibilities for what I'd call a commercial solution, even if it's not one that generates much revenue, we're currently negotiating with two overseas buyers of burnt timber, one from Korea and one from Italy. In fact, some of those people are in our office today. In the next couple of weeks we'll know for sure whether we're going to be able to do a deal or not do a deal. It's very complicated, not the least of which is because the shipping prices at the moment are very high as a result of the war and other things. So it's hard to actually achieve deals in this area. We had a lot of players initially, but one by one they dropped off.

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THE CHAIR: What do you use burnt timber for? What would an Italian or a Korean firm want?

Mr Bartlett: The Italians are looking at using it to produce biofuel. They've got very high electricity charges in Europe and also government incentives to do it. They've just taken a shipload of timber from Victoria in the last two weeks and they're pretty keen to see if they can make a deal here. But one of the problems we've got is our timber is actually a bit further away from the port, which complicates it, but there is a good chance we'll do a deal with them. They're looking at large quantities, so that would be very helpful in terms of removing product in a way that doesn't mean we have to burn it again.

The Koreans have different building standards to ours. It's quite absurd in some ways that you can't put blue coloured timber that's still just as strong inside the wall of a house, because once you put it in the wall and put plaster over it no-one sees it. Unfortunately, that's our Australian building standards. But that's not the case in Korea; they're not quite as fussy. So they're interested in buying some product from us—at a low price, obviously.

MRS DUNNE: What's the difference between chipping and mulching?

Mr Bartlett: Chipping, they're generally larger diameter trees that go through a big machine that turns them into little pieces that are commonly called woodchips. They're about three or four centimetres wide by three or four centimetres long. It comes out as a whole pile of chips. Mulching is a machine that chews the tree up, but doesn't produce it into a uniform product like a chip. It just puts it in all sorts of shrouds and big pieces and small pieces and it's quite a rough thing.

MRS DUNNE: And they have different uses.

Mr Bartlett: That's right. The mulching is really just a way of getting the organic material back onto the site. The chipping is converting it to a product that can be used by someone else.

MRS CROSS: The second part relates to page 218. I note that the target for the volume of logs sold has dropped dramatically—from 160,000 cubic metres to 13,000 cubic metres—at a time that we would be expecting to sell off huge amounts of the plantation that's no longer growing thanks to the fires. Is this because of the lack of a use for the wood or because the staff are fully occupied with the clean-up?

Mr Bartlett: Actually, the target relates to the sale of green sawlogs. In the past, we were selling about 160,000 cubic metres a year of green sawlog from our total plantation estate. We've had to make some assumptions in order to build a budget. That relates to the remaining part of our plantation estate, generally in the Kowen escarpment area, and that's a sustainable level of supply of sawlogs from that plantation. That doesn't count any remaining wood which we may or may not sell from the burnt plantation, but because we hadn't completed those deals it would be a bit early to pick a target and say that we were going to sell another 20,000, 100,000, whatever you chose, from burnt timber.

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THE CHAIR: This question is probably a question more for the minister. Minister, on 8 May, ABC Radio reported that commercial forestry in Canberra is set to end as a consequence of the January bushfires and the Treasurer was quoted as saying, "The entire resource has been lost. Nature has put us out of the pine forest business." The report went on to say that forest areas are set to be reclaimed for new suburbs as well as nature and recreation reserves. What is the status of the work the government's doing on this?

Mr Wood: The status is that cabinet agreed that Mr Bartlett should prepare a business case. That will be fed into the Hollway study into non-urban use of land and it will probably be used in other areas as well, so that's proceeding and that is a consideration that is to come. Mr Corbell has announced that there are proposals as a consideration for part of that close to the city. The Stromlo area, which is broadly the area that follows Uriarra Road and Coppins Crossing Road, very roughly, is under consideration for residential development. No decisions have been taken yet, but that's where the government is looking at the issues.

THE CHAIR: Is Forestry set to end as a consequence of the fires?

Mr Wood: Mr Bartlett has made a statement that he sees a future. I'll be carrying that case through where I have a role.

THE CHAIR: You said that the area that's being considered for suburbs is bounded by Coppins Crossing Road and—

Mr Wood: Uriarra Road. You can get confirmation of that from Mr Corbell, but that's my understanding of it.

THE CHAIR: How far up the Uriarra Crossing Road, because it's quite a long road?

Mr Wood: To where Coppins Crossing comes in.

THE CHAIR: Okay, to the intersection of Coppins Crossing and Uriarra Road.

Mr Wood: But I'd ask you to check that material with Mr Corbell.

MRS CROSS: Minister, if the department of forestry is going to be either eliminated or reduced, are you going to ensure that those public servants that are in that department can get work in another department, because at the moment, I understand, there are a number of people that have a concern with their job security? I think for months the job security factor has been pretty known in the ACT. Given the excellent work that these public servants have provided to the ACT community, we will have to make sure that we look after them. Is that something that you can assure the committee today?

Mr Wood: I'm not prepared at this stage to give any hint that they won't have jobs in ACT Forests. I wouldn't want to indicate that that's a likely outcome. All this examination and all this consideration is going on, but certainly they are much respected and a very capable, competent, dedicated work force and I'm sure that they would be looked after if that ever had to happen.

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MRS CROSS: By the government?

Mr Wood: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: I want to talk to Mr Bartlett not so much about the clean-up but about the issues of run-off, erosion and things like that. I know that there's a vast amount of work being done at the moment, but you haven't really touched on what you do about erosion control and that sort of thing.

Mr Bartlett: Okay. We've got three programs under way at the moment. The largest of those programs is the aerial seeding program. The first part of that was done last week and some more is happening this week. We're aiming to aerial seed about 7,000 hectares of the burnt area. That's on the sites that have the greatest potential for erosion. We are seeding with grass, which will help to bind the sites together and reduce the amount of soil erosion that's occurring.

THE CHAIR: Is that native grasses?

Mr Bartlett: No, that's sterile grasses that are there for a short period of time until the future land use is determined. But, as an example, one of the grasses that we're using is clover and we are trying to inject nitrogen back into the site to compensate for the large amount of nitrogen that's been lost from that site. We've been working with Environment ACT in determining that program.

The second part of the program is that straight after the fire, on some sites that had high erosion problems, particularly into watercourses, we had a program of putting out hay bales and some netting to reduce the amount of sediment moving. There is a lot of sediment moving all over the fire area. We can't pretend that's not happening; it is happening. We are doing our best to reduce that.

The third part of the program relates to a cabinet decision to allow some replanting this year on highly erodible soils in the Cotter catchment and we have got agreement to allow 800 hectares to be replanted. As part of that program, we actually use bulldozers to rip mounds around the contours and that stops erosion occurring straight down the hill.

I checked this morning and we've currently got 550 hectares of that 800-hectare program of site preparation completed and bulldozers are still working at the moment, so that's reducing the amount of soil being moved of some of the steepest and most erodible soils, particularly close to the Cotter Dam.

MRS DUNNE: You said that land preparation had been done for 500 hectares. When is the planting going to happen?

Mr Bartlett: There will be a planting program of 800 hectares this winter. We have to prepare the site on the whole 800 hectares. We've achieved 550 to now.

MRS DUNNE: I see. So you have to do the preparation first.

Mr Bartlett: Yes. And the planting occurs some time from late June to August, depending on rainfall levels.

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MRS DUNNE: Okay. And that 800 hectares worth of trees, that was basically opportunistic because you already had those on order.

Mr Bartlett: That's right. We had those in the nursery before the fire.

THE CHAIR: There being no further questions for Forests, I thank you, Oscar 5. Enjoy the trip and please represent Australia as well, as we know you will.

We will move to output class 1.1, customer services and information. Minister, the previous government had a very strong commitment to a greater delivery of electronic services and you said in a previous answer that you were also committed to that. The number of internet access terminals has been transferred from another output, so we don't have last year's figures. The target for the coming year is 65 terminals. Is that an increase or is that static?

Mr Wood: I can't tell you. We'll get someone who can, however.

Mr Elliot: That's a static number.

THE CHAIR: That's a static number. How will you increase access to the internet and electronic services for the public? I notice that the number of voice-based financial transactions is to go up only by 1,000—from 40,000 to 41,000. What are we actually doing to encourage people to use the electronic services that the government provides, whether it be voice, internet or phone?

Mr Elliot: A range of strategies, actually. Part of it is about redeveloping those channels and putting better operational requirements inside those particular channels. The first stage of redevelopment of the internet channel you will see towards the end of next month when we release the new ACT government on-line entry point. That will be a model for a Canberra Connect services portal which is earmarked for development in the next financial year. That, in itself, provides a more attractive channel, easier access to government information and services. We think that will encourage a marginal increase in the use of the internet to get access to services.

In terms of other strategies, we are working through the library service and also with some community groups to help train people in internet literacy, if you like, trying to get people used to those particular tools. Out of Chief Minister's there is a digital divide program which looks to locate particular PCs and other internet infrastructure inside community centres, through libraries, et cetera. So that's the internet channel.

In the call centre environment, the voice channel, we are looking to increase the number of staff inside that particular channel, introduce new tools, new infrastructure, better ways of handling information and hopefully increase the number of payment transactions in those particular channels. We are forecasting a relatively marginal increase in those channels because we are not really sure how the ACT community will respond to that, so we are estimating modest increases, but we will be, I guess, hopeful that we do a lot better. It remains to be seen.

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MRS CROSS: Minister, I thought I'd congratulate you. I'm looking at page 181 of BP 4 on the increasing transfer of financial transactions to web based. Clearly, this will be useful for citizens and will improve the efficiency of government. However, I'll touch on something that Mr Smyth raised briefly before, that is, that the bane of the life of many is the shopfront queues. Setting a target of having people wait for up to seven minutes, which you've got halfway down page 181 under timeliness, could hardly be described as good customer service. You only hope to achieve seven minutes, which represented the 80 per cent of the time this time last year, and you did not achieve that. In fact, over 35 per cent of the people had to wait longer than seven minutes. Do you think that it is good enough to respond to this face of government by dropping the target from 80 to 70?

Mr Wood: I could say to almost everything that we would aim to do better. I actually think what's happened at the shopfronts has been excellent in the last year or so, a much better system. You get called up and the waiting time is okay, I believe, but if there are chairs there, you might have one of those chairs. There is not necessarily the long queue. I'd direct you out to Tuggeranong to see how it works at best. I think the systems have been improved very considerably. But Mr Elliot might have a bit of detail.

MRS CROSS: I'm not finished my question yet. Are you answering the first part of this question?

Mr Elliot: I was going to respond to some of that. Just in relation to the actual queuing performance, you'd find, if you looked around Australia, both in a commercial or a government environment, that very few people aspire to achieve a benchmark anything like that particular performance measure. It is a very, very high standard, in fact, and if you did any benchmark work around that you would discover that most people try to put people through a shopfront countering system to do the sorts of transactions we do in 15 minutes, 20 minutes and they are their benchmarks.

To try to achieve the level that we do in a seven-minute period, we have set a high bar for ourselves and that's because we aspire to good customer services. The fact that we need to move that particular measure an iota for next financial year is a fact of the introduction of a queuing system, in fact. What we found, and this was undertaken in an audit report two years ago, was that the manual count on queue times was, in fact, a fairly inaccurate figure. They asked us or required us to put a new system in place that would count queuing times more accurately, so we implemented a shopfront queue system.

Apart from helping us to manage those queues more effectively, they actually give us a very accurate measure. What we've discovered is that that measure is, in fact, too high and that we need to shift it marginally, and that's why you see a change in that particular measure.

MRS CROSS: If the queuing system that you've introduced is a more effective queuing system—

Mr Elliot: It's a more effective means of measuring queue times. We get very, very accurate figures on exactly how long people are waiting.

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MRS CROSS: So that means that all along the dissatisfaction rate target has been 70 per cent rather than 80.

Mr Elliot: No, the satisfaction rate for customers in the shopfronts is in excess of 80 per cent all the time. We do that through a market survey and we ask people specifically whether they are satisfied with shopfront services, whether they are satisfied with the service they get and whether they are satisfied with the staff. Consistently, those figures are in excess of 80 per cent.

MRS CROSS: But they can't be, because I'm looking at—

Mr Davidson: No, it's the quality measure.

MRS CROSS: Okay.

Mr Elliot: In terms of timeliness, they're more precise; they're exactly as you're speaking of. To give you another set of figures, actual queue times show that 65 per cent of shopfront customers are served in seven minutes, 77 per cent of customers are served in 10 minutes and 90 per cent of customers are served within 15 minutes, and I think they're particularly good results.

MRS CROSS: I suppose it contrasts differently because, with a portal availability of 99 per cent, it seems to be that you're more interested in achieving a high success rate there rather than with face-to-face service. I would aspire, if I were you, to a higher level of service. I don't think taking 15 minutes to be served is acceptable anywhere.

Mr Elliot: I guess we aim for the seven minutes. Whether we're able to achieve it is dependent on lots of different factors. It's about how many people walk into a shop at any given point in time and what sorts of transactions we're doing on a day. For example, one of the factors might be that over a month, say March or April, when Easter occurs we're open for less days. People want to do the same amount of transactions, so we're trying to do the same amount of business in less operating days. That just means that queue times are going to move out a bit. We're doing the same amount of transactions in less time available, as our shops are open less.

MRS DUNNE: I must be one of the people who always take 15 minutes to get answered in the queue. Actually, the feedback that I've had was: "I'd rather stand in a queue and be served than be given a comfortable chair and for people not to know that I'm there, in a sense." If people are sitting down, there's less imperative on people to get through the work when they're not confronted with a queue. The feedback that I have got from constituents is, generally speaking, a vast amount of dissatisfaction with that queuing system.

Mr Wood: I haven't experienced that. I've had generally very good comments.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, can I finish, Minister? I have actually had consistently bad feedback about the queuing system. It's something I'd like to see explored. I presume Artcraft still do these surveys.

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Mr Elliot: No, we actually use a separate survey. We use Artcraft to a level, but we use a separate one for this particular one.

MRS DUNNE: So it's not the Artcraft survey. It would be good to actually explore in coming years what people think about the queuing service, because I've actually encountered those sorts of queuing services, not just in the shopfronts but elsewhere, and they are, in fact, very alienating. I hope you do better than the passport office, which has a similar sort of queuing service which is a dog's breakfast. Apart from measuring how long people are in the queue, which is one thing, are you actually providing people with a service that they are satisfied with and how do you measure that?

Mr Elliot: I guess we're measuring that through our customer satisfaction survey. We undertake the survey twice a year, every six months, and, as I say, our results are—

MRS DUNNE: So you haven't actually surveyed it.

Mr Elliot: We do survey.

MRS DUNNE: You haven't surveyed the new queuing system yet?

Mr Elliot: No, that survey's ready to go in May. We do it every six months—November, May, November, May—so it's ready to go again. That's specifically something that we're going to ask about, because we'd like to know. We undertook the shopfront queuing system implementation from two perspectives—one to try to stream different transactions. Where you're doing multiple sorts of transactions in a generic shopfront like the ACT government shops, you have different sorts of services and they take different amounts of time. The queuing system allows us to manage and monitor some of that and stream different sorts of transactions to different counters, so you get more effectiveness, if you like, through the queue time and the waiting times, wherever you can do it.

No matter what else you do, it takes you 15 minutes to undertake a motor vehicle transaction because of the complexity of the actual transactions. People need to do eye tests, et cetera. So you are going to get a differentiation, if you like, through the range of transactions that you do and the implementation of the queuing system was partly to attend to that. It was also partly in response to the auditors, who suggested we ought to be able to account for our queue times more accurately. Our feedback, to date, has been that the shopfront queue system implementation has been very successful. We would want to test that in our market research in May and we'll undertake to do that.

MR CORNWELL: Australians hate queuing.

MRS DUNNE: Not as much as some other cultures.

MR CORNWELL: It's an imported thing. It is, no doubt, part of our new multicultural—

MRS CROSS: Oh, what nonsense!

MR CORNWELL: I thought I'd get a bite.

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MRS CROSS: Retract that statement, please, Mr Cornwell. That is unacceptable. That's a racist comment that should be retracted.

MR CORNWELL: Can you get IDs at Canberra Connect?

Mr Elliot: IDs? Can we identify who a customer is?

MR CORNWELL: No. Can you obtain an ID there, if you want to?

Mr Elliot: No.

MR CORNWELL: Are you aware—I'm coming at this from a different angle—

THE CHAIR: You can't get the pubcard?

Mr Elliot: Sorry, Mr Thwaite might be able to assist with that question, Mr Cornwell. I might have misrepresented there.

Mr Thwaite: Mr Cornwell, you can get ID, young people particularly. It is issued through the licence system to identify whether they're over 18 or whatever; so, yes, you can get that ID.

MR CORNWELL: As I understand it, you need a name, date of birth and address, but no photograph. It has been put to me by young people that it's very easy to get an ID for somebody else. Would you like to comment?

THE CHAIR: Perhaps Mr Thwaite could clarify the process for getting a pubcard.

MR CORNWELL: Yes, that's exactly what I think we're driving at.

Mr Thwaite: Mr Cornwell, my recollection is that the pubcard is similar to a drivers licence. It has a photograph on it and information about the date of birth, et cetera, of the person. In fact, to actually get that card the person has to go through a set of points, so they have to prove their identity, as you do, say, for a drivers licence. So you might have to have a passport, a birth certificate, those sorts of things.

MR CORNWELL: Could you have that checked because it was put to me by a young person, in fact, that it was dead simple to get an ID, particularly they didn't need a photograph to say, "I am who I am." I know that all here are household faces, so it wouldn't matter; but the truth is that if you don't need a photograph, you just need a name, date of birth and an address, it may be possible to assume somebody else's identity for the purposes of getting an ID. I'd appreciate if you would have a look at that.

Mr Thwaite: With some trepidation, I'll take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: There being no further questions on 1.1, we will move to 1.2, roads.

THE CHAIR: Mr McNulty, welcome back. The previous government set up a five-year road program. Is that on time and on budget at this stage?

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Mr Wood: There have been quite some changes in that. Mr McNulty will spell it out.

Mr McNulty: There have been some changes in the timing of some of the projects. William Hovell Drive, which has now commenced, and Athllon Drive are the last two on that list that I'm aware of. So I think it's pretty well under way now, yes.

THE CHAIR: Do you expect to complete them in the timeframes that were originally set out?

Mr McNulty: There may be some minor variations. Without going through the list one by one, I don't know. I think within reasonable limits it will be done in accordance with that program, yes.

MRS DUNNE: When will William Hovell Drive be finished? It's wonderful to see it happen.

Mr McNulty: I suspect towards the end of this year. That was funded over two years.

MRS CROSS: I have a couple of questions. Firstly, Minister, page 182 of Budget Paper 4 refers to planned maintenance of territorial roads for 90 kilometres. In fact, you achieved a little over half, at 52 kilometres. Once again, I note that your response to the lack of achievement is simply to lower the target. Next year, if you aim for 77, don't you expect that a little over half will probably deliver in the order of 40 kilometres? Minister, are you just a little embarrassed when you're putting more money in but service delivery is going backwards?

Mr Wood: No. There is comment on that. That money has been well spent.

