

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2003-2004 (No 2)**

**Members:**

**MR B SMYTH (The Chair)  
MR J HARGREAVES (The Deputy Chair)  
MS R DUNDAS**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**WEDNESDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2003**

**Secretary to the committee:  
Ms S Leyne (Ph: 6205 0490)**

**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 10.25 am.**

### Appearances:

FaBRiC (ACT) Inc

Ms C Daw, manager

Ms J Cain, president

Mrs J Walker, board member and parent representative

**THE CHAIR:** I would like to welcome individuals representing FaBRiC to the committee hearing into the second appropriation bill this morning. I have to read you your rights. 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 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.

The proceedings this morning will be taped and the transcript will be made available. Do representatives of FaBRiC want to make an opening statement to the committee?

**Ms Daw:** Yes, thank you, and thank you for inviting us here today. I will give you a brief background on FaBRiC, the organisation, the acronym of which stands for family-based respite care. We provide respite and social support services to families who have children with a disability, from the time of the children's birth until they are 25.

We're funded by HACC, the home and community care program. We are the main provider of respite care in the ACT to families with children with disabilities. First, I'd like to say that—and we were just talking about this—FaBRiC was indirectly affected by the fires, or at least our families and our support workers were, on the day and for the weeks thereafter. We're located in the Grant Cameron community centre and we had to evacuate. First, we thought the building had burnt down, but in fact it hadn't, but we had to evacuate and we could not return there for four weeks.

During the day of the fire and after that, we spent an enormous amount of time on the phone to our families and support workers to ensure as much as possible that we could continue to provide care. Many families and support workers in the ACT lost their homes and were otherwise directly affected.

The primary reason that we are here today is the concern that we have about our inability to continue providing the number of hours of care that we're currently providing. With the funding that we receive from HACC, our contracted hours allow us to provide 50,400 hours or thereabouts, in total. Last financial year, we provided 65,000 hours, well over the number of contracted hours. That came about largely because of payments that are known as the SACS award payments, but actually we were affected because we used the home care award.

So we had some surplus money which we felt it was appropriate to put into providing respite hours. As, at the time—two years ago—we had a waiting list of, I think, 150 families, we were able to clear the waiting list with this additional money. What we hoped to do then into the future, or at least for the next few years, was to use this money to continue providing hours of care over and above the number of contracted hours. Of course, because they were one-off payments, the money is running out, and we anticipate that we'll be able to provide the level of hours that we are currently providing this financial year, but next financial year we're going to be in a spot of bother.

We have 380 families currently on our books. Of those, 38 families have been allocated hours to the end of December and then, pending a determination on our financial situation, we might have to withdraw our services. We also have approximately 130 families on a new waiting list, which started again in January this year. It just continues to build at the rate of one or two families a week. Of course, this is the unmet need that we know about, but there's no list out there that records what the real unmet need is. However, certainly the families who have approached us are on this list.

What is also important to note is that, with our HACC funding, which is recurrent, we received the 2.5 per cent indexation that all HACC-funded agencies did receive. While that is very useful, it doesn't actually address the real costs of providing a service such as ours. Certainly, we're all aware of increasing insurance costs, and just wages are much higher than the 2.5 per cent indexation. So, in effect, actually, our funding is gradually being eroded, but there is still this expectation that we will provide hours at the level of the contract that we have with HACC.

In all, the recurrent funding that we need to address the overcontract usage that we're currently providing is around the \$350,000 mark. I'm stating recurrent funding because we've experienced what it's like just to get the one-off payments, and the effect that can have. The recurrent funding needed to address the priority list of the 130 families that we currently have is \$1.3 million.

I might hand over to Janelle Walker now, who will give you more of an insight.

**Mrs Walker:** In terms of the bushfires, I must congratulate FaBRiC. On the day, they were actually on the radio at about 3 pm, on 666 2CN, to actually inform families about what was going to happen to their care for the day. Thereafter, apart from the impact of thinking they didn't have a building, with all the information there, FaBRiC had to move their premises out to Fyshwick and continue care. Even though we had families directly involved in the bushfire, there were also indirect effects, because not enough support workers were at home. They were mopping up after the fires, and thereafter trying to come to terms with the bushfires, and it was probably a full eight weeks before FaBRiC became fully operational again.

FaBRiC plays an incredibly important role in the community in terms of respite care for families with a disability. It decreases the incidences of mental health problems, it decreases the incidence of child abuse within families, and it even decreases isolation, so it plays an incredibly important part. But I consider that the fires had an incredible impact on us during those times.

**Ms Cain:** I'd like to just add a little bit more to underline the role that FaBRiC plays in the community. In relation to families faced with the challenge of caring for a child with a disability—and that disability could be minor or it could be quite profound—this is something new in our community because, in previous times, many of these children would have been cared for at government expense within an institution.

It's now seen, and probably rightly so, that better care and love is provided within the family home, but I'm sure that it doesn't take very much imagination to recognise the strain that that puts on the family. It's a 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year task; it's a never-ending responsibility. Consequently, a large number of our families are single-parent families, and some are even grandparent families, when a parent or parents simply cannot any longer see the rest of their lives in this way and can't cope.

FaBRiC, we've been told on many occasions by quite a few families, has been their lifesaver. It has gone in, it has given people the opportunity to take a deep breath, take some time out, spend some time together as a couple, spend some time with the siblings or just simply stay there and have somebody else take over a little bit of that pressure. This can relieve the pressure valve for families caring for their children. These people are the hidden need in our society. We don't see these families. Many people don't even know that FaBRiC exists, and why would they? They're the lucky ones. The unlucky ones are the ones who need the services.

It's one of those services that really are going to be ongoing forever in our community. So we are just sitting here telling you about the impact of the fires and the way in which our service was affected. However, we are also telling you about the way the organisation actually responded, because there is an enormous commitment by the people who work within FaBRiC to keep that service rolling—it's beyond the normal commitment within an organisation—and to keep up the support work as well. They have that commitment to their families and their clients. It's beyond that normal working arrangement.

**THE CHAIR:** Cheryl, what's the implication if additional funding is not found? Would there be a need to dramatically wind back FaBRiC's services?

**Ms Daw:** Yes, we'll have to cut the families' hours, or maybe the total number of families, until such time as we bring our budget to the level of the hours we can provide. We will probably have to go back to the HACC contracted hours, so that's 15,000 hours less. That's a substantial number of families we would have to take off our books.

**THE CHAIR:** Currently, your funding comes from Commonwealth and ACT funding through the HACC program.

**Ms Daw:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And you charge families a fee as well?

**Ms Daw:** Yes, we do have a fee structure. It's based on the income of the family and it has six levels. It starts at 50c an hour and goes up to \$5 an hour for a service that costs \$38 an hour to provide. The board recently agreed to increase the fees by 50 per cent, so

the 50c an hour has gone up to 75c an hour and the \$5 an hour has gone up to \$7.50. That has the potential to bring in an additional \$86,000. Of course, according to the HACC guidelines, if there's an inability to pay, we have to address that. Certainly, a family wouldn't lose service if they couldn't pay, for whatever reason.

As Judy was saying, we have many single-parent families who live on less than the lowest level, which is \$17,000.

**THE CHAIR:** How much does it cost an hour to deliver the service? 38?

**Ms Daw:** About \$38 an hour. That's the direct and indirect costs. We provide our service 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to meet the needs of the families and to be as flexible as possible. That means that we might provide those services on Sunday, which is double time, Saturday, which is time and a half, and on Monday to Friday, when there are some penalties after 6 o'clock. It goes on and on. We recognise the value of the qualifications and experience of our support workers. Actually, I think that it's reasonable to pay them that because they're very valuable, of course.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. I think John has a question.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes, thank you very much and thanks for sparing us the time. I have a few questions. You said that you are HACC funded and you also receive revenue from charging. Are there any other sources of revenue?

**Ms Daw:** No. At one stage, we had some funding from Education, but that was for a different program. We have a tiny little bit of money from Disability ACT for one IFA, to support a child, so it doesn't actually affect our respite money.

**MR HARGREAVES:** In your submission for 2003-04, you have a budget of \$2.382 million. Could you break that down into HACC funding and fees for us?