Mr McNulty: The reduction from the target to the outcome for this current financial year is a result of us reprioritising work from territory road maintenance to urgent streetlight maintenance work, community path maintenance, road maintenance and some of the other programs. While we start the year with the intention of doing that much work, during the year, as we assess where the priorities should lie, we do have to adjust those targets to live within our budget.

MRS CROSS: That leads me to the next part. You've set aside nearly \$9 million for streetlighting, which you've just referred to. How much of this is for new streetlighting and how much of it is for replacement?

Mr McNulty: The money in that output is all for the maintenance, but that includes the cost of the electricity, I must add.

MRS CROSS: I'm told that the previous government set aside substantial moneys for the replacement of ruined and fading streetlights, particularly inner north and south. Was all that money spent on this purpose, because there seem to be substantial areas in the older suburbs with poor lighting? What are you doing about it?

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Mr McNulty: Streetlighting is a really difficult issue. I mean, the lights in the older suburbs were built to the standard of the day. Like everything else that you do, they were built to the standards that applied at the time and to upgrade those lights to current standards would be an enormous amount of money and we simply can't afford to do that, so we try to identify areas of greatest risk, greatest need, and do those areas as funds become available. But we can't just undertake a program to update every streetlight in Canberra to current standards; we couldn't possibly afford it.

MRS DUNNE: Would it be possible, Mr McNulty, to upgrade the old streetlights that we might find in Narrabundah, Weetangera or places like that to modern standards?

Mr McNulty: One by one? I don't know; I'll have to take it on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Can I just follow up on the point that Mrs Cross made about the cutback in the number of kilometres? What we had last year, Minister, was that we didn't do as many kilometres of maintenance as we'd planned because we reprioritised into roads and bridge maintenance and this year we are finding that we are reprioritising it into streetlight upgrading. It seems to me that there is an essential flaw in the budget process here that you actually come out of a year and have a target and then you sit there afterwards and say, "We didn't really plan that all that well and we have to reprioritise." Isn't it the point of the budget to say what you are actually going to do and, if you are consistently reprioritising year after year, isn't there something flawed in the system?

Mr Wood: No, I don't think so.

MRS DUNNE: Every year you say you are going to maintain so many kilometres of road.

Mr Wood: Take the bridges, for example.

MRS DUNNE: This year you said you were going to do 90 kilometres of road and you did 52 because you reprioritised it. Last year you said you were going to do something similar and you did considerably less because you reprioritised it. If you are constantly reprioritising, you might get to zero. Doesn't it mean that your priorities aren't right in the first place? If, in the course of a budget year, you have to reprioritise that radically, by nearly 50 per cent, there's something wrong.

Mr Wood: To take that to the other extreme, you could lock everything in and not respond to conditions and issues that emerge. That is undesirable. In particular, I reflect on the need that emerged to do something about the bridges. Yes, we noted there was less money actually being spent on road maintenance and there are substantial new moneys coming into the budget to pick up that area that might have been lost—what, \$4 million?

Mr McNulty: There is \$4¼ million or 4½ million in this year's budget which is, in part, additional from last year.

THE CHAIR: The government touted last year the asset management strategy that they finally put in place, which does see substantial extra money going into the budget, but we seem to be getting less service for it. We are not getting as many kilometres of municipal

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roads done, we are not getting this year as much community path restored. Yes, we are doing some other things—lines, signs and street marking—but surely if you're putting an extra \$4 million into the budget for the maintenance of the municipal systems you'd be meeting the targets that you set yourself.

Mr Davidson: That's right. It's important to realise, firstly, that roads have adopted an asset management plan and, secondly, there has been \$4 million of extra funding into maintenance of the road infrastructure this financial year as a significant part-implementation of that plan.

But having said that, it's fair enough in my view that the areas treated under the various classes of asset might change from year to year. Okay, this year it's planned that there will be fewer kilometres of territorial roads maintained, but the municipal length goes up quite considerably.

THE CHAIR: If we go to the territorial roads, for the current year you were estimating you'd spend \$6.8 million for 90 kilometres. This year we're going to spend \$7.8 million for 77 kilometres.

Mr Davidson: Yes.

THE CHAIR: So we're spending more and getting less.

Mr Davidson: And that's because those kilometres of territorial roads—firstly, there have been price movements but, secondly, they are of a more complex nature than some of the straight running that we've had in the past.

THE CHAIR: So it's the nature of the road that makes it more expensive.

Mr Davidson: It's a mixture of the cost that you get when you go to the market and the nature of the work and then the quantum that you choose to do from your condition audits, which in this case we're slipping over to do some more municipal in the next 12 months. But overall the maintenance budget for the infrastructure has gone up by about \$4 million.

THE CHAIR: But we are getting less.

Mr Davidson: The costs are going up, too, but also the work that we're choosing to do is more complex.

THE CHAIR: I haven't done the maths, but it looks like the cost per lane kilometre has gone up almost 50 per cent. The cost pressures aren't 50 per cent, surely.

Mr Davidson: I haven't done the maths, either.

Mr Wood: Fifty?

MRS CROSS: Well, 48.7638.

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Mr McNulty: The costs and the quantities we estimate are based on best estimates of what we expect to be able to buy that work for. On territorial road maintenance, the work we're going to do this year involves crack sealing and a lot of patching before we can actually put the new surface on the roads, so we have to allow for that cost.

THE CHAIR: But we've always done that crack sealing and surface preparation.

Mr McNulty: Yes, but I suspect that this year there is a greater proportion of that required than in previous years.

MRS DUNNE: Is there a greater proportion required than in previous years because you've let it slip over the last two years? Is it the case, Mr McNulty, that if you don't do the maintenance that you should have done two years ago, what doesn't go around comes around?

MRS CROSS: That's make-up time.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, so that you actually have to spend more money and you're actually robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Mr McNulty: In the long term, that's true. But I think it's also true that, within a fixed budget, you need to adopt some risk management principles about where the greatest risks lie in the allocation of those funds, and that's what we do. Clearly, our greatest public liability risk is people tripping over on footpaths, so we tend to direct money in that area to avoid those public liability issues. There's a fixed bucket of money we can spend and we allocate that money in the way we consider to best manage the risks confronting the government.

MRS CROSS: So you're saying that the work you're doing now is more careful, you're being more thorough, or you're just using a better quality cement or tar or putting more men on the job?

Mr McNulty: There's a range of things. There are cost increases, especially bitumen has gone up significantly, so the price of asphalt has gone up.

MRS DUNNE: How much?

Mr McNulty: I did have those numbers some time ago—

MRS DUNNE: Okay, could you get back to us on that?

Mr McNulty: Yes.

MRS CROSS: On lighting—I'll just finish on this because I asked a question on lighting before—one of the concerns that I have, having been president of a business district that had some serious lighting issues which caused serious security concerns, and those businesses have been vandalised for some years now, is how people access some of that money to address the streetlighting problem. For example, the Phillip business district has one particular street which has had ongoing vandalism for a number of years, Altree Court. I think they've made dozens of calls to Urban Services to address that problem.

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Given that you've allocated \$9 million in the budget for streetlighting, how do people go about accessing it and how do you decide who gets lighting fixed?

Mr McNulty: That money in the recurrent budget will not pay for upgrading of streetlights. That's for the maintenance of our existing streetlight network, changing the actual bulbs in the lights, but that doesn't provide for new light installations.

MRS CROSS: What will?

Mr McNulty: That's a capital program to do that work. That's a capital works role.

MRS CROSS: What do little business areas do with you? Do they ring you up and say, "Look, we'd like to apply for you to fix the lighting here so we don't get vandalised any more"?

Mr McNulty: That's one way, yes. I mean, people can approach us and say that they have this need and we'll build that into our priorities for future capital works programs and we do that continuously.

MRS CROSS: How often do they have to ring you to do that?

Mr McNulty: Once, presumably.

MRS CROSS: It doesn't work.

Mr McNulty: The problem is I can't guarantee the money. As I said, there's a huge cost to upgrade the streetlight network. We get limited funding to do that work each year and we have to prioritise that the best way we can.

MRS CROSS: Mr McNulty, I'm not questioning the focus you put on your job, because I know that you work very hard. My concern is that the great frustration the community has with any government department—in this instance, we're talking about Urban Services—is that taxpayers feel that they're entitled to a service, they're entitled to have their businesses and their homes protected as much as possible. They don't know, however, after they've made dozens of calls, they've got the police involved on a number of occasions, what else they can do, so they get so frustrated that they just end up voting for another political party in the hope that political party will fix the problem. When the problem is an ongoing one, we tend to move the politics out of the way and say, "Is the problem with the empire building in the bureaucracy?" Is that perhaps where the problem lies?

Mr Wood: No, absolutely not.

MRS CROSS: Well, where is the problem, Minister? What do I say to my constituents when they come to me and say, "Mrs Cross, we have called dozens of times and you've asked for help, but we get nothing"? What do I say to them?

Mr Wood: You say to them, "Yes, society isn't always as good as we'd like, and all the agencies of government, the police, et cetera, do all they can within the resources they have."

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MRS CROSS: Minister, that is a wishy-washy answer. I've never heard a greater load of waffle in my life.

Mr Wood: If you think that daylight-style lighting would solve every issue in those areas, I think that's a bit—

MRS CROSS: Minister, lighting will address security issues for those small business owners that I represent and that other members in this Assembly represent. That answer is unacceptable.

Mr Wood: It would be of assistance.

MRS CROSS: I would be happy for you to take that on notice and come back to me with an acceptable answer that I can give out to my electorate. Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr McNulty, you said that the \$8 million is for replacement and upgrade and that there would be money in the new capital works program for new lighting, as required. Can you tell me what page that would appear on?

Mr McNulty: What I said was we bid for upgrading works in the capital works program and when we get the funds we use them according to the priorities that are established.

THE CHAIR: Are there any funds in this year's budget, either in the major new works or the minor new works, for new lighting anywhere in the ACT?

Mr McNulty: The capital works money this year, I think, covers the armour cable replacement, which is a significant issue with the streetlighting network as it stands. I don't believe we were funded this year for streetlighting upgrades.

THE CHAIR: So there won't be a single new streetlight anywhere in the ACT this year?

Mr McNulty: There will not be any of the existing streetlight network upgraded. There will be new streetlights in new developments, obviously.

Mr Phillips: I think I should add to that. If you look at works in progress, there is \$150,000 with no expenditure, so that money is basically carried over, so there is \$150,000 available for streetlighting upgrades.

THE CHAIR: From the current year?

Mr Phillips: From the current year.

THE CHAIR: Upgrades or additional and new lighting?

Mr Phillips: It's additional and new lighting that's in the capital works program.

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THE CHAIR: Okay, which does beg the question: if there've been requests, and I know there've been requests, why hasn't that \$150,000 been used this year, Minister, instead of your answer that the world's not perfect? You've obviously had \$150,000 for the last 11 months to spend on additional, extra or new lighting. Why has that not been spent?

Mr Phillips: Sorry, the \$150,000 is an estimate. If you look at page 178, streetlighting works in progress—

THE CHAIR: Three or four?

Mr Phillips: Budget Paper 4, streetlighting, \$150,000, estimated expenditure in 2003-04, \$150,000. Yes, that does indicate that there's \$150,000 that we believe will be carried over.

MRS CROSS: Why carry it over? Why not use it to help people now?

Mr Davidson: It could well be that the orders are with Actew but the work hasn't been done and it's a matter of waiting for the accounts.

Mr Wood: We'll come back to you and tell you where we'll spent it if it hasn't already been committed.

THE CHAIR: All right. With that, we might finish.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, I've one last question about roads and it goes to the cost of roads. I'm quite happy for this to be taken on notice, probably by Mr McNulty. Mr Smyth raised the point before that we seem to be getting less for more money, but for the one lane kilometre of national highway that we're upgrading the bitumen seems to be cheaper than it was last year. What causes that?

Mr McNulty: The issue with national highways is that significant amounts of that are in relatively new condition, therefore they require a different level of maintenance to the older territorial road network. We've recently done a lot of work on the Federal Highway and the Barton Highway, which are the two parts of the national highway that we're responsible for. I think that's what that is reflecting, that it's a different level of maintenance being undertaken.

MRS DUNNE: So you tend to be just resealing roads rather than patching and resealing.

Mr McNulty: Correct. That mightn't be the exact reason, but that sort of reason would be why.

THE CHAIR: And where is that lucky kilometre? Do you know where it is?

Mr McNulty: Off the top of my head, I don't.

THE CHAIR: Could you find out for us?

Mr McNulty: Yes.

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THE CHAIR: Thank you. With that, we'll close this session with Urban Services. Thank you, Minister, and all the staff. We'll resume at 2 o'clock to discuss the Emergency Services Bureau.

Luncheon adjournment

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, Minister, and your staff and welcome to the estimates hearing. I have a small introduction that needs to be read. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly and protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal actions, such as being sued for defamation for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

To assist Hansard—ministers and departmental witnesses, your evidence today is being recorded by Hansard to prepare the committee's transcript of proceedings—it is therefore necessary for you to speak clearly into a microphone when you answer questions. Officers who are seated at the back of the room should come to the main witness table if called on to respond to questions. Please do not speak from the back of the room.

It was assist the committee staff and departmental officers if witnesses could also state clearly when a question is being taken on notice. It would also greatly assist in the preparation of the transcript if witnesses would state their full name and the capacity in which they are appearing on the first occasion that they give evidence. Thank you.

Minister, would you like to make a brief statement?

Mr Wood: Yes, I would. I'd pass over some questions, if I could, to the secretariat—housing; stuff that's been done.

THE CHAIR: I arrived just after we finished housing. We'll read them for next week.

Mr Wood: If I may: the main role of this committee is to examine the expenditure proposals contained in the bill and to look at any revenue estimates proposed. It should examine the bill and any supporting document, looking closely at the estimates of expenditure for the forthcoming year.

Historically, Assembly estimates committees have ranged widely but, after the momentous events of January this year, this committee needs to remember that matters of personal responsibility and what happened and when are matters for elsewhere. They will be specifically and expertly addressed by the McLeod inquiry and the coroner's inquest and should be left for them. This is following correct Assembly processes.

For this reason, I, with officers from ACT Policing and Emergency Services Bureau, won't be answering any questions relating to the details of the bushfires of January this year. This is also consistent with the response to media requests for interviews on the same matter. There is a sound process under way, with the McLeod inquiry and the coroner's inquiry, and that is where officers from the Emergency Services Bureau and others will provide answers to questions.

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The McLeod inquiry, as with the coronial inquest, has been properly and well established for the purpose of inquiring into the response to the fire. This approach also applies to Auditor-General's Report No 3 of 2003 which has been referred to McLeod and will further be examined by the Assembly's PAC and will also be responded to formally by the government.

The government has maintained its commitment to openness over the bushfires by publicly releasing all agency submissions two weeks ago. It has also given a commitment to have the McLeod report released as soon as possible to all Assembly members once it's been received.

So I welcome all questions on the usual matter of estimates, expenditure proposals, et cetera, issues of resourcing and other related topics.

THE CHAIR: Minister, thank you for your opening address. I note what you have said, but it's not up to the minister or the government to dictate to the Estimates Committee what members will seek to ask or not ask. It's a well-established tradition that estimates committees are wide ranging and do ask questions about anything that has an impact on the budget; and, given that the events of January 18 have had a significant impact on the budget and the budget is full of initiatives in response to that, I will allow members to ask questions as they see fit.

However, I will ask members to just remember that there is the McLeod inquiry and that there is a coronial process that has started, but the Assembly does have the right, through this committee, to ask whatever questions it sees fit.

Mr Wood: I think we'll work well together. There are a whole range of resource issues arising that are subject to questions.

THE CHAIR: Minister for Police and Emergency Services, on Monday I received a document with the ACT Health logo on it that purports to be a document on how to avoid budget estimates questions in the year 2003. I was just wondering whether you'd consulted with the Justice and Community Safety Department and the AFP as to whether or not such a document had been circulated through those departments and what have they done to stamp out the sort of nonsense that is contained herein.

Mr Wood: Well, I suspect nothing's been done because there's no reason to do anything. I'm not aware that anything's been circulated of that nature.

THE CHAIR: Did you ask, Minister?

Mr Wood: No, I didn't.

THE CHAIR: Well, then how can you be aware or unaware?

Mr Wood: These are very sensible, well-managed agencies. But Mr Keady might respond.

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Mr Keady: No document of that kind or anything similar to it has been circulated through my department.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Keady. Mr Keady, the other question that I've been asking ministers and departments as they appear is: have there been any breaches of the Financial Management Act in your department throughout the course of this year? On page 90 of the budget papers, it alludes to a possible breach by the Central Financing Unit. I'm just curious whether you're aware of any, or are there any breaches of the FMA that you'd like to bring to the attention of the committee?

Mr Wood: I don't think so.

Mr Keady: I'm not aware of any.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Minister or Mr Keady, are there any programs that are finishing this year or being shut down within the portfolio; and could you please tell us what they are and the reason for them being discontinued?

Mr Wood: Any programs, I would think not. The Emergency Services budget has no cuts. We expect that the budget will be reviewed as a result of the McLeod inquiry and the coroner's inquest. The police budget shows an increase; there's money there for real terms maintenance; and there will be a need to raise the issue when the new certified agreement has been finalised. I know the police are having an establishment review or something of that order, and that's something I will discuss with the commissioner over the period.

MRS DUNNE: On the initiatives, Minister: in what sense is the bushfire coronial inquest an initiative?

Mr Wood: Well, it's something that's happening and having to be funded. We had the same discussion in the last session before lunch. It's a new expenditure item.

MRS DUNNE: So that anything that's new expenditure you're putting in as initiatives. This is not something you've chosen to do—

Mr Wood: Well, I think anything, certainly, with a substantial amount of money attached to it should be. Sometimes there are a lot of small things. Mr Keady might respond.

Mr Keady: Mrs Dunne, I was just making the comment to the minister: it's a matter of materiality. The inquest is going to be quite an expensive exercise. I'd imagine, if some provision hadn't been made specifically for it in the budget, there would be a concern that it hadn't been identified and there'd be concern perhaps about where the funds were coming from.

MRS DUNNE: I understand entirely the point that it has to be identified; there's obviously a cost associated with an inquest like this; it has to be somewhere. An initiative has a sense of being something new, bright eyed and bushy tailed that the government is doing for the good of the community. But this is in fact something that

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you have to do. I'm just wondering about the classification of it as an initiative in the first instance.

Also, I'd like to receive some guidance from Mr Keady about how \$1½ million compares to, say, the Bender or the Winchester inquests, in terms of quantum of money?

Mr Wood: I don't know how else we would describe it. It's new money being spent, whether you want to open a sub-category of unavoidable expenses or something. It may be in your concept of what an initiative is. That normally relates to good news stuff, I suppose; it doesn't have to be.

MRS DUNNE: No, it doesn't have to be. Mr Keady, can you let the committee know—and this may be something you have to take on notice—how the quantum of \$1½ million compares to what was spent on, say, the Winchester inquest or the Bender inquest? We're looking at a large inquiry, as those were. I just want to see how much money has been allocated in comparison to those.

Mr Keady: The \$1½ million would be well short of expenditures certainly on the Bender inquest. I'm not aware of how much was spent on Winchester. The figure at this stage is very preliminary, because at this stage we're not aware of just how much this process will cost us.