**Ms Daw:** The fees are about \$110,000.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Is that with the 50 per cent increase that you've just told us about, or before that?

**Ms Daw:** No, so if you added on the 86—

**MR HARGREAVES:** That's before the increase, so there needs to be about another 86?

**Ms Daw:** Yes, sorry—it would be about \$190,000.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Okay, there are two more questions from me. I notice in your submission that, in the 2002-03 year, your hours of care were 64,611, and in 2003-04 they were 57,767. That's a drop of 6,844 and yet there was an increase of \$172,000 in expenditure. Was that solely due to insurance increases?

**Ms Daw:** They were our budgeted figures, our outputs. We were hoping that we could drop our hours from 64,000 to 57,000. After a number of discussions around the board

table, and with families and so on, it was decided we would just bring over pretty much the last of our surplus. So, with the first two periods that we've currently provided, it looks like we'll be staying around the 64,000 mark.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Okay, with just an increase of \$172,000. How much of that is going to be eaten up with the insurance increase? Presumably, you've copped it the same as everybody else?

**Ms Daw:** Yes. D and O insurance has increased by 10 per cent. Miscellaneous business insurance, which is public liability and so on, has increased by 10 per cent. Malpractice insurance, which is professional indemnity insurance, has increased by 15 per cent. Workers comp has increased by 7.5 per cent.

**MR HARGREAVES:** And yet your increase is only what looks to me to be around nine per cent, if that, or eight—going from \$2.2 million to nearly \$2.4 million. You are about three or four per cent behind, at least, in every insurance policy that you have, from what I can gather.

**Ms Daw:** Yes.

**MR HARGREAVES:** You mentioned that you were affected by the fires and I assume that the families that you provide the service to were also affected by the fires and have therefore placed a greater demand on your services. There are two points about that that I'd like you to address if you wouldn't mind. One is whether you see that coming back down again after everybody's settled a bit. We can probably expect folks in this sort of family situation to take a heck of a lot longer than everybody else. The second is what would have been the situation with FaBRiC had it not been for the effect of the bushfires on those families? Has it plateaued, do you think? I don't know.

**Ms Daw:** Yes. I think, particularly after the fires, there was a direct impact and we provided additional support to families who had been affected then for as long as they needed it. I know one family went into a hotel room with an autistic boy for a short time and so we provided additional supports there. I think that has plateaued now.

**THE CHAIR:** But that doesn't come anywhere near to addressing the need of the 130 families, I think you said, who are still on your waiting list, the new families who have emerged since January.

**Ms Daw:** That is right. One of the main points about the respite that we provide is that, often, families' situations are crisis driven, whether they are caused by the fires or whatever. If the respite allows the family to maintain equilibrium and sustain its wellbeing, the concern is that taking away this respite, which is ongoing and regular, can send the family into crisis. This is different to the situation at Carers ACT, for instance, which provides one-off, short-term respite care situation.

**MR HARGREAVES:** In the context of the bushfires, there seems to me to be, for very valid reasons, quite a bit of money flying around to support people in the recovery phase. Has your organisation tried to access any of those funds and, if so, what happened?

**Ms Daw:** Yes, we did actually access some money for administrative purposes. We had to replace a couple of computers and we had removal costs—we had to move to two locations during the four weeks we were out—and we had telephone costs—we were on mobile phones for the whole time.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I was actually thinking more of the additional services you had to provide to people affected by fires.

**Ms Daw:** No, actually, we didn't put in for that, I'd have to say. We didn't think of that.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**MS DUNDAS:** You said that a family won't lose service if they can't afford to pay and that that is a stipulation of the HACC guidelines. But, if you're going to be faced with a reduction in hours, how are you going to manage that? Is it that some families are going to lose service all together and which families? Do you have a plan for the way these decisions are going to be made?

**Ms Daw:** For big cuts, we have a needs assessment matrix which assesses all families based on the their needs and the children's disabilities—this is just one scenario. It's a scoring system, so we could just chop off the families with lower level needs. The decision wouldn't be made on the basis of those who couldn't pay. I hope that the fees we have can be met by the families and that, if they can't meet them, then there can be discussion about it.

**Mrs Walker:** But, even regardless of the fact that a person is assessed as having low-level needs, we actually provide services for moderate to profound intellectual disability. As I said, FaBRiC does come across all sorts of services—mental health, child abuse, substance abuse—that have an impact on having a child with a disability. We've had a lot of debate on the board about equity. Who are we to say who can have a service and who can't have a service? It's quite a dilemma for us.

**Ms Daw:** Can I just give you a quick little scenario? One of our families has a teenage girl with cerebral palsy. She goes to a mainstream school, but it's just getting a bit too hard for her mother. The girl has confided to the support worker that the mother takes the wheels off her wheelchair and shuts her in her room because she just can't cope. The child of another family, in which grandparents are looking after the child, is now in Marymead. He was in Marlow two weeks ago. He's ten years old. He's got ADHD and they just can't cope, so those are the little things that we do by providing respite.

**Mrs Walker:** Can I say that my personal situation is that I am woken up at 3 o'clock every morning. James is a severely autistic child, profoundly intellectually disabled, and at 3 o'clock on the nose, like ringing a bell, he gets up. He's a one-on-one child, and that's been the case for ten years. He's actually classified as, I think, moderately impaired. If my hours of respite care were reduced, James would be in Marymead, and look at the long-term financial consequences there for government.

**MRS BURKE:** Thank you very much for your account of what goes on at FaBRiC. I do follow what you do and I'm very impressed by what you do. You're the unsung heroes,

I think, in our community. I have to say that. Going back to the impact of the bushfires, I went over to Grant Cameron a couple of days after that and realise what happened there. I think that we have taken this for granted. I would like to back us up a few steps to the money and the human resources—the intangible costs to FaBRiC that we've not spoken about yet—and what loss you, as an organisation, are still suffering as a consequence of that.

How you would quantify that in dollar terms, as well as in terms of the outputs of delivering extra service, given that you are dealing with a group of people who are stressed anyway? How many extra hours would you say it took? If you can't answer that, I would be happy for you to take that on notice.

**Ms Daw:** Yes.

**MRS BURKE:** Also, what are the intangible human costs? You were running around, obviously. What dollar value would you put on the service that you gave after the fires, because I believe that you, as an organisation, should be recompensed for that loss in some way. If you can't answer that now, I would be happy for you to take that on notice.

**Ms Daw:** I think I would have to take it on notice, because after the bushfires we just—

**MRS BURKE:** You just did it.

**Ms Daw:** Got on and did what we could do.

**MRS BURKE:** Notwithstanding that—somebody had to do it and you were there to do it—it's a cost to the community that we, as a government, didn't have to bear, but I think that we should be recompensing you in some way. The second question is about grandparent families, which you mentioned. I have a very keen interest in what happened there.

Again, we're talking about an older demographic looking after a very young demographic. I know my office had calls from elderly people. They were very stressed anyway. Again, what extra level of service have you had to deliver to those particular people? Could you quantify that?

**Ms Daw:** We can, and other agencies have been involved with this particular family. It's a horrible set of circumstances but, yes, we certainly have put in a lot more resources, with both office staff and support staff.

**Mrs Walker:** Can I put another spin on that, please? Carers of younger people with disabilities are now caring for their elderly parents, so there's a double need there. I don't think that has really been addressed. During school holidays, I go home to my parents' place and pick up what they can't do, with a disabled child, so you have a double-edged sword there.

**MRS BURKE:** Carers caring for carers who care for carers, yes. Thank you for that.



**THE CHAIR:** Okay, we'll have to wrap it up there as we have other witnesses. A request that the committee might put to the government or a recommendation they might make, in your dream world, would be for \$1,036,750?

**Ms Daw:** Yes, that would be lovely. That would sort out the waiting lists. The families who are currently receiving care who we are not going to be able to support after next year will cost in the order of \$350,000, so that is to sustain the 380 families we currently have.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

Appearances:

Australian Spatial Information Business Association

Mr D Hocking, chief executive officer,

Mr D Cassin, member

Mr PK Tickle, member

**THE CHAIR:** Members, representatives of the Australian Spatial Information Business Association have now joined us. Gentlemen, I thank you for coming along to the Estimates Committee. I need to read your rights to you.