We're not aware how long the inquest will go for. We're not aware just how much the coroner herself will spend on things like expert witnesses and those kinds of things. If you like, a provisional amount has been allocated—that is, the \$1½ million—and experience will tell us what the final amount will be. If necessary, additional funds will be sought to cover those additional expenditures. But we're just not in a position at this time to make any accurate assessment.

MRS DUNNE: So it's really: how long is a piece of string—this is a notional piece of string?

Mr Keady: Very much. We can't go to other inquests and say, "Well, we spent a certain amount on that inquest and therefore we are likely to spend a certain amount on this." Each is a unique event, and the cost pressures or the expenditure needs will vary. The government's provided an amount sufficient to cover all those things which we could identify, in a preliminary sense, but knowing that it's unlikely to be the final figure.

MRS DUNNE: On the other initiative, the community fire units trial: could somebody give a brief exposition on what is intended in that trial?

Mr Keady: Yes, very briefly, because we are still working it up. It's based on a program that's working in New South Wales, which was commenced there after the 1994 bushfires, which was intended to provide the communities in an organised way with a means of self-help. Kits are provided; basically, trailers of equipment are provided to communities; stand pipes, hoses. They are accompanied by a training program.

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We are in the process at the moment of setting up within the ACT Fire Brigade a capacity to support what is intended to be a trial of this concept in the ACT. Depending upon the success of the trial, it may well be that initial expenditure and that initial commitment will become both permanent and expanded.

MRS DUNNE: You said “the Fire Brigade”. The Fire Brigade would have principal carriage of this trial?

Mr Keady: It’s an urban fire-fighting activity; albeit the concern is the escape of bushfire into the urban area.

MR PRATT: Can I just follow up on that with Mr Keady. Will the community fire program trial be conducted and completed in good time for decisions to be made to implement whatever recommendations you have in time for the next fire season?

Mr Keady: Well, it’s intended to get the trial under way for this fire season and, depending on the success and what we learn from it, I think if an evaluation proved its worth it will be a matter for government then to decide how widely and in what way it might be propagated further. But certainly I’d imagine a successful trial would lay the basis for a much broader implementation concept. We’ve had no direct experience of it. Certainly New South Wales are quite pleased with the way they’ve managed it to date. But the way we are approaching it here is to conduct the trial first, see what lessons we need to learn and then make subsequent decisions based on that experience.

MR PRATT: Given the experiences that you can draw upon elsewhere, is it possible that you might be able to exercise the program to finish in good time to allow government, within a reasonable time space, to determine and to carry out implementation if it’s a success?

Mr Keady: Well, quite possibly. I think it depends very much on what we learn. There is a fair amount of work and organisation in this. There’s a need to engage the interests of the communities that we seek to protect. That needs to be engaged in a way that endures and is not just dependent on the first flush of enthusiasm. We’ve got to set up structures that are capable of living well in to the future, and we need to learn how to do that properly before I think we attempt to engage too widely.

If we do it prematurely and muck it up, we’ll affect the credibility of what may well be a very, very valuable initiative, and that’s why I think the notion of a trial first and then subsequent expansion is sensible.

MS DUNDAS: I had some questions on new initiatives.

THE CHAIR: Yes, broad ranging discussion.

MS DUNDAS: On the computer-aided dispatch and the upgrade of the Emergency Services communications system: I understand that the original tender process for the computer-aided dispatch system was about two years ago; is that correct?

Mr Keady: Yes, it’s quite a complicated series of events.

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MS DUNDAS: Walk me through them.

Mr Keady: Okay. I thought you'd say that. Perhaps if I could call on the assistance of Mr Castle from the Emergency Services Bureau, who is in a better position to walk than I am on this one.

Mr Castle: It wasn't a tender that we provided for. We were provided with money to actually rectify Y2K and CAD. The components were primarily focused in the first instance on rectifying the year 2000 issue. It also included some preparatory work for the CAD. Then we actually did the tender process. That is quite complicated in terms of determining exact statement of requirements. The tender proceeded and came to fruition in terms of evaluation in about August of last year.

MS DUNDAS: Will the system that you originally tendered for that took a long process to actually finalise be compatible with the new system that you look to have, or the new upgrades to the ESB communication system?

Mr Castle: There are not two systems; there were not two tenders. The process, the money and the initiative were to rectify Y2K as well as and including CAD. We then went into a tender process. There are not two systems.

MS DUNDAS: The upgrade of the Emergency Services communication system, which is a new initiative, and the computer-aided dispatch, which is a new initiative, are basically the same project?

Mr Castle: No. Sorry, I misunderstood. There are two different things. One is the computer-aided dispatch, which is the communication centre and all its technology to take calls and determine the right responses and then dispatch. The radio communication system is exactly that—it's a radio system—and it's all part of an integrated network, I suppose, that we use to dispatch and talk to our crews and talk to the public.

MS DUNDAS: So those two new initiatives will be integrated?

Mr Castle: Yes. They are sequential, and so we are actually implementing the CAD now; we've actually let the tender; we are looking to bring the CAD system on line in early December of this year; and at the same time we are starting the process of determining the statement of requirements for the radio system, that is, the truck mounted or unit mounted base stations and all those sorts of externals.

MS DUNDAS: Is it true that the CAD tender went to a system that was developed in the United Kingdom?

Mr Castle: The successful tenderer is Fujitsu, which is a consortium. Fortech is the system that's implemented in the UK, but it's also here in Australia.

MS DUNDAS: So we do have the technology to maintain it and upgrade it?

Mr Castle: Part of the process will be the maintenance of it here.

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Mr Keady: Just to interpose if you don't mind: my understanding is that system is in use, for example, by the New South Wales Fire Brigade.

MS DUNDAS: Can you say that again, Mr Keady? I didn't hear you.

Mr Keady: That system is being used by the New South Wales Fire Brigade; it's their dispatch system.

THE CHAIR: So it is operational in Australia?

Mr Castle: Yes.

Mr Keady: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: But isn't the system that's being used in New South Wales actually an older version of the system that you've asked for and is actually being replaced by a completely different system?

Mr Castle: Yes.

Mr Keady: It's an upgraded version.

Mr Castle: It's an upgrade. We are getting the upgraded version. New South Wales are in the process and will eventually upgrade. Like all technology systems, you gradually upgrade to the new version.

MS DUNDAS: So your answer is that they're actually upgrading to the same version that you're paying for?

Mr Castle: I'm looking behind me to my director of the CAD project. We're not aware—he advises—that they're specifically proceeding to upgrade yet.

MRS DUNNE: Could you find that out for us please?

THE CHAIR: Will the system that you've tendered for be inter-operable with the police system? I understand they've put in a new system, recently funded, I think, as a result of an initiative in 1999. It's not the same system, is it?

Mr Castle: No, it's not the same system. The inter-operability is: we share information. There are a number of different computer-aided dispatch systems around Australia, and they look to actually share. So even in New South Wales they don't have the same system across all their emergency services. However, one of the advantages we have here is that they will be the same across the four agencies that belong to the Emergency Services Bureau.

MRS CROSS: So there'll be compatibility across the board?

Mr Castle: Within our services, inter-operability is being able to share information across to other systems. We already share it with police Winchester Centre, and there'll be greater sharing ability because of the technology that we put in.

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MRS CROSS: Can I ask: when you put this out to tender, did you put out a national tender?

Mr Castle: Yes.

Mr Paulsen: I have been appointed director of the Ambulance Service, but I am heading this project up on behalf of the Emergency Services Bureau.

MRS CROSS: Mr Paulsen, this was a national tender?

Mr Paulsen: The tender was released nationally but could well have attracted tenders from overseas as well.

MRS CROSS: Did you have local bids for this tender?

Mr Paulsen: In terms of this tender, there were no local bids because the nature and the complexity of the CAD product was such that it required large companies to get involved with established, what we call, off-the-shelf CAD products.

MRS CROSS: And who decided and when did they decide to go with Fujitsu?

Mr Paulsen: There was a formal evaluation process as a part of the government procurement requirements. There was an evaluation team established. It had an evaluation structure that was formalised prior to that evaluation.

MRS CROSS: And the team was made up of whom?

Mr Paulsen: And the team was made up of a range of people from within our organisation. We had co-opted experts participating in that evaluation as well. And we had financial input to the evaluation on the financial side.

MRS CROSS: Are you able to provide a list of those people to this committee?

Mr Paulsen: I can do that.

MRS CROSS: And when was the decision made to go with this company?

Mr Paulsen: The final recommendation of the evaluation committee and the final report of the evaluation committee were signed off in June last year.

MRS CROSS: And the implementation period is how long?

Mr Paulsen: The implementation period has commenced. We signed a contract with Fujitsu on 5 May.

MRS CROSS: This year?

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Mr Paulsen: This year. We commenced implementation the following week, and that implementation phase will proceed through on the project plan, which is a formal plan, till mid-December.

MS DUNDAS: You said that there were no local tenders. Was the successful tenderer or any of the tenderers obliged to submit a Canberra region industry plan?

Mr Paulsen: All tenderers were required to submit a Canberra industry regional plan—CRIP.

MS DUNDAS: What did the CRIP show the benefits for the ACT and the Canberra region will be out of the winning Fujitsu tender?

Mr Paulsen: I don't have that information immediately available to me.

MRS CROSS: Can you provide the terms of reference to the committee?

Mr Paulsen: Certainly. I have a copy of the CRIP for Fujitsu.

MS DUNDAS: Is that a document that the committee can see?

Mr Castle: If it's available we'll make it available. The only hesitation may be if there's some issue of confidentiality with the company; but if it's something we can release, yes.

THE CHAIR: That would be kind. The question is, though: if the tender committee made a decision in June 2002, why did it take till 5 May this year to actually sign the contracts?

Mr Wood: The government commitment came through at that stage, later—the commitment, the funding.

MRS CROSS: Can you speak up Minister?

THE CHAIR: Surely you can't go to tender without the commitment for funds?

Mr Wood: The commitment was there. I became aware of this fairly early in the piece because it was when I was minister. I signed off on it. The commitment was there, but it needed the signing off.

MS DUNDAS: So how much money was in the last budget for the CAD, considering that this is a new initiative in the 2003-04 budget?

Mr Castle: Some of it has actually been the original funding that was provided and needed to be added to, to meet the tender costs that eventually came in.

Mr Wood: The tender cost exceeded what was in the budget, so we had to track around and find some money for it.

MS DUNDAS: That was my question: where was that money and how much money was it?

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Mr Wood: Originally?

MS DUNDAS: Yes.

Mr Castle: The CAD goes back to that Y2K component in terms of the overall, and in the current budget there's \$381,000.

MS DUNDAS: In the 2002-03 budget there was \$381,000. Minister, this is perhaps now a question for you. Why is this listed as a new initiative—goods to the value of \$478,000 in the 2003-04 budget?

Mr Paulsen: It's a very complex history with the funding of the CAD. In broad terms—if I can talk in broad terms—the original funding that was provided in the early budgets for Y2K and CAD consisted of funding to fix the Y2K elements and also initiate the CAD project and proceed with the CAD project, but we were never going to know what the actual costs of implementing the CAD were until we had completed the tender process and knew what prices were put on the table as part of the tender process.

The original funding concept in the early budgets was to procure the CAD on a lease basis, and the funding in those early budgets was provided on the basis that we lease the CAD. When we got through the tender process, it was clearly identified that a lease option for the CAD was certainly not the best financial way to proceed with that and we were better to procure it. Therefore it required a capital injection to procure the CAD, which is what's in there.

MS DUNDAS: Which is what's in this budget. The contract that you agreed to on 5 May was a procurement contract, not a leasing contract?

Mr Paulsen: It's a purchase contract. In other words, we're buying it as a capital item.

MS DUNDAS: But that contract is dependent on this budget.

Mr Paulsen: It is.

MS DUNDAS: Did you have any failsafes in the contract in case the budget process didn't go your way?

Mr Wood: I can't think of anything much more secure than putting it in the budget.

MS DUNDAS: But again, it's a piece of legislation that is yet to be approved.

Mr Wood: That's right, but year after year every bit of purchase goes through in this way.

Mr Keady: Because the whole pack capital program depends on the Assembly passing or providing supply to the government.

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MS DUNDAS: But we've heard throughout this that usually things are in development and then they get finalised after the budget has been approved. This seems to have gone the other way, where a contract has been signed before the budget has been finalised.

Mr Keady: Yes, one makes a judgment about some of these things, but this is a critical system.

MS DUNDAS: But the contract was signed before the budget was even dropped in the Assembly.

Mr Keady: That's right. Well, this is a critical system.

THE CHAIR: Is that a breach then of the procurement rules that you have signed a contract before you had funding?

Mr Keady: No. Well, it was signed in expectation that funding would be provided. If funding wasn't provided in the budget, one would imagine government would have to find some other way, for example, Treasurer's Advance. But we were faced with the difficulty of ensuring that a critical system was provided and, I guess, had we delayed we may have come before this committee and suffered criticism for unnecessary delay.

THE CHAIR: If we can perhaps go back to the start. The tender for this document went out in December 2001 or closed in December 2001?

Mr Paulsen: I'm just clicking my diary back. The tender was in fact released in January 2002.

MRS CROSS: And the decision was made June 2002; is that right?

Mr Paulsen: Sorry, just excuse me for a moment. I'm correct. I thought I was. The tender was released in January 2002 to the market place.

THE CHAIR: And it closed when?

Mr Paulsen: It closed at the end of February in 2002.

THE CHAIR: And that was with funding for it in the 2001-02 budget?

Mr Paulsen: There was some funding for it in that budget to purchase it on a lease basis.

THE CHAIR: So by June 2002, following the closure in February and the assessment, it was decided to go ahead with an outright purchase, rather than the lease, which required more money?

Mr Paulsen: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: And so the agency went to the government to ask for more money.

Mr Paulsen: That's correct.

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THE CHAIR: And initially the money was not forthcoming in the 2002-03 budget?

Mr Paulsen: The final evaluation report of the tender evaluation committee was not submitted until July.

THE CHAIR: Minister, this is probably a question for you. The government had two additional appropriations in the year 2002-03. Why wasn't it considered urgent enough to put into those budgets?

Mr Wood: I can't answer that question. I was first caught up with this when I became minister at the end of the year, as the process advanced. I'll seek advice on that.

THE CHAIR: So you'll take that one on notice?

Mr Wood: Yes.

THE CHAIR: From July 2002, when the government first became aware that the system was required and needed more money, nothing happened until 5 May 2003, when contracts were signed, even though there wasn't dedicated funding for it?

Mr Keady: When you say "nothing", that's not quite correct. There was a substantial period of contract negotiation, so that the signing off of the contract was preceded by considerable negotiation with the company as to the terms and conditions.

THE CHAIR: Mr Keady, is it normal process to be conducting negotiations on a contract when you actually have no money to fund that contract?

Mr Keady: Well, the government approval in principle to sign the contract.

THE CHAIR: This has gone through the procurement system, which was set up by the government, and approved by the procurement board?

Mr Keady: Well, that was the tender process.

MRS CROSS: Sorry, can you keep your conversations in the back low.

Mr Keady: Maybe we're just caught up in terminology here, but the whole tender process was a procurement process.

THE CHAIR: But it was approved by the procurement board? It was conducted through the procurement unit or by ESB?

Mr Paulsen: Prior to going to tender, we're required to go before the departmental procurement unit and also the government procurement board. We went through both those processes and were approved.

MS DUNDAS: When you were going to tender in January 2002, you were looking at a leasing arrangement. Did you go back to the procurement board when you made the decision in June to actually buy it outright?

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Mr Paulsen: My understanding is there's not a requirement to do that.

THE CHAIR: This is probably a question for you, Minister. Given the fires on Christmas Eve 2001—and I note in the Emergency Services Bureau submissions to the McLeod inquiry one of the recommendations is the upgrade of the communications system—being aware that your department is recommending an upgrade to communications systems; and given that your government, I think, in the 2002-03 year itself got an additional two appropriations, why was no money sought for what is clearly an urgent project? Or instead of using the Treasurer's Advance firstly for social housing which was transferred then to fire safety housing—

Mr Wood: I'm attracted to that process, I might say.

THE CHAIR: Why wasn't the Treasurer's Advance made available for the changing nature of the project?

Mr Wood: This is the radio communications system you're talking about?

THE CHAIR: No, we're still on the computer-aided dispatch system.

Mr Wood: Well, I didn't contemplate going to Treasurer's Advance, I might say; so it wasn't part of my framework of thinking. I'm not sure it was necessary.

THE CHAIR: The recommendation that came out of the review—and Mr Pratt might like to follow up on this because I know he has got some documents there as well—of the December 2001 fires was that an urgent need to upgrade systems was apparent. Given that the information was available to the government, why was no money found between July 2002 and 5 May 2003?

Mr Wood: I don't think 5 May is the date; I think the money for the system flowed at an earlier date than that.

Mr Castle: 14 January is when the Treasurer, I think, gave us the indication that we would proceed.

Mr Keady: I think there was some consideration from the government about whether there were alternative ways of financing it, and ultimately there was a change of minister as well towards the end of 2002; the decision was made by government effectively in January; and we acted on it straight away.

MS DUNDAS: So the decision was made in January that the money for the dispatch system would be in the 2003-04 budget?

Mr Keady: That's right. Well, it was also to do with the anticipated cash needs of the project as well.

THE CHAIR: Did the Treasurer put that indication in writing—the agreement in principle that you would get funding for this project? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

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Mr Keady: There was a submission to government at the time. I just can't remember who signed off what and when.

THE CHAIR: Could we have a copy of the notice that you had agreement in principle to spend the money?

Mr Wood: We'll have a look at that. I'll check what the processes were that occurred.

MR PRATT: Coming out of the December 2001 lessons, there were a lot of comments about the state of the fire service, communications equipment and the ability of agencies to talk with each other. Was there no consideration given to finding funding to urgently upgrade those systems—step outside the, I suppose, longer-term tendering process to quickly sort those system weaknesses out? Or how far did you get if you did, and how far have you got to go?

Mr Castle: Money was provided in the 2002-03 budget to do a feasibility study into the radio upgrade, and that's what we've actually proceeded to do. So in 2002-03 there was actually money provided to undertake the feasibility study.

MR PRATT: But nothing was undertaken earlier than that, in terms of emergency funding, to meet what were clearly concerns being reported by the fire units?

Mr Castle: The solution is not simple. The solution is as is indicated in the budget papers—a very significant expenditure across a number of agencies that also contribute to bushfire—and therefore the accepted process is to do a feasibility study. That's what we bid for; that's what was funded in 2002-03. Yes, we put up the bid for a feasibility study to look at the radio upgrade. At the same time, of course, we were proceeding with CAD.

MR PRATT: What guarantees can you give us that, when the new communication system is designed and trialled on the fire ground, police units will be able, on that occasion, to link in and talk closely with all other emergency service agencies and vice versa?

Mr Castle: I'm not aware of any jurisdiction with a unit of this individual nature being able to talk to that unit across agency, because you have a heck of a lot of people on the net and that then becomes a congestion issue. So the procedures need to be looked at in terms of who needs to communicate with whom and for what purposes. Most jurisdictions, as I understand it, look at what are those agency needs; and a lot of the process is also done with liaison. So it's the ability of the technology, what frequencies and what radios they operate on and what systems, because some are analog and some are digital; and they're at various stages of upgrade and development. So there will always be inter-operability issues, and there are always aspects about operational procedures.

What we are looking to do is try to improve the inter-operability, but it also has to go hand in glove with the procedures on the fire ground if that's the instance; or in the storm if that's the other instance; or whatever. It has to be multi-hazard as well.

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MR PRATT: Are there occasions that you can perceive where individual fire units or other emergency service units, including ambulance and perhaps police units operating side by side—for example, at Duffy, at midday on 18 January 2003—may need to be able to talk amongst each other in terms of that local environment? Do you see instances like that, Mr Castle, where perhaps it would be okay to have some flexibility in a system that allows a one-off communication?

Mr Paulsen: Perhaps I can just answer that by saying yes, you certainly can see that requirement; and yes, it's anticipated. Certainly it will be written into the specification requirements for the new radio system that we'll have that capability, and the communications capability within each vehicle will allow them to operate across multiple channels; and those channels will be available to all agencies.

MR PRATT: Including police?

Mr Paulsen: That adds an extra level of complication, because they have a different radio system; and therefore we would need to look at how that could be achieved. Often when that is required, as it does now happen, say, with ambulance between the ACT and New South Wales, you put a common frequency in both of those vehicles and address that problem.

Mr Wood: And that's an issue, too, that the police may have some thoughts about. They need a pretty secure sort of system as well. It's not too expansive.

Mr Castle: We have already done that with our command units, and there is a frequency that our commanders can actually talk to the police.

MR PRATT: Sure the police certainly don't want other personnel listening into their nets and vice versa; and most of the time you need to be able to operate in parallel. But do you not consider that there will be times where, in terms of the issuing of frequencies, command nets during emergencies, some flexibility would allow a police unit to flick onto and become part of a homogenous, multi-agency grouping on site to be able to talk, particularly when they can't see each other because of smoke, et cetera, et cetera?

Mr Castle: The simplistic answer is yes, but they also have issues then in terms of call signs and identification and so forth—command and control. If they flick off their own they're actually now not necessarily under the command and control of their own parent unit, and they might have a higher priority task. So you've got to get the balance right between the need to talk specifically unit to unit and command and control. So they're the issues we would need to work through; but simplistically the answer is yes.

MR PRATT: So you would concede that in high-crisis environments there is sometimes a need and you would possibly look at that sort of flexibility in your communications system?

Mr Castle: Intuitively, yes. The achievement of it and the processes to do it will be difficult.

MR PRATT: I know it's hard.

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MRS DUNNE: I'd like to go right back to the beginning, if I could, Mr Chairman, to the allocation in the 1999-2000 budget for the CAD upgrade. You said earlier in the piece, Mr Castle, that that was designed mainly to address Y2K issues. How was the money allocated, the \$1.1 million in the 1999-2000 budget? Was that allocated to upgrade existing systems or to buy new Y2K compatible systems?

Mr Castle: Elements of both. Some of the equipment needed to actually be replaced because it was beyond the life of the type, and some was actually to make changes to the existing equipment. So it was a combination.

MRS DUNNE: In that allocation there's \$1.1 million in 1999-2000 and then \$700,000, \$400,000 and \$300,00 in the outyears. How much of that money was expended and on what? How much of it was Y2K specific, and how much of it was for new equipment that just happened to be Y2K compatible? If you need to take that on notice I'll understand.

Mr Keady: Mrs Dunne, I think we might have actually answered that. A similar question, I'm just reminded, was asked on notice, I believe, in the Assembly. I think there may well be an answer on record that covers that.

MRS DUNNE: Well, if there's an answer on record I'm sure I can get a copy of it.

Mr Keady: If I'm incorrect on that we shall provide it you.

MRS DUNNE: Could you check my question against the question that you think you've already answered, and if the answer that's already been provided doesn't answer it can you provide an answer?

Mr Keady: If the question's already been answered we'll provide a copy; if it hasn't been answered we shall answer it.

MS DUNDAS: Just to get a last little piece of information regarding the CAD project: has any money actually gone to Fujitsu as yet?

Mr Paulsen: In terms of the contract, there is a payment regime established under the contract. It requires, on contract signature, a payment of 10 per cent of the contract price. We have not yet received an invoice for that and, therefore, have not paid any money to date.

MRS DUNNE: But you have a commitment to pay 10 per cent?

MS DUNDAS: But you have a commitment to pay 10 per cent possibly before 1 July 2003?

Mr Paulsen: Yes. And there is some funding within the budget, yes.

MS DUNDAS: That's my next question. Where is that money going to come from?

Mr Paulsen: Within the budget, from the previous year's funding, recurrent funding.

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MS DUNDAS: So it's just out of the recurrent funding?

Mr Paulsen: Yes.

THE CHAIR: If it's coming from recurrent funding what's it displacing? Or it was allocated for that purpose?

Mr Paulsen: Yes.

MS DUNDAS: When was it allocated for that purpose?

Mr Paulsen: There's \$381,000 in the recurrent funding for the CAD project.

MR HARGREAVES: I want to ask a question relating to BP4, page 285. It relates in fact to Ambulance Services. It indicates the 2002-03 targets, the outcomes for that year and the targets for next year. The survival rate for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest, a six-year average, is 18 per cent. Can I ask you, firstly: why is the figure so low? I'm sure you can answer that because it's a rolling six-year average, I understand. But also what initiatives has the Ambulance Service actually introduced that can have an impact on that?

Mr Paulsen: I'll ask John to contribute to that if I can't give you all the information, but I'm pretty confident I can. John my assistant might like to add some information. Firstly, the 18 per cent out-of-hospital survival rate, comparative to most ambulance services within Australia and around the world, is certainly equal to the survival rates achieved by most ambulance services and in many cases is higher than other ambulance services.

Some services, particularly some in the US—and Seattle, for instance, would be one city—do achieve higher out-of-hospital survival rates. In some cases it is up to 25 per cent with patients who suffer from a particular problem known as ventricular fibrillation. The reason that they achieve higher rates than we do is that they have a much stronger community education program in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, to the tune in fact, say, in Seattle where one in four people in knows how to do cardio-pulmonary resuscitation in the street, because they have a very strong public education program. That means that if you have this cardiac arrest in a public place in Seattle there's just about a guarantee someone can immediately implement cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and increase your survival rate significantly.

Hence if we were seeking to improve our out-of-hospital cardiac survival rates, then we should be focusing on having a strong public education campaign in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and other self-help strategies such as how to call for an ambulance, what information you give, et cetera. That's in addition to the existing quality service provided by the Ambulance Service. Obviously we're trying to reduce our response times as much as possible.

MRS DUNNE: We might compare Mr Paulsen's answers this year and last year; it varies. I'm pretty sure you answered the same question last year.

MR HARGREAVES: Quite possibly. I didn't have the pleasure of being here at the time and being—

MRS CROSS: The recipient of the answer.

MR HARGREAVES: And being educated so comprehensively. As I understand it, there's essentially a two-pronged attack on this. One is the community awareness—as you are saying, getting people to be able to have the patient in such a state that the ambulance officers have got a bit of a chance. Is there anything, though, that can be done in terms of the technology, training, for the trip from the incident to the hospital?

Mr Paulsen: The ambulance officers training and technology?

MR HARGREAVES: Yes. You talk about out of hospital. Those steps stop when you drive up the emergency room's driveway?

Mr Paulsen: Well, from the time the patient has the event, the collapse or whatever the case may be till the time the patient goes home there is a health continuum of care, and we're only one component of that. Although the ambulance component or involvement in that patient's care ceases when we deliver that patient to the hospital, the very things that we do in the pre-hospital phase affect the outcome of that patient subsequently in hospital, even down to reduced hospital stay times and, therefore, reduced costs to the system, not only from a patient benefit point of view but from a cost point of view.

Every area in fact in which we can improve that process of care—whether it be the bystander-initiated CPR through a public education campaign, the improved response times for us to get there and provide that care earlier, the improved care within the ambulance transport phase and then subsequently the improved care in the emergency department—obviously has an impact on that patient's well-being and ultimately reduces the costs immediately of that patient's care but also in the broad terms to the community in the long run.

In terms of the ambulance treatment phase: the Ambulance Service in the ACT is certainly equal to any ambulance service in the world in the quality of care it provides, and the strategies we employ are leading edge in terms of that which is provided in a pre-hospital setting.

Mr Castle: And could I add that that phraseology, out-of-hospital care, is the nationally accepted statistic that we compare across the jurisdictions as well, and it's designed to try to focus on the ambulance component as opposed to the hospital; that's all it is.

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Paulsen, you talk about the continuum between a person having a heart attack or whatever and then going home, hopefully okay. Does that 18 per cent refer to that whole demographic or just your role in it?

Mr Paulsen: No, the 18 per cent figure refers specifically to one category of patients—that is, those patients who suffer a cardiac arrest as a result of a medical emergency such as ventricular fibrillation; in other words, they have a sudden collapse; their heart stops—and that measures that specific event in Australia. We are able to compare that with results not only within Australia but with other services in the world.

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THE CHAIR: Do we have a measure of how many of the victims are actually dead when the ambulance officers arrive, because I suspect it's a very unkind statistic in relation to the Ambulance Service?

Mr Paulsen: We do have information within our clinical database which does give us a feel for how many patients when we arrive are in a clinical state where their heart is not beating any more. However the relevance of that is dependent on the timeline; if someone's heart has not been beating for a minute their survivability is much greater than someone who has been in that situation for several hours. Our treatment would vary accordingly.

MR PRATT: Minister, coming out of the December 2001 fires, which was a significant wake-up call for the whole ACT community, there were a large number of recommendations which ESB and other agencies ought to adopt. Can you advise me how many of those recommendations have been adopted since December 2001 and actually implemented?

Mr Wood: Yes, there might be some data here about that.

Mr Castle: I'll call on Mr Peter Lucas-Smith but preface it by saying that I don't have that data in front of me. I'm not too sure I could actually give you that information, but there were an amalgam of various levels of recommendations that were put together, some at emergency management committee level. One of those that were asked before was really at the emergency management committee level. Some were at much more an operational level. Peter, I'm not too sure whether you can add to that.

Mr Lucas-Smith: I can't give you an exact number. About 80 per cent of them have certainly been implemented. There were, all up, a total of 106 issues to be addressed. That was actually a very, very encouraging number that came out of that whole debriefing process because, firstly, of the 106 issues to be addressed there were no major command and control issues and there were no organisational or structural issues; they were fairly minor issues that related primarily to improvements in training or procedural aspects and things like that which we can address.

Of the 106 recommendations, about 34 or 36 came specifically out of the emergency management committee and were looked at at a much higher strategic level across government, government agencies. The remainder were within the organisation and addressed within the organisation. As I said, well over 80 percent are complete. I can give you an exact number on notice if you want the exact number, but we're well down the path.

The ones that are still outstanding are only outstanding on the basis that they require us to make a significant change to our training curriculum, and that requires production of material and so forth.

MR PRATT: Are any of those unadoptable, so to speak, simply because of budget restrictions? Clearly the communication question has come up again, and that's part of an ongoing program. Are there any critical recommendations, lifesaving recommendations, which you feel were not able to be got up in time, before, for example, January 2003—for whatever reason?

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Mr Lucas-Smith: There were certainly no ones that I can recall as being critical in that nature. As I said, no major issues were identified in the December 2001 fires in relation to command and control. We need to recognise that the coronial inquiry into that fire has still not yet been heard, although the coronial process has started. I'm sure the coroner will have their own recommendations and comments to make about any of those sorts of outcomes. But all that information—the 106 issues and so forth, along with a whole range—have all been given over to the coroner's office anyway.

MR PRATT: Has the need to address the Scania truck systemic weakness issue progressed quickly enough for your liking?

Mr Lucas-Smith: The Scania truck issue is an ACT Fire Brigade truck issue and not a bushfire service truck issue, and I'm not the commissioner for the ACT Fire Brigade.

MR PRATT: I'll flick that back again.

Mr Castle: On the Scania issue, publicity was given to a problem with an earlier version, the Mark 3 series. That problem was addressed for the Mark 4 series, with a different type of material, a fire retardant material in the filter. The manufacturer also relocated the air intake for the air filter. It was considered, I suppose by the manufacturers and others, that as it was behind a panel, therefore, there was not a direct intake of the embers. That proved that it was still a problem. The manager of our technical services area is working with the manufacturers on behalf of the national forum of the fire agencies that use those Scania's to come up with a solution in terms of less vulnerability.

MR PRATT: How long since the identification of that weakness has it taken to deal with it, and how far have you got to go in terms of sorting out the fleet?

Mr Castle: The weakness became very evident by the burning of a truck on 18 January. How far we've progressed: there have been meetings and the manufacturer's actually looking at that at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Was it evident before 18 January?

Mr Castle: I understand that one other jurisdiction had a problem before 18 January. We're looking to improve that communication process with the manufacturer and also with the inter-agencies through the Australasian Fire Authorities Council.

MR PRATT: And what do you understand to be the actual duration between identification and action being taken?

Mr Keady: Well, Mr Pratt, my understanding is—because I inquired on this as well—that the series 4 truck was thought to have solved the problem because of the relocation of the air filter. So far as the ACT Fire Brigade's concerned, it wasn't until 18 January that it was found that that relocation in fact didn't work under those kinds of extreme circumstances. What we've found out since—after our incident and after making inquiries—is that one or more services interstate has had the same problem. But they didn't tell us, and we didn't know.

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As a consequence of that and following our January experience, an officer from the ACT Fire Brigade is now heading a committee of officers from other fire services around Australia. They have made a joint approach for all those services who are using Scania chassis to Scania to get a solution to the problem.

THE CHAIR: Mr Prince, I welcome you to the committee hearing. How many series 3 and series 4 vehicles have we? Are they all 4s? Are they all 3s?

Mr Prince: I'll just refer to the back of the room for the moment. Series 3, we have 6; and series 4, we have 7.

MR PRATT: Have all six of the series 3 been upgraded?

Mr Prince: Yes, they have been. The position with the series changeovers at the moment is: we're working with Scania; they will start production changes on the series 4 in July; hopefully, with everything being rectified by October.

MR PRATT: Mr Keady, do our services have in place a safety management system, a safety reporting system, or do you have some means of tapping into a national system to quickly catch up on issues such as failed Scania trucks in other jurisdictions?

Mr Keady: My understanding is—and Mr Castle can give you a bit more detail—we did. I thought that the information exchange was through AFAC, which is the Australasian Fire Authorities Council, and that has been used as an information exchange and a cooperative research centre in many ways for all the Australian fire authorities, both urban and rural. So the failure to pass on the information that a couple of other services had experienced this kind of failure with series 4 is a concern, and it's something I think that AFAC is exploring itself to ensure that kind of problem doesn't recur and that the information exchange which we thought was effective is indeed so.

Mr Prince: I might add that Scania actually changed the series 4 filter system. We didn't foresee, and neither did they, that those changes would impact on the modus in total.

MR PRATT: But the question also is: do you have in place a reporting system for all the equipment and material used by Emergency Services personnel? The Scania truck issue is one that highlights a weakness. Are you satisfied now that you'll be able to look at all of those requirements right down to breathing apparatus, equipment, clothing, et cetera?

Mr Keady: From what I've said, the reporting systems that are internal, yes. I guess it'd be a question of materiality which would be dependent on individual services to identify how important a particular issue is, or a particular failure they may have experienced is, to pass on. If it was something like the incident involving these trucks, what was discovered really was a design fault.

I'd need to make the point that these are urban pumpers which normally, but not exclusively, wouldn't be exposed to the conditions that resulted in the burning of this truck. But now that we're aware of the problem, bearing in mind that urban pumpers can from time to time find themselves in those circumstances, it'll be rectified.

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So in answer to your question: yes, we do rely on the systems we have in place both within ACT Emergency Services Bureau and in other jurisdictions to exchange information about those kinds of failures, particularly where it involves equipment that is reasonably common across the services. But as this incident shows, our assumptions about the preparedness and the alacrity with which people might provide information can't always be relied on. Hopefully, as a result of this incident, people will be taking action in their individual services to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Mr Wood: This time next week, or next Thursday or Friday, there's a meeting of emergency services ministers somewhere or other.

Mr Keady: Melbourne.

Mr Wood: This issue is on the agenda—the reporting of defects or whatever across a whole range of materials.

Mr Castle: Mr Prince might want to add to that too.

Mr Prince: May I add that each fire service within Australia uses different types of equipment; there are variations; different manufacturers. Obviously if we're talking about making ourselves aware, we do attempt, through the Australasian Fire Authorities Council, to do that on a regular basis. This was a major one that has gone through. Normally it does not occur.

THE CHAIR: Were you in discussions with Scania, say, in December about perceived faults with the trucks? I'd heard stories that new filters had been promised in December and had not arrived.

Mr Prince: It was a cusp; there was an interim measure in relation to changing the filter; it had not been completed.

THE CHAIR: That was in December?

Mr Prince: That's correct.

THE CHAIR: And what has Scania done to rectify that interim measure since?

Mr Prince: Now they have met with all national fleet members. The manager from ESB fleet, Wayne Willimott, is actually working with Scania to rectify their production requirements for the filter system.

THE CHAIR: Was Scania helpful in that time, or were we in the process of chasing them for the replacement filters?

Mr Prince: Yes, they were.

Mr Castle: And we have actually put a screen over the top of the filter, over the top of the air intake as well, on all of the Scania's; so we've actually taken some measures.

MRS CROSS: Are they fireproof?

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Mr Castle: The screen is actually a metal screen, to actually stop the embers.

MRS CROSS: But is the rest of the device fireproof? I heard that one of the problems that the trucks had was that elements of it that needed to stay in place sort of melted.

Mr Castle: Well, that's the problem with the air filter; it actually caught fire—sucked the ambers down into it and then caught fire.

MRS DUNNE: I have a supplementary which was supplementary about 10 minutes ago. Could I ask Mr Lucas-Smith to come back to the table. We got off the track, but it actually relates a bit to this. It's about equipment and it's about the 2001 fires and the recommendations out of that. But before I get onto the equipment, I'd like to ask the question—and I'm not sure who answered the question: why is it that the coronial inquest into the 2001 fires has only just commenced?

Mr Keady: The listing of the inquest is a matter for the coroner; it's a judicial decision; it's not something which I can account for. It's a decision of the coroner when to list.

Mr Wood: That's an aberration of powers, I guess.

Mr Keady: And he's recently done so.

MRS DUNNE: There's nothing that the Emergency Services Bureau or anyone can do? Given the extent of the fires in 2001, there's no pressure to be brought, no sort of prioritising or anything like that where elements of the government can say to the coroner, "Gee, you really need to get on with this"?

Mr Keady: The matter has already been listed, and it's had one hearing; so we're part heard.

MRS DUNNE: That was last week or the week before.

Mr Keady: All I can say is that there's no tardiness on the part of the Emergency Services Bureau.

MRS DUNNE: I realise that.

Mr Keady: It is entirely a matter for the court to determine when to list it.

MRS DUNNE: There are supplementary questions on the equipment stuff in relation to the 2001 fires.

THE CHAIR: Be quick.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I hope to. Mr Lucas-Smith, I don't know whether this was in the recommendations that came out of the 2001 fires, but it was put to me by rural fire-fighters after the 2001 fires that there were problems with the rural pumpers in that a lot of the newer equipment had plastic fitments or non-metal fitments that didn't stand up to

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heat and that fuel lines and coolant lines and things like this melted in the heat during the fires of 2001 or on other occasions. Have those issues been addressed?

Mr Lucas-Smith: We've done a complete and detailed risk assessment on all our fire appliances. There's no doubt whatsoever that the last couple of years the trucks that have come off the assembly line—the Isuzu trucks and the Hino trucks—have had a lot of plastic in them because they're not manufactured as a fire appliance cab chassis; that's what we convert them to. We've raised this issue, once again through the Australasian Fire Authorities Council, and through that forum with the manufacturers of these trucks to have modifications made.

There is retrofitting that we can do to limit some of those plastics, but on the external parts of the truck there's not a great deal we can do. We've certainly lagged all the brake linings and the fuel lines; we've put metal screens around the battery areas; and we've put aba screening around aba areas, particularly the fuel bowl. The fuel bowl on a diesel truck was actually a plastic fuel bowl. We've replaced that with glass fuel bowls and things like that.

We've gone through those sorts of processes, and we've made a whole number of alterations and that to the truck following our risk assessment process. Certainly in January 2003 we had some plastic elements on the external parts of a couple of trucks melt. During the December 2001 fires we had one that I'm aware of. There was certainly no danger posed to any of the trucks or anything like that that I'm aware of.

One of our older trucks, which was attached to ACT Forests, had a problem with air brakes. It had virtually no plastic parts on it at all; it was purely and simply a bleeding of the air pressure which locked the brakes at a critical time, and that caused some problems. But those sorts of mechanical problems happen when you're working in an all-terrain environment anyway.

MRS DUNNE: You've actually said that you buy Isuzu and some other brand—

Mr Lucas-Smith: Hino.

MRS DUNNE: Trucks that are not purpose built.

Mr Lucas-Smith: The cab chassis.

MRS DUNNE: The cab chassis are not purpose built for the purpose you buy them for. Did you do a risk assessment before you actually contracted to buy these trucks, and were you aware before you actually contracted to buy them that they had plastic fuel tanks? In terms of pure road safety, the whole idea of putting a plastic fuel tank on a diesel truck does strike me as slightly bizarre. But did you do a risk assessment and sort of say, "Hey, there's a whole lot of stuff here that's going to melt if I'm on a fire ground"?

Mr Lucas-Smith: We carried out the risk assessment, and I'm quite happy to make that available to the committee if you want it.

MRS DUNNE: I'd love to see that.

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Mr Lucas-Smith: We did that a number of years ago. I can't remember exactly what year it was, but it would have been in 1999 or 2000 that we would have done that risk assessment, because we were concerned about it and we wanted to have a look at exactly what the level of exposures and that were. So we went through a process.

Through the risk assessment process we also looked at the history—what's happened to our trucks in the past? Are our trucks in fact suffering damage on the fire line? Is this in fact exposing any of our fire-fighters or any of our people to an unsafe environment or a situation which may compromise their safety and welfare? We found—and I can't give you it exactly; I haven't got the risk assessment in front of me—that the number of incidents, if there were any at all, was extremely low, to the point where there really wasn't any justification for us to be spending money to make modifications based on the risk assessment.

However, we've still continued down that path with all new trucks that we've been purchasing, to eliminate the amounts of plastic as best we possibly can, and to reduce it. We buy one bushfire tanker each financial year, if we can. It is exactly the same cab chassis that is bought by the whole of the CFA in Victoria, the Country Fire Service in South Australia, and the whole of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. We're all stuck with a market of only two trucks that are really available to us in Australia and meet our needs, and that's the Isuzu and the Hino. If you wanted to go to the much larger dollars you can buy Mercedes or Unimogs and other things like that, but you're doubling your price.

THE CHAIR: Or you can spend 2½ times and go to the ADI fire king—the bushmaster, armour plated fire-fighting truck with in-cabin systems and a big donk. They are big boys' toys.

Mr Wood: The answer is no.

THE CHAIR: It's called BERT, the big enormous red truck. Wrap this up, please, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Chairman, this is a serious matter. Do other country fire agencies undertake retardant processes like shielding the plastic?

Mr Lucas-Smith: In fact, at the present time, not to the extent that we currently do in the ACT.

MRS DUNNE: But if you put in a special order for an Isuzu cab chassis that you're going to use in the rural fire service, can't you order one with a metal fuel tank?

Mr Lucas-Smith: The fuel tanks are metal.

Mr Castle: It's the bowl; it's a little bowl.

Mr Lucas-Smith: It's just the bowl above the filter, that's all it is, that's plastic.

MRS DUNNE: But can't you put in special orders?

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Mr Lucas-Smith: We just change it.

MRS DUNNE: You just change it.

Mr Lucas-Smith: It's a \$15 job.

MR HARGREAVES: I think the fire service is wonderful so I'm going to ask them a question about money. Page 283, BP4: I wanted to ask you to explain to me, in terms of the "user charges—ACT government" under "revenue", the Commonwealth grants and other revenue figures there, why there's nothing in the budget for 2002-03, nothing in the budget for 2003-04 but there are revised figures in the outcomes for 2002-03. Could you explain to me where that came from?

While you're at it, in terms of services the urban fire brigade gives to government buildings like testing them for such things as fire alarms, training people in government departments, do they actually do that as a free-of-charge exercise and include it in the government payment for outputs? Or is the amount of money that we're getting for the fire brigade so inconsequential that it doesn't feature in here?

Mr Castle: The answer to the latter one is yes, we charge. For fire warden training and that sort of stuff, yes we charge. It's actually in the revenue.

MR HARGREAVES: Whereabouts would that be?

Mr Castle: It would be in "general". Under "user charges—non-ACT government" is, I believe, where we actually put that.

MR HARGREAVES: It's only fair that you charge for that, but what about for other buildings?

Mr Castle: If we did it for Commonwealth buildings and did their warden training, it still would appear.

MR HARGREAVES: The Commonwealth issue is another one which is being, as we know, pursued. Let's suggest that you did fire warden training in ACT schools. Would you charge the ACT department of education for that?

Mr Prince: No, I don't think we do.

MR HARGREAVES: So that would be in the services provided free of charge.

Mr Prince: That is correct.

MS DUNDAS: I was on the same page and just wanted to ask about the government payment for outputs.

THE CHAIR: Does that cross over what you're doing?

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MR HARGREAVES: No, but, actually, if you want to give that question to Mr Lenihan, he can answer them both at the same time.

THE CHAIR: Go for your life.

MS DUNDAS: Last year the department was going to meet an \$850,000 reduction across the whole of JACS put on it by Treasury, and that was \$311,000 specifically in emergency management. Was that efficiency met, and how is it reflected in these budget papers?

Mr Keady: Well, that was an impact on the budget base, basically, and that'll carry forward. As to whether it was met, our current budget position in Emergency Services is that we're overexpended; so I guess you'd say no.

MS DUNDAS: Also, just to pick up on a point Mr Hargreaves made that you're predicting that there will be zero income from the user charges, grants from the Commonwealth and other revenue, and you're also predicting that for this year: where did those moneys come from; what was the other revenue; and what was the grant from the Commonwealth?

Mr Keady: Is that the Commonwealth payments?

MR HARGREAVES: On those three items that I mentioned to you, the figures are: user charges—ACT government, \$20,000; grants from the Commonwealth, \$82,000; other revenue, \$100,000. There's nothing in the estimate for that year and there's nothing in the estimate for the coming year.

MS DUNDAS: But every year you estimate that it will be zero. Looking back at the last budget papers you still estimated that it would be zero, but you keep getting revenue from those streams. I'm not saying that you shouldn't get revenue, but I'm just wondering what it is you're doing to get that revenue and why you keep predicting that you won't ever get it again.

Mr Keady: I'll call Mr Lenihan if he can answer, otherwise I might need to take it on notice. We have in the past received grants from the Commonwealth, mainly for particular projects. It may be that is a sort of surviving line in the event that that occurs, but that's sort of an ephemeral thing; it's not a regular source of funds. Unless there's a good explanation.

Mr Lenihan: No, not at this stage. I will have to take it on notice. There was no budgeted amount for it in 2002-03, and certainly none in 2003-04, so I'll just have to go back and check exactly what it is that came out of the actuals for 2002-03.

MR HARGREAVES: Thank you. You just mentioned that the bureau is overspent. I don't know to what extent—and I accept that. I don't have a difficulty with it, except to ask a question about the revenue received, which is a page transfer—and I accept that too. Those services are provided free of charge to places like schools, government departments and generally. Would that actually make the bottom line in the bureau's expenditure?

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Mr Keady: I wouldn't think so. I think the amounts of money we're talking about are very minor. I'd imagine some of those activities would be more or less regarded as community education, and indeed the purpose of undertaking them at all, or intending to undertake them, would be defeated if we charged for them, because if we charged for them presumably people wouldn't be interested.

MR HARGREAVES: Except that I'm not talking about charging, say, individuals out there. What I'm talking about is charging chief executives within the ACT government service, and, as you well know, they ain't got a lot of choice in the matter.

Mr Keady: It is always a delightful prospect, but I think the amount of the money involved here would be very, very small.

MR HARGREAVES: When you do things like participate in the national disaster-type exercises—I think there's one in particular; what would that be?

Mr Castle: Foot and mouth was the last one, I think.

MR HARGREAVES: I attended one out at the airport at one stage, and there's another one coming up, I think.

Mr Castle: That's an airport exercise. That's done by the airport.

MR HARGREAVES: When our services participate in those sorts of things, is the cost of doing that just absorbed into the general cost of the bureau?

Mr Keady: Yes, it's just regarded as a normal departmental or bureau obligation. It's part of our core business, and effectively it's a training exercise. If there was an extraordinary cost involved, well, maybe it's something we'd seek supplementation for. But, in the scale of the exercises that we're talking about, they're regarded as a normal activity; and the cost is absorbed accordingly.

MR HARGREAVES: In terms of costs, I would imagine that one cost that would be a significant cost to the bureau would be fuel—just getting appliances around the place. There is always fluctuation in fuel prices. Presumably they're on the back of a Shell contract. Has that got a rise and fall clause in that contract where it will fluctuate as badly as at the bowser, or is it just pretty static?

Mr Keady: To tell the truth, I don't know. It's negotiated on a whole-of-government basis. I don't know what the rise and fall rates are. We've seen, certainly, very wild swings at the public bowser. Just what kinds of hedging arrangements exist within the contract at a whole-of-government level, I don't know.

Mr Lenihan: It's a national contract. It does fluctuate, and it can have a discount of up to 7c off the bowser price.

MR HARGREAVES: Is the fluctuation such that it has a material difference on your budget, or is it just absorbed into the running costs?

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Mr Keady: Well, I guess it could be one of those variable things. The fluctuation may not be judged as much by what occurs at the public bowser; it's probably judged more by what occurs with world oil prices. They've been going all over the place over the last 12 months.

MR HARGREAVES: Given the fluctuations—and we all suffer that, and privately I suppose we tailor our driving needs according to the amount of money we've got to pay for petrol—does that have an impact on the service?

Mr Castle: Not directly. We turn out to the incidents we're actually advised to turn out to. I suppose there's always been the situation that, if there are extraordinary events like we've just had in the fires, the second appropriation processes then take into account those additional costs, because it's not just the price of fuel; it's the usage that we actually have in terms of number of incidents.

MR HARGREAVES: In the last two years we've had two really significant incidents. Those aside, do you actually have a budget for the fuel that's used?

Mr Castle: We allocate a budget in terms of fuel, and it is rising.

MR HARGREAVES: And what's the performance against that budget like?

Mr Castle: The cost is rising.

MR HARGREAVES: You're constantly having to top that up from somewhere?

Mr Castle: Except the extraordinary event that we just highlighted is exactly that, an extraordinary event. We also had an increasing number of incidents that also will have an effect on that, other than just pure price rise. So the fuel cost is probably an element of additional usage, just in day-to-day emergencies in our activity, and also probably the price fluctuation.

MR HARGREAVES: Does that sort of activity explain a bit the million dollar increase in supply and services in terms of the expenditure last year over the budget and the projected expenditure for 2003-04?

Mr Castle: That contributes to it. The activity has also other costs associated with it—wear and tear on vehicles, just to name one.

THE CHAIR: I have a lighthearted question for Mr Prince. I was driving past the Lodge several weeks after the bushfire and saw one of our fire pumpers being towed by a recovery vehicle. Is it true that the American embassy killed our fire truck?

Mr Prince: No.

THE CHAIR: How was that fire truck damaged?

Mr Prince: It was damaged when a guard removed his finger and allowed the anti-terrorist vehicle barrier up onto the back of the appliance. So it wasn't actually the American embassy; it was a contracted guard.

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THE CHAIR: And who will get the bill for the repair of that truck?

Mr Castle: I think we'll investigate that very closely in the circumstances.

Mr Prince: We have not issued a bill.

THE CHAIR: Were you not aware of this, Mr Keady?

Mr Keady: I think our insurer, in the first instance; but they might want to look at recovery back.

THE CHAIR: I'd actually like to turn to some serious issues. Minister, this is a question for you to start with. The Emergency Services response to the McLeod inquiry says that on the morning of 16 January certain officers briefed the cabinet on the fire situation and possible developments. Were you at that briefing?

Mr Wood: Yes, but that's not the area that I want to get into today, thank you.

THE CHAIR: I appreciate your opening statement, and you will appreciate my response to it. Can you tell the committee what the cabinet was warned of about the fire situation and what possible developments should have been expected?

Mr Wood: Well, that may emerge through McLeod. It may also be the case that that was a cabinet process, cabinet-in-confidence.

THE CHAIR: Are you declaring it cabinet-in-confidence, Mr Wood?

Mr Wood: Well, we were sitting in the cabinet room; so you make your judgment about that.

THE CHAIR: You're not willing at this stage to tell us what it is that you were briefed about on 16 January?

Mr Wood: Well, not at this stage.

MRS DUNNE: Was it a formally constituted meeting of the cabinet?

Mr Wood: Well, I'm not going to go down into questions.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wood or perhaps Mr Castles, on the afternoon of the 16th, the CFCO briefed the Fire Commissioner and senior staff of the Fire Brigade. Was that the first time that the fire officers were briefed?

Mr Wood: No, we're going down a series of questions that are appropriate for Mr McLeod, and that's where all these issues may properly be discussed.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wood, I will ask my questions, and I do expect answers to them. If you choose not to answer them, that will be noted.

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Mr Wood: Well, you'd better note it then; that's what you'd better do.

THE CHAIR: As a consequence of the fires, there is something like \$35 million worth of appropriations expected over the next couple of years, and it is entirely within the realms of this committee to ask these questions.

Mr Wood: You may look at those appropriations; indeed you may.

THE CHAIR: Mr Castle or perhaps Mr Prince, on 17 January, the ACT Fire Brigade updated its activity levels and two of the things that were undertaken included the interface hydrants—

Mr Wood: Well. I don't know that you need to proceed down there any further because I've indicated what's happening at this committee hearing and where questions of that nature will be properly answered.

THE CHAIR: Well, Mr Wood, I'm intending to put this to you.

Mr Wood: We can go round in circles for ever and ever if you like.

THE CHAIR: Well, we certainly will then.

Mr Wood: But my position is clear. It is the proper position to take. I've taken it on advice, and that's what will stay.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wood, it has long been the tradition that estimates committees can ask whatever questions they wish.

Mr Wood: Well not quite. They can ask, but they're not always assured they're going to get an answer.

THE CHAIR: And they are normally given answers.

Mr Wood: Yes, I think that's right.

THE CHAIR: On very rare occasions would a committee be denied an answer. I will ask my questions.

Mr Wood: Well, this is one of those occasions.

THE CHAIR: Well, then, Mr Wood, I suspect you run the risk of being in contempt of this committee and possibly in contempt of the Assembly.

Mr Wood: Well, you may take that through. If that's the course you wish to take, you may do so. But I have stated the position, and that position holds.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wood, I'll ask these questions of you, not to embarrass officers.

Mr Wood: Well, will you put them on notice, perhaps? That might be the way to go if you've got them written out.

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THE CHAIR: No, Mr Wood, I will not put them on notice. These are questions that are being asked—

Mr Wood: Do you want me to give you the same answer every time?

THE CHAIR: You may choose to do so.

Mr Wood: All right.

THE CHAIR: These are questions that are being asked in the community; they have asked me to ask them on these days.

Mr Wood: Well, you ask them all of me, if you would.

THE CHAIR: I will ask them all of you, Mr Wood.

Mr Wood: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Because the community expects answers to these questions, and your reticence will be noted.

Mr Wood: The community is going to get the answers to all these questions.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wood, these interface hydrants are the hydrants at the periphery of the city. One of the activities undertaken was that operational staff of the ACT Fire Brigade were tasked with checking hydrants on the interface areas between Duffy and Bonython. Why was that carried out on the 17th?

Mr Wood: I suggest you ask Mr McLeod to answer that; don't put it through me.

THE CHAIR: In the same list of activities undertaken, it mentions evacuation centres and says that liaison occurred with the recovery coordinators under the emergency plan, to identify likely evacuation centres. Given the briefing to cabinet on the 16th—and this is an activity on the 17th—why was that activity undertaken?

Mr Wood: Mr McLeod.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I've been asking for several weeks now for a chronology that the government has refused to give me of what happened on the day. Could you please tell me when the fire reached Pierces Creek, the Cotter, the Uriarra settlement, Stromlo and then Duffy?

Mr Wood: Mr McLeod.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Wood, on the morning of 18 January, the incoming incident controller, a deputy chief fire control officer, adopted an objective which emphasised protection of people and property; the strategy had changed with the deteriorating conditions from fire fighting to protection. This is on the morning of the 18th. At what time did that occur?

Mr Wood: Mr McLeod.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Wood. It then says, in the following four words in the paragraph, Mr Wood, on page 131, that “all resources were tasked”. Does that mean that on the morning of the 18th every unit we had available was tasked to activities?

Mr Wood: Mr McLeod is undertaking a process where that and all these other issues would be thoroughly developed. I don’t believe that this is the venue for that sort of inquiry. Mr McLeod has the expertise to undertake this; and, no disrespect to this committee, it doesn’t.

His is a thorough process that is going to take quite some time; the time is allocated to it. It will be thoroughly considered. It gives respect to the very significant issues that were raised at the time. It gives due consideration to all those issues which can’t be done in the confines of an Assembly committee, and I think you’re paying very great disrespect to officers, to the ESB and to all the processes, by asserting that you want all these answers.

I think the path you are endeavouring to follow is out of line with Assembly procedures. If we look at the core of those procedures, it’s totally unproductive in terms of getting good answers, the very good answers that will be forthcoming to the wide range of questions.

THE CHAIR: Mr Wood, with all due respect, the committee has, as you know, a right to ask questions. Over the past years estimates committees have traversed issues such as Bruce Stadium and the hospital implosion, and answers were available, were always forthcoming. I think what you actually do is a great disservice to the estimates process.

Mr Wood: I am speaking—

THE CHAIR: I heard you in silence, Mr Wood. What you have done is a great disservice to the Estimates Committee and to the Assembly and the Assembly processes. I will end my questions there.

Mr Wood: I might say I’m speaking in full confidence; the issue has been thoroughly debated by me with competent people who understand processes. What I’ve said I say with every confidence.

THE CHAIR: That’s fine.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Chairman, you raised specifically the paragraph on page 131 in the ESB submission to the McLeod inquiry where it says that “all resources were tasked”. I would like to know whether, when that says “all resources were tasked”, was that all ACT resources; or was it all the available resources, including what I understand were 20 tankers provided on the Thursday and Friday from New South Wales?

Mr Wood: As for Mr Smyth, you can ask the question; and as applies in the Assembly, too, you can’t dictate the answer. There are a whole host of answers to come; a whole host of matters to be contested in the two inquiries that have been set up—not just

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McLeod but the automatic process of the coroner's inquiry—and the answers will be forthcoming. All the discussion is ahead of us, and that's where it will happen.

MR PRATT: Mr Chair, can I just point out, before I ask my question, that lessons to be learnt coming out of the January 2003 disaster are extremely important in terms of getting those applied and as soon as we possibly can, and this Estimates Committee in this place is a very, very important vehicle for helping us to progress. We're talking about the lessons that can be learnt and applied rather than pursuing other objectives, and it's against that background that I wish to ask the following questions:

Mr Wood, on 18 January, with the fire breaching the Murrumbidgee and the risk clearly apparent to areas east of the Murrumbidgee, and a fire front of 50 kilometres, a state of emergency was being discussed. Can you please advise who was involved and present at those discussions? What time were those discussions held on Saturday morning? And was the Chief Minister informed at that time about those discussions and their progress?

Mr Wood: You made an opening comment that these are very important issues and warrant a response, and a quick response; and that is true. But your logic didn't develop, in fact, to take on that question of very important issues at stake here. It is then the case that they ought to be thoroughly and properly considered by people and a process competent to do that. And that is why McLeod is up and running.

MR PRATT: Following on from that question: at 2 pm on 18 January a state of emergency was again discussed; and it was clear—according to the ESB submission that I have here, to McLeod—that the Chief Minister was advised. Why did it take 45 minutes from 2.00 to 2.45 to get to the point of that final affirmation? What were the sorts of problems existing that didn't allow for that decision to be arrived at quickly in terms of making a state of emergency? How far did the fire progress in those 45 minutes, Mr Wood?

Mr Wood: Mr Pratt, you and your colleagues have raised, what, probably 10 or 12 questions at the most at this stage. The fact is that there are very many more questions than that; there are a very large number of questions that are possible to raise and need to be raised and contested, discussed. It's simply not within the province of this committee to be able to have the time to do that. So it's not a good process to pick and choose and look at particular issues.

The whole answer, the whole response to the fires, and the report that will come down need to be comprehensive, considered. Just by the nature of your questions today you've indicated clearly enough that you're not in a position to do that. I say this respectfully once again: it is only McLeod and then the coroner who have the resources to go through the very, very large number of questions that are out there. If you're proposing to sit through here and ask, I don't know, 100, 200, 300 or 400 questions, then have them contested and then have the ability to have someone else make their comment on it, you clearly don't understand how limited committees are.

Therefore I point out to you that the McLeod inquiry followed by the coroner's, or in a joint staging there, is the proper way to go.

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THE CHAIR: And it's a shame the same standard wasn't applied when you were in opposition, Mr Wood.

MRS CROSS: Can I ask a question?

THE CHAIR: No, Mr Pratt didn't finish. You might wrap your questions up, Mr Pratt; you're clearly not going to get answers today.

MR PRATT: Can I ask a question which relates to the 10 days leading up to the fire. It's a procedural matter and perhaps your officers may be able to answer this. I notice on pages 111 and 122 of the submission to the McLeod inquiry that there are indications that on two occasions a couple of vehicle accidents blocked roads and didn't allow fire teams to actually get to tackling the stockyard and the Bendora fires. Presumably those vehicles had an accident, blocked the road. Was it that they could not be removed because of legal requirements? Is Emergency Services unable, during fire crises such as this, to override normal procedures and push vehicles off roads to allow crews to get through to the fire front?

Mr Wood: Well, once again—

MR PRATT: Can you possibly answer that one?

Mr Wood: Mr Pratt, once again you demonstrate a reason why this committee's not the place to do that because you're making assumptions. Can it be presumed? Well, no, nothing can be presumed. It's all to be contested and argued through thoroughly.

MR PRATT: Well, I'm simply stating what's in the report.

Mr Wood: So the questions I'm getting are showing quite clearly why this committee should not pursue this line.

THE CHAIR: And your statement shows the contempt in which you now hold the estimates process.

Mr Wood: Not at all.

THE CHAIR: Never before has such a statement been made about any committee of the Assembly and their ability or their right to ask questions.

MRS CROSS: Minister, can I ask you—

Mr Wood: No, I want to respond to that, if you allow me. I am offended by the suggestion that I'm holding this committee in contempt. I've been in this Assembly all the time since it started, and I believe I pay it and members and processes all the respect that is due. I do not set out to treat this committee with contempt; I do set out to see that the guidance that this Assembly gives, as I've considered in this, is followed; and this is not the place to pursue this inquiry.

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MRS CROSS: Minister, I take your point. Can I just ask some questions, given that I'm one of the newest people on this committee. If in fact we should not be probing into something where an inquiry is being held, hasn't there been a precedent in the past where you, when in opposition, asked similar question of other matters that concerned the Assembly—for example, the hospital implosion and Bruce Stadium, when there were already inquiries on at that time over those matters? Given there's been a precedent in the past for committees such as this one to probe, why is it this committee is not allowed to probe?

I understand the sensitivity of this matter, but there was also a sensitivity with the hospital implosion, because we lost a young girl. There was also a sensitivity with the Bruce Stadium, because of the money that was involved.

I'm only interested in the process here; I'm not going to get into the dirty politics of this, because I have a lot of respect for the Emergency Services people that are in this room and I'm not interested in hurting or offending them at all; and I'll say that in front of them. But I am interested in process, as are, I know, my other crossbench colleagues. For me, it's very important that, if there is a precedent in this Assembly, then you cannot deny us the right to ask questions that you in opposition asked of others.

Now if there is another reason that you can't answer those questions, then let this committee know, and it can consider that reason. But in the meantime, I am interested in due process. And if you are not following the process that I understand this committee is entitled to, then your reason up to now is unacceptable.

Mr Wood: Well, I could go back and check just how much was said in and out of committees on those two incidents that you mentioned. Let me tell you how I set my pattern, and that was: when the committee to inquire into disability services, Gallop, was set up I walked—you can go and look at the record—into this room and said, "I am not proposing to answer any questions about the Gallop inquiry." And that's my answer. That was my proposal, and that was the standard I set.

MRS CROSS: So your standard is different to the government's standard or your colleagues' standards?

Mr Wood: No, I'm not saying that at all.

MRS CROSS: Therefore you're going to run with your own line on this one; is that what you're saying?

Mr Wood: No.

MRS DUNNE: I want to go back to an issue that relates to an issue raised by Mr Pratt. I'd like to ask Mr Keady this.

THE CHAIR: Through Mr Wood, please.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry. This is actually a technical question.

THE CHAIR: Yes, all right.

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MRS DUNNE: I'd like an answer to a technical question, Minister; and that is: who, under the Emergency Services Act, has the delegation to advise the Chief Minister on the calling of a state of emergency—the capacity?

Mr Wood: I think that that's another issues. That's a pretty clear issue. There's a clear process in the act, and I think that's pretty well known anyway.

MRS DUNNE: Well, can I have a description of it please?

Mr Wood: No, I'm not about to give that. Go and look at the act and look at the processes there; it's pretty clear. There's no difficulty. As you say, I don't think it's directly related to the fires, but I suspect that won't be where you'd want to end your question; so I won't get into it.

MRS DUNNE: And the other two parts of my question, which I will put on the record, are: what conditions must be fulfilled before the declaration of a state of emergency? And what material changes are brought about by the declaration of a state of emergency?

Mr Wood: Well, I think those are matters that are not too difficult to find out, and I encourage you to do so.

THE CHAIR: You can't answer, minister?

Mr Wood: I'm not proposing to get into these issues. I acknowledge your question is not quite of the same order as the others, but it will very likely lead down the path that you've been pursuing.

MR HARGREAVES: Firstly, for the record, my recollection of the Bruce Stadium and the hospital implosion issues is that the questions that ensued through this process were in fact after those inquiries concluded.

Mr Wood: Yes, I'd want to check what had happened.

MR HARGREAVES: And I'm not holding up my memory against anybody else's, but that is my understanding. The issue at the moment is that there are two inquiries current. There are no lawyers at this table, and we do not know which is sub judice and which is not. We don't have a legal adviser sitting at this table; so we still can't know whether things are sub judice or not. And I would have thought it prudent to have avoided it.

I wish to dissociate myself from views expressed about the minister's contempt. I don't think that is so at all. If there is such a comment in the report, I flag with the committee there will be a dissenting report. And it'll be a strong one at that. I will not sit here quietly and have questions which put Emergency Services people or the people to whom they're responsible on the spot when there are is scrutiny as it is within the community, within the context of these inquiries.

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I think it's most improper and grossly inappropriate. I think it would have been the proper thing to have avoided those things when the minister indicated he wasn't going to answer these questions. The time for being political about these things is on the floor of the chamber; it's not the role of this committee.

This committee is here to consider financial matters. There is a convention where people can wander all over the place if they so desire. I think you'll find, if you have a look back at the *Hansard*—not so much regarding Bruce Stadium because that was a financial issue, and I don't have any difficulty with that—of the hospital implosion, there were sensitivities which were honoured in the asking of the questions there. I don't see those same sensitivities honoured in this place. I wish to dissociate myself from it.

I would urge you, Mr Chairman, in fact in the interests of time—we're running out of it—to dispense with this nonsense and get on and ask questions possibly of the police.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Hargreaves. Mr Pratt, did you want to make a comment?

MR PRATT: Only to reject everything that Mr Hargreaves has just said.

MR HARGREAVES: Well, I would expect nothing else.

MR PRATT: But having put that on the record, let's move past that; let's move along. This place is designed to scrutinise the functions of government, its resource management and the outputs which come as a consequence. That statement by Mr Hargreaves is rejected. Can I ask pre January 2003?

Mr Wood: Well, I'll pay attention to your question.

MR PRATT: Going back earlier to discussions we've had on equipment matters: Minister, what sort of equipment management cycle do we have in place which allows for the identification of concept, trialling of equipment, introduction to service? Can you describe what that system is, please?

Mr Wood: I think that's a fair question, and I'll seek a response.

Mr Castle: Could I have a bit of clarification as to exactly what you mean?

MR PRATT: The question is clearly predicated on a comment I've seen coming out of the Auditor-General's report. Do you agree with the comments that he has made that the acquisition process can be further developed?

Mr Wood: We can go through the Auditor-General's report now down the same line. Again, the Assembly has full process to deal with the Auditor-General's report, and that will be done. A committee of this Assembly will attend to it; the government will attend to it; and Mr McLeod is able to attend to it.

THE CHAIR: The committee notes the minister's reluctance to again answer reasonable questions that do have an impact on the estimates, that do have an impact on the budget in the coming year and in the outyears after that. In the interests of not wasting officers' times perhaps we will move on to ACT Policing.

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Mr Wood: Okay, good idea.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, gentlemen, for your attendance this afternoon. The committee welcomes the Chief Police Officer of the ACT, Mr John Murray, to the table.

Mr Murray: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Murray, I think you were here when I read the warnings about telling the truth and speaking into the microphone loudly?

Mr Murray: Yes, I understand the principles.

THE CHAIR: You understand the principles. Mr Murray, I see at page 18 of budget document No 2, *Budget at a Glance*, that there are more than 750 police personnel funded by the 2003-04 budget. Is that 750 uniformed officers?

Mr Murray: No. I think this figure requires an explanation of a general nature. To pick any single point in time and say how many police we have is artificial in the sense that over a financial year we have enough people that we can afford, if I can put it in that colloquial way. So at the beginning of the year we might have a number which is different to the number at the end of the year, and the reasons for that are fairly obvious in that the unit costs per police officer vary according to things like rank and other variables that can be introduced through the year—which could be industrial claims—that give us extra costs per unit.

So when you say there are 750, at that point of time that would have been correct. Insofar as it being all operational uniform, that number would have been a number which comprised both policing for the ACT and police from AFP National, which we call enabling services. So it's a combined number.

THE CHAIR: So how many of those 750 are sworn officers and how many are unsworn?

Mr Murray: I am just looking for a percentage now—it tends to be static.

THE CHAIR: Okay, and how many police volunteers do we have in the excellent volunteering and police program?

Mr Murray: I can answer that one about the volunteers. There are approximately 50 volunteers currently in place. I can add, too, that it's a great service. They have been highly complimented and they are very serious in performing their duties.

Mr Chair, the figures that I have as of 7 May are: of the ACT police, 593 were sworn, 215 were unsworn. And at that stage we are talking of 808 police.

THE CHAIR: Why is it at that stage we have 808 police on the ACT books?

Mr Murray: Again, it's the variable I mentioned before.

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THE CHAIR: All right.

MR PRATT: Minister or Mr Murray: in terms of the adjustments to budget, has there been any net loss of public service positions in the ACT Policing organisation and, if so, have there been any uniform police taken away from the beat to take up office positions in the absence of anybody who may have moved?

Mr Wood: What, sworn versus unsworn?

MR PRATT: Correct.

Mr Murray: We have been careful over the last two or three years to get the mix right, with the focus on getting as many operational people up front as possible. But we also realise at the same time that there are functions that unsworn people can perform just as well as police, and the best example of that was the communications room—what is sometimes referred to as civilianising that area—by having a police superintendence but mainly with civilians doing the job. We are conscious as we look at the whole of the service in terms of efficiency and effectiveness to look at that mix and there has been no substantial shift over the last two years, apart from the one I mentioned.

MR PRATT: There is nothing planned as a result of this last budget preparation that over the next financial year or in the outyears to determine that there will be any dramatic change, or in fact any change at all, in the mix of the civilian support service, unsworn police and sworn police?

Mr Murray: I can't guarantee there will be no change, but there will be no substantial change. What we do continually—it's a regular thing—is look at the establishment of our service in terms of the budget available, and in that context we look at the jobs that we have to perform and we also look at who might perform them. By way of example, crime prevention. In the past, it had been assumed that crime prevention was essentially a sworn officer's job. We re-looked at that and we conclude in some instances that it is perhaps equally done with an unsworn person.

MR HARGREAVES: Madam Deputy Chair, can I go down the line that Mr Pratt was talking about.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Mr Pratt, have you finished your question?

MR PRATT: Yes.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Mr Hargreaves.

MR HARGREAVES: It may actually lead onto what Mr Pratt has been asking. In terms of the establishment, I am aware that a couple of years ago there was a bit of a difficulty perhaps with the ageing profile within the police force and the worry about the predicted turnover and having, as it were, a lot of police officers reaching the time when they were leaving the service and therefore the loss of experience and so on. What is the actual mean age of police officers now, and has that problem gone away or is it still there with you?

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Mr Murray: I can talk to it generally and look for specific ages, if you like. Over the last couple of years because of a high recruiting policy we had a lot of police, proportionally a high number of police, who were not so much young but relatively inexperienced, and we also had, in terms of attrition, movement of some of our people to the national part of the Australian Federal Police. But at the same time, it must be said that there was a reciprocal return of people from Australian Federal Police back to ACT Policing, so there was a balancing in that sense.

It is true to say that over the last year there has been a substantial movement of people to and from. But in terms of operational police at the front, it is true also to say that there is arguably a high proportion of younger, less experienced people at the front end—that is quite correct.

MR HARGREAVES: Has there been any sort of movement in the gender mix of police officers, because I know that there was a bit of a push to redress that imbalance?

Mr Murray: The push or the focus that you talk about is based on the premise that it's an occupation which has equity and fairness in mind as it recruits. It hasn't actively recruited specifically for women but it has demonstrated that equality in its advertising campaigns. In other words, there is no quota attached to recruiting. It is essentially a competency-based assessment in terms of recruiting and, coincidentally, sometimes one-third of the recruiting class would comprise women.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: How many female SES officers do you have?

Mr Murray: There is one at SES level. We also have slightly below SES, at superintendent level, the highest ratio I think in the country, which comprises a superintendent in charge of our intelligence area, a superintendent in charge of southern districts—

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Can I just go back to SES, Mr Murray?

Mr Murray: Yes.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: How many SES officers in general?

Mr Murray: Do we have?

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Murray: Myself, plus the deputy, plus the commander, plus the Director of Services. That is four.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Is that four men and one woman?

Mr Murray: No three men and one woman.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Three men and one woman. Okay.

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MR HARGREAVES: To continue that issue, you said that we have got the greatest ratio of women officers at the senior officer level, at the level of superintendent, and you were just elaborating a bit on that.

Mr Murray: Yes. In terms of that level, it is a disproportionately high level of women at that level.

MR HARGREAVES: Thanks for that.

MRS DUNNE: I want to go back to police numbers, if I could, Mr Murray. We have now got 808 on the books as of 5 May or 7 May, whatever that was, which is, from recollection, a fairly high number. You talked about getting what you can afford to pay for. But are there any particular factors at the moment that would indicate why we have such a high number of police on the books? Are they engaged in particular sorts of activities that are unusual, or is it strictly ACT Policing, or is there some emergency protection in there as well?

Mr Murray: Canberra or the ACT is unique in this regard, that we provide a service to the Commonwealth which comprises about 6.7 per cent of our budget, about 90 people. We also have, given the contractual arrangement with Australian Federal Police, enabling services, which is also part of our budget.

MRS DUNNE: What do you mean by “enabling services”?

Mr Murray: People who provide human resources, pay office, computers, forensic sciences—things like that. So that’s the mix.

MRS DUNNE: That’s the mix. That doesn’t include sort of close protection or anything like that?

Mr Murray: Close protection is undertaken by the national part of the Australian Federal Police.

MRS DUNNE: In that number there are no what might be considered national functions like anti-terrorism or anything like that?

Mr Murray: The answer is yes, that is part of that. The money or the funding that comes from the Commonwealth government, the 6.7, is on the basis that we provide a service to the Commonwealth, and that includes things like the protection of Commonwealth buildings, defence and security, and it also includes some aspects of counter-terrorism.

For example, the Commonwealth has funded 10 positions in a specialist response and security group. It is about to fund \$350,000 to improve our police operations centre. It has funded, for example, in that area too, lockers for handguns. There is a series of areas like that where the Commonwealth has decided that, given the blurring, if you like, of the function between ACT policing and its national responsibility through the protection of the Commonwealth interests, they should provide some funding towards that.

MRS DUNNE: And so what does that amount to at the moment?

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Mr Murray: 6.7 per cent.

MRS DUNNE: The 6.7 per cent includes the \$350,000—

Mr Murray: No, that is actually outside that—the \$350,000 is something they have promised. We haven't got it yet but they are going to do that. That is something which is extra.

MRS DUNNE: So in what sense are you going to upgrade—did you say upgrade your communications room?

Mr Murray: Police operations centre.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. What will you be doing there?

Mr Murray: Bringing it up to date. It is really quite good currently, but given the expectations that each city has now in terms of counter-terrorism, we really have to be state of the art, and \$350,000 will do that.

MR PRATT: Mr Murray, given the war against terror situation which the country finds itself in, and the ACT to a lesser degree, has there actually been an increase in operational funding for uniformed police to take care of, shall we call it, counter-terrorist operations within the ACT community as distinct from the AFP counter-terrorist activities protecting federal and international assets?

Mr Murray: There has been no specific funding if you are talking about our responsibility for the territory. We take that as part of our ongoing responsibility within the ACT budget—which we do, because this city, like any other city, has the same propensity in terms of potential attack, and I think that is a responsibility I have to have outside of the national responsibility. So it is within the existing funding, yes.

MR PRATT: Are you satisfied that you have got sufficient—I guess this probably is a case of how long is a piece of string. Can I withdraw that question. Can I instead direct my question to the minister. Minister, in the budget we have \$195,000 allocated to counter-terrorist means within the ACT police proper. I gather that is money allocated for a consultant. What is the timeframe for that consultancy to be undertaken, and what do you aim to achieve with that consultancy? And who is the consultant?

Ms Kelly: That initiative is within my division. It is actually not a consultancy. It is the retention of a permanent employee, actually under a 12-month contract. But he is an employee of government and he is a security coordinator. He is currently on board and he will be with us for the next 12 months. His task is a very broad task.

As part of our responsibilities as a member of the national counter-terrorism committee, we have a responsibility to assist in protecting critical infrastructure in the ACT, and that is both government and privately owned critical infrastructure. There is a national process whereby there is a template that has been developed to help infrastructure owners identify risks and manage them within various security alert levels. The security coordinator is working with private industry in the ACT currently to start that process,

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and we are on track and in accordance with the timetable that the national counter-terrorism committee has set down.

So it is very much that private sector focus, and then the other side of his work is in relation to government. He is assisting with a review of government security procedures. Government, of course, owns a lot of critical infrastructure and he is assisting in coordinating government's response to make sure that we are having a consistent approach to the way we protect our infrastructure.

He is also looking at more static security issues within government and the employee security issues within government. We are developing a protective security manual. In the same way as the Commonwealth have a protective security manual, the ACT is developing its own, and that will provide for things like building security and the procedures that should be in place in relation to employees in the ACT government.

The other aspect of his work is to assist us in ensuring that the measures that we have to deal with a terrorist incident from the territory government's point of view, which is different from the ACT Policing's point of view, are in place. So we have established a manual for the operation of the territory crisis centre and established a training procedure, and all of that will be exercised in the next few weeks.

MR PRATT: What proportion of that person's role crosses out of the police arena as such and into the ACT government emergency management sphere? What percentage?

Ms Kelly: He works very closely with police. The work in relation to critical infrastructure is done with a working group of which ACT Policing's specialist response and security group is an important member. So I am not sure that I could put an accurate proportion on that.

MR PRATT: Integrated.

Ms Kelly: Yes, very much so.

MR PRATT: Mr Wood, could we better enhance the ACT community's security, the domestic component of the ACT as it sits alongside these critical federal target areas, by enhancing the capability of our beat police?

Mr Wood: I am very confident with the capacity of the ACT police and their ability to deal with circumstances. The special response squad is an excellent initiative and that sort of ability is very widespread within the police services. You can always enhance and expand and all those sorts of things. Mr Murray might have some comment about that.

Mr Murray: Yes, I can add. I think it is a very good question because it's not just the specialist groups that we expect to be able to have the capability in terms of counter-terrorism. So to that end the Australian Federal Police has gone across the country, including the ACT, on an awareness program. The awareness program gives a security profile of the city, to some extent confidential, but it also recognises the need in some instances to train people up in terms of command and control.

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To add to the minister's point, we feel entirely capable, as we are required to under the national counter-terrorist arrangements, to protect this city against counter-terrorism. In doing that and to prove that we have—

THE CHAIR: Surely against terrorism.

Mr Murray: Yes. Sorry. I correct myself, thank you. And to prove that, if indeed proof is required, next week we are having a three-day exercise, which is funded by the Commonwealth. It will be a simulated terrorist attack—not a counter-terrorist attack; it will be a terrorist attack—and we will be put on notice about that and our capability will be tested.

Just to make that point: I belong to a committee called the National Counter-Terrorist Committee. My contribution to that on behalf of the ACT is: I will undertake to have the capability to meet any terrorist situation that arises. In saying that, obviously the extent of the terrorism exercise might well be that we can't handle it by ourselves. But within the counter-terrorist cooperative arrangements, we have with other states and territories the facility to draw from them as well, just as they would draw from us. So not just the specialist response people but also the general duties people are well versed and will be tested next week in counter-terrorism.

MR PRATT: Minister, given the international terrorist threat that we have to concede can potentially impact on the ACT community, what extra effort and funding do you intend to put into ACT community policing as part of their role to add that layer of capability working along with AFP assets?

Mr Wood: The budget indicates what resources are there. The change to the budget would be a response to the certified agreement process that is under way. What additional? There is no further money. We stand on the great capacity of the ACT police.

MR PRATT: Which we have a lot of confidence in, by the way.

Mr Wood: Yes.

MR PRATT: Thanks, Minister.

MRS BURKE: My question is to you, Minister. A letter was sent to some residents on 15 May by the AFP from Michael Chew, detective superintendent, Territory Investigation Group—it's an excellent letter and I really support what the AFP have done here, and it's good to see a cranking up of the level of activity. This does advise tenants of increased activity, which we have seen, and I want the AFP and you, Minister, to note my appreciation of this continued action. Can the minister please advise the committee if he is actually now really in need of more resources, financial or otherwise, from his government to ensure that this increased level of activity is maintained and sustained?

Mr Wood: I think it will happen under the current arrangements.

MRS BURKE: So it won't affect your bottom line?

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Mr Wood: I'm not proposing a supplementary appropriation bill at this stage. Interest from police ebbs and flows, depending where incidents occur. Mr Murray is much more conversant about that. But we go through periods of quiet in some places and then for particular reasons we get periods of a bit more agitation in other places, and this is across the whole community. And the police, I believe, respond very well.

MRS BURKE: I concur.

Mr Wood: But I'm not proposing before the budget is even passed to seek further funding to do anything.

MRS BURKE: I think you would agree we have got extenuating circumstances within our community at the moment and I don't think anybody would really argue that. So you don't see it affecting the bottom line. You are not at this stage then telling me that you will need to ask for extra resources, human or financial?

Mr Wood: I don't expect to.

MRS BURKE: Under the current arrangement you will be able to meet all the costs. And perhaps finally you may like to advise the committee of something. We have talked—I know that you know I am interested in this, too; and I have talked to Mr Murray about this—about a deepening of relationships between Housing and police, and you know you are in that unique position. Would you like to flesh out perhaps some of those things that you said this morning, that you have had a good relationship—

Mr Wood: What I have been aware of as a minister, as a backbencher, as a shadow minister for housing, and I was shadow police minister, too, on one occasion—

MRS BURKE: The current relationship that you have.

Mr Wood: The current relationship continues as before. I think it is a very good one. I am aware of many circumstances where the police presence is very beneficial. There are times when I have been responsible over the years for saying, "Gee, can you do something? Can you have a look in this street or that?" And I might say, that applies to non-public housing too where sensitively, because you don't want to direct anything, you suggest that a look here and there might be beneficial. That has been good. And I think it is happening. You have stirred it along a little bit and it is certainly happening at the moment, and I think the relationship continues to be good. Mr Murray might want to add to that.

Mr Murray: Yes, I can add, in two dimensions perhaps. We are speaking with Housing about certain areas where police by themselves would be ineffective. Most community problems cannot be solved simply by arresting people or something akin to that. So we are working with Housing and looking at other agencies that might allow us to have a joint approach to issues like that. And I think that is the only way to go.

The other aspect that we feel equally concerned about is trying to prevent things before they happen. So we are giving equal time to crime prevention. For example, in a recent situation, a particular area, where there were concerns about criminality and public order within a particular group of houses, when we arrested a certain amount of people we

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followed that up with a crime prevention team going in to try to reassure the people about their relative safety. That seemed to be successful.

But as recently as this morning I was talking with a researcher from the Australian National University about a more sophisticated approach to issues of community order and wellbeing, including housing, and that was mentioned specifically this morning. We won, you might recall, a \$1.2 million grant from the Commonwealth grants scheme for a longitudinal study into policing in this territory over the next four years. She belongs to that research group and we can use her and her colleagues for these sorts of short-term analyses which we are about to do. She has undertaken, as I say as recently as this morning, to look into how a community might police an area which is defined by geography, as in housing. So we are doing that as well.

MRS BURKE: Again, I just wanted to commend the work of the AFP, and obviously the heightened increase or level of activity that is seen. Tenants have phoned me, reassured. They didn't like the uncomfortable stage, but I appreciate and thank you for your work to date.

MR HARGREAVES: Mr Murray, I would like to echo Mrs Burke's comments—if you could pass it back to your officers. I have attended many very small community meetings at which your officers have attended, and it's been most productive and people have felt a heck of a lot better for having had those officers address them.

My question, though, I guess relates to something that we have spoken of before, and something in which you have had some interest. Policing agreements, and the documents which support that, have performance measures in them. And it isn't isolated, I can tell you. Almost all policing agreements have purchase agreements—a preponderance of quantitative measures, which are in my view nothing more than workload statistics. We know that the officers work pretty hard—we don't need the numbers to prove that. But I understand that you have been giving some attention to some qualitative measures, and I would be interested if you could expand on a couple of those, and let the committee know where you are heading with that.

Mr Murray: Yes, you are right. To support your last comment, in recent months with JACS there has been significant consultation about the efficacy of the previous purchase agreement, if you like, to the extent that significant changes have taken place. And, to underline your concern, the removal of many of the quantitative measures has taken place. It is broadly described in terms of one outcome, but there are a series of measures in these outputs. There is the level of crime, which is obvious, but equal attention is given to the fear of crime, police responsiveness, public confidence in the police, road safety, and the support to the judicial process.

I would suggest that in this document, that is here for you to see, the shift away from largely quantitative measures has gone, and if there is a theme or a thematic sort of profile about this purchase agreement, it is largely dependent on how the public feels and how the public receives its services.

MR HARGREAVES: And so there would be, I would hope, more emphasis on the effectiveness of the services as opposed to the efficiency of those services.

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Mr Murray: And how people see the service to be effective, yes.

THE CHAIR: Minister, has that document been tabled in the Assembly yet?

Mr Wood: I don't know that it has been. The agreement—I don't think it has. I am not sure whether it is required to be or not. I will have a look at it.

THE CHAIR: Well, it is just that how can the committee know what outcomes are expected if we are not given a copy of the document?

Mr Wood: Okay. Well, we'll get it to you. There is no reason why not.

THE CHAIR: Because if you go to the one-line statement on page 289, it simply says—

Mr Wood: Okay. We will get the committee a copy of it.

Mr Murray: Can I just add, for the sake of the minister's benefit as well as anybody else's here, that the period to which I have just referred is from 1 July to 31 March, and it has just been sent to the minister's office.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, do you have a question?

MRS DUNNE: Yes. Actually, my first question, Minister, was could we see a copy of the purchase agreement. We had this discussion this time last year. We could talk about the generality of the police operations, but there are no measures or anything in the budget paper, and that does make it very difficult to do so. I would like to see a copy of the purchase agreement.

Mr Wood: Yes, because of the position of the police one step aside, it probably hasn't happened automatically.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. But my principal questions go to capital works, and are fairly varied. The Woden police station. Can the minister please explain to the Estimates Committee first of all the blow-out in costs at 2.33—\$2 million over previously \$5 million, which is a nearly 50 per cent increase in costs; and also the blow-out in the time line from June 2003, which means that the police should be just about moving in, according to last year's capital works budget, to March 2005?

This time last year, and on two or three occasions before, there have been extensive discussions about the urgency and the high priority of needing to do something about the Woden police station. We had a long discussion last year about the desirability of it being in JESC or not, and the original proposal was to address the needs of the police station in the context of the JESC and do other things as well. But the clear message that came out of estimates last year was that the highest priority in the police and emergency services capital works budget was to address the dire need of the police officers working out of Woden police station. And here we are, the whole time line has blown out by 18 months and the budget has blown out by almost 50 per cent, and I would like an explanation.

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Mr Wood: Look, I have got this document, but it's the original document, it's my signature in blue, so we will indicate it; and we will get it copied and—

MRS CROSS: Can we keep it for posterity?

Mr Wood: Well, it might lose all force if we lose it.

MRS DUNNE: No, I want an explanation, Minister.

Mr Wood: Well, I'm about to come to your question on that.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, as to why the budget has blown out and why the time line has blown out.

Mr Wood: Well, the budget hasn't blown out. There was \$5 million in the current year's budget.

MRS DUNNE: None of which has been spent. Sorry.

Mr Wood: That's right. Well, I don't think it's been spent. Someone might tell me if some bit of it has gone.

MRS DUNNE: It seems \$120,000 has been spent.

THE CHAIR: Small change.

Mr Wood: Yes, small change.

Mr Keady: There has been some minor drawing down, yes.

Mr Wood: Yes. The accountants may have a term for it. My term is—and we have discussed this earlier today in other issues—that was an indicative figure to say we are building the Woden police station. That wasn't the amount required. As plans firm up we now have a precise figure.

There has been a delay, and in my understanding of that delay there has been quite a discussion about the number of police who are to be accommodated in that building. That number I think took some settling. Once we got the clear position as to police deployment—if that is correct or changed, or a new organisation or a slightly varied organisation came in—we got the exact number of police. Therefore, we got an exact price on it. The budget hasn't blown out. That's what it's going to cost, and we have indicated that. The time line might have extended because of that process, yes.

MRS DUNNE: Eighteen months.

THE CHAIR: All right. Would you like to indicate in all the areas that you are responsible for as minister which other items are just estimates that will change in next year's budget?

Mr Wood: I wouldn't think there are too many of those, so you can take them—

THE CHAIR: Well, okay. If there aren't too many, will you take on notice and provide to this committee a list of all the other figures that we can't trust in this document.

Mr Wood: I will take it on notice, Mr Smyth, and come back to you in a year's time.

THE CHAIR: Because that's the whole point. The document says that you have got three days. When you say an estimate, an estimate is not a guess; it is not just a number that you put in to fill a hole.

Mr Wood: Well, what were we talking about this morning? What was the one we were talking about?

MRS CROSS: The one this morning we were talking about—and it was my question to you—was regarding an overestimation in what you actually needed. Your explanation at the time—and you can go back to *Hansard* and check it, because I remember—was: “Well, Mrs Cross, you know how it goes. We come up with this figure and then we sort of round it off and work out what we need, and if we don't quite need as much, well, that's why we have estimated.” In this instance, though, it's the other way. You have underestimated.

Mr Wood: Well, I don't think the claim was in last year's budget—I wasn't in the committee at this time and I wasn't the minister. I don't know what you discussed about that \$5 million, whether that was—

MRS DUNNE: It was discussed at great length, Minister, and it was a hand on heart “We're going to commit \$5 million to build this much needed resource by June this year.”

Mr Wood: The whole and nothing but the whole?

MRS DUNNE: Yes, the whole and nothing but the whole, because part of the discussion was that the previous estimate was \$7½ million for a joint emergency services facility.

Mr Wood: An earlier estimate, yes.

MRS DUNNE: And I wanted to know why we were only getting roughly one-third of that for \$5 million. And now we are actually spending almost everything that was originally estimated on the joint emergency services centre to provide us with a police station 18 months after it was originally promised. It is probably now about five years, is it not, Mr Murray, since we started to talk about the building of the Woden police station?

Mr Wood: It does go back some time.

MRS DUNNE: Before your time. Without wanting to verbal Mr Murray—

Mr Murray: Whatever that word means.

MR PRATT: Excellent answer.

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MRS DUNNE: Go to the top of the class, Mr Murray. But one of the things that you made the point about last year was how important and what a high priority the Woden police station was for the morale and the working conditions of the police in the Woden area. Has that changed?

Mr Wood: Mr Murray can answer this. It hasn't changed. I went through the Woden police station some little time ago now and it is totally an unsatisfactory facility. If we go back five years, I might ask you why you didn't build it because that was your turn. Look, it has taken longer.

MRS DUNNE: It's 13B, 13G?

Mr Wood: Something like that, yes. I acknowledge it has taken too long. There has been a lot of discussion about it, particularly about the number of people it would locate. The comparison with the proposed JESC is valid in part because that was a pretty early figure as well and I think the police component and the requirement for police is the most intensive part of a JESC, that it proceeds. I am sorry, I apologise—it has taken too long. I am very satisfied as minister that now that I'm on board it is really up and moving, the money is now there to do the whole job.

MRS CROSS: Minister, just going on from Mrs Dunne's question: can you make a commitment to this committee that you will have it built before the next election or will that be another carrot dangling exercise?

Mr Wood: No, the completion date is after the next election. It is not a factor in it.

MRS CROSS: After the next election. When will you start work on it?

Mr Wood: There is a time line on it, which I have seen.

MRS CROSS: Can you table the time line to the committee?

Mr Wood: Well someone might be able to tell us here.

MRS CROSS: Mr Castle knows?

Mr Wood: The time line—May 2003, finalise functional brief. It's got—

THE CHAIR: Has that been done?

Mr Castle: It's in process.

Mr Wood: It's nearly done. June/July this year, start design; March 2004, call tenders.

MRS CROSS: Why are you waiting that long?

Mr Wood: Well it is interesting because I am looking at the brief that I signed off on this and it makes much the same comment.

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MRS CROSS: Does it?

Mr Wood: So that's something we will look at.

MRS CROSS: Thank you, Minister. That means we agree on this.

Mr Wood: May 2004, award construction contract—that is two to three months to assess the tenders; March 2005, practical completion; April 2005, that's when you move in.

MRS CROSS: That document sounds like an empire building exercise.

Mr Wood: I don't understand that.

MRS CROSS: Yes, you do.

Mr Wood: No I don't.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, you just said that on that timetable you will be letting the building contract in May 2004.

Mr Wood: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: But in the capital works program there is \$5.6 million to be expended in this financial year. How can you expend \$5.6 million between May and June 2004?

Mr Wood: Well that's a fair point. I don't know how the contracts are paid out. I don't imagine it is all in one heap, so it's a fair point.

MRS DUNNE: Can I have an explanation of that, please, and I don't mind taking it on notice.

Mr Wood: There will be significant expenditure. I don't know that it will be all of that amount—architects, the design, earthworks and that sort of thing.

MRS CROSS: Does Mr Keady know?

MRS DUNNE: You are not going to have earthworks until you have signed the contract.

MRS CROSS: Do you know?

Mr Keady: I don't have any more detail. These things have a fairly standard track. Once you get to the point of committing finance there is a standard approach to developing specifications, going to tender, getting a design, and this project will go down that track. The estimates that will be provided in terms of time will come basically from the architects and it will be built, I guess, as quickly as we can.

MRS CROSS: So do you agree with the minister that that time line is stretched out far beyond necessity?

Mr Keady: Well I wouldn't imagine "beyond necessity".

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MRS CROSS: I am assuming you agree with the minister, given—

Mr Keady: If I can say this: there is no desire and there is no need to be pushing this out longer than needs be. There is a commitment to fund fully the project. So I would imagine from the government's perspective—and I don't want to be talking out of place here—it would suit them to have everything open prior to election rather than after.

Mr Wood: Mr Castle indicates that that's a conservative time line in the sense of allowing for all unexpected eventualities and it is hoped that it might move a little faster than that.

MRS CROSS: But at least you and I agree when we first listened to that and you just saw it—

Mr Wood: The design?

MRS CROSS: We both agree and it's quite stretched out, isn't it?

Mr Wood: But it's a new block. It is starting from scratch. It is a flat site so we will see how long it takes to do that.

MRS CROSS: Thank you, Minister.

MRS DUNNE: Could I ask a question on notice in relation to that. Can I have a reconciliation of that time line and the amount of money that is supposed to be spent in this financial year?

Mr Wood: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Minister, on a question of policy: when I was in your seat briefly it was put to me by my officers that a JESC was absolutely urgent in the Woden area, not just for the benefit of police officers who are working in sub-standard conditions but that both the ambulance and the fire station were well beyond their use-by date and were not located in positions that allowed the most effective response times. Your government is now going ahead with the construction of a JESC at Belconnen and you are planning a JESC for West Belconnen. Why is it that we are simply building a stand-alone facility for the police at Woden?

Mr Wood: When I asked this question, the advice was that the site that was designed for the JESC on Melrose Drive became unacceptable to the community—so the site was wiped off in that pre-election time—and that no other site similar to match the need could be found. I, for example, asked a question about a site on Hindmarsh Drive.

MRS CROSS: There was one in Phillip actually, Minister, but you didn't consider it.

Mr Wood: Well, Phillip—sorry about your connection—might have been a bit far and the understanding I have is that there was no other JESC site available.

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THE CHAIR: There are no funds for an upgrade, a refurbishment or indeed a new fire station or ambulance station. Why has the government abandoned those officers in this process?

Mr Wood: They haven't abandoned them. The clear priority, the urgency, was for the police station.

THE CHAIR: My memory of the advice I had was that all three were reasonably urgent and the tours I had of both of the other stations would indicate to me that, although I certainly agree the police station is certainly not up to scratch, both the others certainly needed upgrading as well. We are getting more for less here. We are spending almost the same amount of money to receive a—

MRS CROSS: That's what the Chief Minister told us—more for less.

THE CHAIR: We are getting far less for more cash. Why are we doing that? Why weren't greater efforts made to find a site?

Mr Wood: I think the efforts were made to find a site. It's a bit late now but you all know that area well. You know it particularly well.

MRS CROSS: I do.

Mr Wood: But I don't think you could locate the Woden police down in Phillip.

MRS CROSS: I'm sorry, Minister—

Mr Wood: Sorry about that. You raised questions about security and lighting earlier today that—

MRS CROSS: That would have been the ideal situation for that business district. There was plenty of land, it is close to the Woden—

THE CHAIR: Not for response times.

Mr Wood: That might be contested.

MRS CROSS: You are going to support him now?

THE CHAIR: No, quite clearly the case was based on response times and the site that you have chosen is a substandard site in terms of response times based on the information I was given when I was minister. Why are you accepting a substandard site for the ACT police?

Mr Wood: I have had no data of that order.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps we can have a briefing for the committee on the response times from that location as opposed to the previous site—

Mr Wood: Response times within the—

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THE CHAIR: As was proposed but was simply knocked off, Minister, because of politics generated by your party.

Mr Murray: Chair, would you like me to speak to response times?

THE CHAIR: Yes, Mr Murray.

Mr Murray: Response times insofar as geography is concerned are not at issue. Police are on the road all the time.

MRS CROSS: Can you say that again please, Mr Murray. I didn't hear that. Did you say response—

Mr Murray: Geography is not an issue for police in terms of response.

MRS CROSS: Thank you very much.

Mr Wood: You did hear it—you just wanted it said.

Mr Murray: Because police are on the road, in the cars receiving radio calls, but it might well be an issue, and I suspect it is an issue, for ambulance and fire.

THE CHAIR: Both ambulance and fire brigade.

MRS CROSS: We would have been happy with a police station in Phillip.

Mr Wood: Well, sorry about that.

MRS DUNNE: My question relates to the AFP but also relates to the JESC for Belconnen and the JESC for West Belconnen, both of which are crying out in terms of the time lines. I would like an explanation, Minister, for the blow-out of the time line for West Belconnen joint emergency services from March 2003—they should be in there now and that has not happened, and it is not happening until June next year. Again, we are starting to look at a Belconnen joint emergency services facility and that is not going to happen until 2006, according to the capital works budget.

Mr Wood: That is the capital works program?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Wood: And that's the significant issue there, but Mr Castle might give some more detail.

Mr Castle: If I can start with the Belconnen JESC. We made provision to start the design for that, but that was actually changed in priority to look at Woden because of the state of Woden police station and we actually then switched the priority to Woden JESC. Now that we've actually delinked and the Woden police station is proceeding, we're returning to look at the Belconnen area. All of the services—police, fire and ambulance—are in a row there and it is logical to look at it as a JESC.

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We already had the site—not like Woden, where we had to find a site. We've already earmarked it; it was already indicated that we would go on to the Winchester site. It has also been geared to the Belconnen Town Centre master plan and the site area that we're actually looking at is up facing Lathlain Street, which will ultimately go out to Belconnen Way. That's the story around the Belconnen JESC.

The West Belconnen JESC is, in fact, only fire and ambulance, so it's the services within the ESB. It's not a police station; so it's two services. The issue there is the design and some of the additional requirements for works and we needed to seek an additional appropriation to proceed with that.

MRS DUNNE: What were the additional things?

Mr Castle: The removal of petrol tanks is a significant cost.

MRS DUNNE: Why wasn't that anticipated in the original site analysis?

Mr Castle: Sorry, in the original—

MRS DUNNE: Surely, if you're building a building and you've got tanks on the site, that's one of the things you have to take into account.

Mr Castle: No, the removal of the tanks became an EPA and a broad assessment of all our tanks—Environment Protection Agency.

Mr Keady: The trouble with tanks is that they inevitably have accompanying them a degree of contaminated soil because of leakage over time and it's quite an expensive process.

MRS DUNNE: So what you're actually doing at West Belconnen is basically rejigging the existing site.

Mr Castle: We're refurbishing the building that exists on the site and adding to it to cater for ambulance components, but in the process of that the building gets rejigged and the layout will change, and the usage; in fact, fire, it's anticipated, will use the new bays.

MRS DUNNE: Are they still going to open onto Lhotsky Street or are they going to open onto Ginninderra Drive?

Mr Castle: No, they won't open onto Ginninderra. They currently open onto Lhotsky, but there's that link road and we'll be on a corner site and it's likely that the access will be two bays. The specifics of the design we still need to go through in consultation.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. And with the Belconnen JESC, what is the—

Mr Castle: The money is for the design.

MRS DUNNE: The money this year is for the design. What's the entire project cost over the life of the project?

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Mr Lenihan: It is \$8.65 million.

MRS DUNNE: There's \$1.629 million this year, \$200,000 in previous years and then \$1.4 in the outyears. Where do we get—

Mr Lenihan: Sorry, you're talking of West Belconnen or Belconnen?

MRS DUNNE: Sorry. I left my glasses at home.

THE CHAIR: We might move on. Mrs Burke has a question.

MRS BURKE: It is in regard to the initiative on pages 169 and 170 of BP 3 in relation to the sexual offences response program. I see that you've got it under departmental and territorial, with \$90,000 being allocated in 2003-04. Can you tell us what we're purchasing for that? I notice it's an initiative to allow the DPP and AFP to jointly identify research and so on. Can you just tell me a little bit more about that, Minister?

Mr Murray: Would you like me to answer that question?

Mr Wood: Thank you.

MRS BURKE: Minister, you've got nothing to say first on it?

Mr Wood: No.

Mr Murray: Sorry, I didn't want to jump ahead there.

MRS BURKE: Sorry, I wasn't being disrespectful, Mr Murray. I just wanted the minister to have his input on this as well, if he would.

Mr Murray: You would be aware of the successes that were reported in previous years of the family violence intervention program. The essence of that success has been joining with other agencies and taking a full and comprehensive look at the problem rather than just the crime. The same principle is going to be applied with sexual assault. The \$90,000 will go towards that formal liaison and a full and more sophisticated process of dealing with victims of sexual assault.

MRS BURKE: Minister, would you like to give an overview on that as well from your capacity as minister?

Mr Wood: Yes, we have had multiagency stuff, involving everybody, to see that we are on top of the offences that happen and how we may best deal with them.

MRS BURKE: Is the \$90,000 actually buying people power or a mix, or is it a position? What is it actually about purchasing?

Ms Kelly: The initiative is actually something that came from the DPP. My understanding of it is that one of the prosecutors from the DPP did a Churchill fellowship in both the United States and the UK at the end of last year, where they studied the

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response to sexual assault in various places in the United States and the UK, very much looking at an integrated approach, how police and prosecutors can work together to improve the way the system functions, the experience of victims. That prosecutor has written quite a lengthy report, which I haven't quite completed but I've started, where she raises a whole lot of issues about things. You can't just pick up something that you see working in Alabama and apply it in the ACT. My understanding is that particular parts of research are going to be commissioned to actually see whether these ideas could be applied in the ACT.

MRS BURKE: Thank you for that. If you've got some information on that, I'd be very interested in the research that was done before and your picking up on that. If you can advise my office of that.

Ms Kelly: I can certainly provide you with a copy of the Churchill fellowship report.

MRS BURKE: That would be helpful. Again, what is the actual split between departmental and territorial? What does that actually mean? What does it mean in real terms?

Mr Keady: Essentially, it means that the territorial goes to the AFP for their part of the project and the departmental allocation goes to the DPP for the counterpart.

MRS BURKE: So one's DPP and one's AFP?

Mr Keady: That's correct.

MR PRATT: Minister, the ACT police are subject to administration by the AFP in terms of their conditions of service and their awards, et cetera. Do you consider, though, that the ACT police force is our own? Does the government consider that the police force is the ACT's little baby?

Mr Wood: We're very proud of the police force. Mr Murray is in the position where his boss is Mr Keelty and he has to respond to Mr Keelty. I don't know whether he gets caught occasionally in the grip between ACT and federal, but the contractual arrangement between the AFP and the ACT is one that I think all governments and police have focused on over the years to get the best possible arrangement. I think it works reasonably well. I don't propose that we're going to turn around tomorrow and get our own police force; that would bring enormous troubles. I'm genuinely comfortable with the way it works. Where I have questions, I will ask them of the police. For example, I have had very good liaison since coming to be police minister. Mr Murray has offered a particular resource to me and I think we're working very well.

MR PRATT: Given that they are there to police our community operationally, the CPA is fairly much accountable to government in terms of the priorities of the territory. Are you satisfied that we have sufficient input in regard to looking at their conditions of service and their entitlements, and I am talking specifically about pension matters and, particularly, death cover and medical cover?

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Mr Wood: I have to say I haven't focused on those issues. At the present moment, a new certified agreement is being negotiated and I've had conversations with Mr Keelty and Mr Murray about that. It's not far from being settled. I've focused on those issues. I have to say I haven't caught up with issues that you indicated. I might also add that, as usual, the police association comes knocking on the door and they haven't raised those issues, but they would obviously be of concern to them.

MR PRATT: They've not raised those issues with you?

Mr Wood: Not at this stage.

MR PRATT: You've not heard that sort of thing, particularly in light of recent emergency activities? You've not heard feedback about concerns?

Mr Wood: No, I haven't. Mr Murray might. You appear to be alluding to something that you think I should know about.

Mr Murray: These issues are not unattended. In fact, it would be more natural for the association to go to the AFP nationally on these sorts of submissions. I talked before about enabling areas, the provision of human resources and other things that are common to both the national police and the ACT police. Conditions of work, including pensions, superannuation, et cetera, would be dealt with nationally.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Murray, on page 11 of your submission to Mr McLeod in relation to events on the morning of Saturday, 18 January, you say at one of the dot points, "An ACT Policing officer provided a preliminary briefing to the coroner's office at approximately 11.15 am." Mr Murray, why did you feel it necessary to have an officer brief the coroner at that time?

Mr Wood: Mr Murray tells us, as we know, that the coroner has jurisdiction over fires and deaths and these are issues that he will consider, and, to the extent that Mr McLeod considers them relevant, as I'm sure he's likely to, he will consider those, too. But I reiterate my comments earlier that matters arising from the events of that time are properly dealt with elsewhere.

MRS DUNNE: This was before the event.

Mr Wood: Yes, I understand that.

MRS DUNNE: And I wanted to know why the ACT police thought it was necessary to brief the coroner about something that hadn't happened.

Mr Wood: I am reminded that the fire started on 8 January and that's the period I'm considering, or even more extensive than that perhaps.

THE CHAIR: On that same page, Mr Murray, it is said that at 9.00 am the police operations centre was activated in response to the need to manage police resources, given that the fire had moved towards the ACT faster than originally predicted. What did you base that upon?

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Mr Wood: Mr Murray will speak to Mr McLeod and that issue will be considered in full detail, like many, many others, at that time. You've got a list of questions you'll want to read out, so you may do so, but my response is the same.

MRS DUNNE: I have a question, raised by ACT Policing's submission to the McLeod inquiry, and it seems to be about the operation of the emergency services act. On page 8 there's a discussion about Mr Murray being appointed the territory controller and the appointment of an alternative controller. There seems to be a jurisdictional problem here about the powers of the territory controller and any alternative controller. Seeing that this was, in fact, the first exercising of these powers, will there be amendments to the legislation to clarify the issues?

Mr Wood: That is an issue that has come from a number of quarters. Mr McLeod has received a number of comments about it. He'll report back to us on what he sees as the way to make sure that everything is absolutely clear. That is a matter that the government will then take up, and perhaps the community at large and others, when we see Mr McLeod's report.

MRS DUNNE: My understanding is that if any part of the emergency services legislation is activated, any part of the emergency plan is activated, there is automatically an internal inquiry. Has an internal inquiry on the activation of the emergency plan in January been undertaken?

Mr Wood: I might accept that question because it's separate from the actual incident of the fire. Could you just—

MRS DUNNE: My understanding is that if you activate any part of the emergency plan there is then a review of how it worked and where were the problems, like we did after the fires at Christmas the previous year.

Mr Wood: Is there someone who can respond to that?

Mr Keady: Just on behalf of the emergency services area, normally it wouldn't be just the emergency plan. I guess you'd say after any major incident there'd be a normal debriefing process. Indeed, that's what occurred after the 2001 fires.

MRS DUNNE: But there's a statutory requirement for these things to happen.

Mr Keady: I'm not sure that there's a statutory requirement, no. No, it's normal operating procedure that any event of significance, but certainly one, I suppose, where you were activating the plan, there would be a debriefing process and that would be normally multiagency because normally a number of agencies would respond cooperatively.

MRS DUNNE: So has that happened in relation to—

Mr Murray: I think I can answer that. I chair the emergency management committee which is established under the act. We meet every six weeks and, yes, that process takes place through that committee.

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MRS DUNNE: So that process has taken place.

Mr Murray: Yes, it's formalised.

MRS DUNNE: It is formalised?

Mr Murray: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: That is what I was trying to get at. Has that review process highlighted perhaps a need to amend the legislation to clarify this apparent ambiguity in the powers of the territory controller and the alternative controller?

Mr Wood: Mr Murray will answer, but I don't want to go too far down this track.

MRS DUNNE: No, I just wanted that answer.

Mr Murray: I don't want to go against the minister's advice here but, as with the 2001 fires, a formal process took place through the emergency management committee which had us address issues from lessons learnt, things that had to be done by each agency. That was formalised in a schedule of events that we had to address, some of which have been referred to by Peter Lucas-Smith today. The same sort of process will take place here with the 2003 fires.

MRS DUNNE: So it hasn't taken place?

Mr Murray: No, it will take place, but we're formalising the procedure now. We meet every six weeks. I must say, just to commend the committee, it's the best committee that I've been involved with, and I've been in this area a long time, both because of its expertise but also its level of commitment. I don't think there's been a single day when anyone has sent a proxy along. They've taken matters very, very seriously and continued over the last two years to do so.

MRS CROSS: Can you table the names of the committee to our committee?

Mr Murray: Yes, I can. Through Mr Castle's office, yes.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Chairman, with your indulgence, I have one last question about ACT Policing's submission. It says on page 2, "This chronology is largely drawn from the attached report entitled 'The Recovery Process for Canberra's Bushfire Emergency—18 to 28 January 2003'". On the copy I received that was tabled that was not attached. Was it attached when it left your office?

Mr Murray: No. No, it wasn't.

Mr Wood: I think that's a question I will allow, yes.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I might remind you that it's not up to you to allow questions and this is the nature of the content involved in that answer.

Mr Wood: It's a question I will respond to, Mr Smyth.

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Mr Murray: I don't want to mystify this. I sent this report to both the Chief Minister and Mr Wood and that recovery document was not attached.

MRS DUNNE: But it says in the preamble that it was attached.

Mr Murray: I sent that separately and before the McLeod report that you have there.

MRS DUNNE: Was the recovery document sent to the McLeod inquiry?

Mr Murray: Yes, it was.

MRS DUNNE: It was sent to the McLeod inquiry.

Mr Murray: Was sent to Mr McLeod, yes.

MRS DUNNE: So that when this was tabled it was incomplete?

Mr Murray: No, that's not true.

MRS DUNNE: The minister tabled the other day the agencies' submissions to the McLeod inquiry. What we got was the AFP submission minus the document called "The Recovery Process for Canberra's Bushfire Emergency—18 to 28 January". Can I ask, Minister, where that document is. If it went to Mr McLeod, why wasn't it tabled in the Assembly?

Mr Wood: I don't have an answer for that.

Mr Murray: Well, I think I can. It's not referred to there as an appendix; it's referred to as a reference document.

MRS DUNNE: It says, "The chronology is drawn from the attached report." This is on page 2 of the preamble.

Mr Murray: I'm sorry, if that's what it says, that's—

MRS CROSS: Incorrect.

Mr Murray: Well, it wasn't my intention, put it that way. It wasn't my intention.

MRS DUNNE: Does the chronology exist?

Mr Murray: A chronology does exist.

MRS DUNNE: And did it go to Mr McLeod?

Mr Murray: Yes, it did.

MRS DUNNE: As part of your submission?

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Mr Murray: Separate to. I think that document went at a separate time, but they were coaligned. I'm not sure of the timings.

MRS DUNNE: Could you clarify that for the committee and could the committee obtain a copy of the document?

THE CHAIR: We asked the Chief Minister for that on Monday and he's agreed to supply it.

MR PRATT: Just going back to Mrs Dunne's question of about 5,000 or 6,000 ago. My question goes to my concern about the system and not about people, I stress. Could the anomaly in the Emergency Management Act with respect to the respective responsibilities of the territorial controller and the alternative controller have had something to do with the slowing down of the process of the declaration of emergency on the 18th?

Mr Wood: That would obviously be a question for Mr McLeod. You've asked the question. Mr McLeod would obviously pay attention to that sort of thing and it's not a question which I think we would want to explore today; it's in his province.

Mr Murray: Chair, in answer to, I think, your first question on the proportion of sworn to unsworn police, the percentage is 73 per cent sworn, 27 per cent unsworn.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. Minister, thank you for your attendance and the attendance of departmental staff. We look forward to seeing you next week, ladies and gentlemen.

The committee adjourned at 5.01 pm.