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 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.

The proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. Please state your name and the capacity in which you are appearing on the first occasion that you speak so that we get the record right. Gentlemen, over to you.

**Mr Hocking:** I am the chief executive officer of the Australian Spatial Information Business Association. Two of my ACT members, Philip Tickle and Damien Cassin, are here to support me on the technical aspects of spatial information. My role is just to give you a brief understanding of our organisation and our industry.

The Spatial Information Industry Business Association was set up following the federal government's action agenda program, where spatial information was identified as an emerging industry. Since that time, which was approximately two years ago, ASIBA has represented just over 300 companies throughout Australia, ranging from large multinationals to one person consultancies.

Our primary role is to inform government and the wider community of the role of spatial information in society and to encourage the adoption of those technologies to enhance business and social outcomes. Today we are here to talk to you about the importance of spatial information in dealing with fires and also to seek support from this committee to influence the government to look at the priorities for dealing with the aftermath of the bushfires.

We strongly believe that spatial information should be the most important aspect in dealing with the outcomes of the McLeod report, which, on a number of occasions, mentions the failings of the lack of data and the lack of technology to deal with this type of event. Perhaps I could hand over to Philip Tickle to take us through some of the aspects.

**Mr Tickle:** I am from Raytheon Australia. Firstly, I thank the committee for the opportunity to address you today. Also, I wish to acknowledge the job that the ACT

government has done in taking a very rigorous and sound approach to the inquiry and in terms of the adoption of the McLeod inquiry's recommendations.

To provide you with some background, Raytheon Australia is based in Canberra. We have just established in Canberra the largest remote-sensing capability anywhere in the southern hemisphere. During the bushfires, we supplied satellite imagery of the bushfires on the Monday and Tuesday after the Saturday fires. During the fire events through New South Wales into Victoria, we supplied in particular Victorian fire agencies on nearly a daily basis for three to four weeks with satellite imagery. Since then we have been supplying satellite image-based mapping systems to ACT, New South Wales and Victorian fire authorities, mapping the effects and the severity of the fires. There is one example on the wall over there. You might have to walk over there later to look at it. It gives an example of the sorts of information that we have been providing.

While the McLeod recommendations do mention the need for improved information, we believe there is a need for explicit recognition of the need to improve spatial information systems, not just information systems as a broad term. In fact, spatial information systems have a key role to play in every aspect of fire management. Whether it's assessing fuel loads prior to the fires or it's looking at developing communications systems during the fires, locational information is absolutely fundamental to the entire emergency management process, and it's very important that people recognise that.

It's very easy for organisations to buy new fire trucks as a response to a fire event or an emergency event or to buy new radios, but we need to be looking at buying spatially enabled systems which have the location of the assets and the state of those assets explicitly linked to a whole range of other strategic information that is collected and analysed well prior to a fire event. I think these statements are supported by some of the recommendations in the McLeod report, which talks about an access focus on tactical decision making during the fires.

The ACT emergency services just did not have the spatial information at hand to make a whole range of strategic decisions on a regular basis, and that drove them to very tactical decision making, on-the-fly decision making, which makes it very difficult to prioritise how assets are used.

Private industry is investing in a whole range of capabilities. I mentioned Raytheon's facility here. There is other industry in Canberra and around Australia investing in emergency management capabilities. But those capabilities are often drawn upon on, effectively, a voluntary basis during the fires and it is very difficult to run a private business around the basis of a one in 100 years or one in 50 years fire event that occurs over a three-day or a three-week period. We are investing in technology that is really about strategic information, and there are some real issues there that need to be addressed in terms of how government and industry work together to build emergency management systems.

Specifically, our industry has got a whole range of abilities here to improve how the emergency management systems are developed. We can improve the way fire fuel management is conducted and we can also look, particularly in the post-fire events, at

how we can manage both fire fuel in terms of its fire risk, but also environmental outcomes. We have got environmental outcomes and they are going to be with us for probably 200 years or more in some of these areas around Canberra. It's crucial that we monitor the rehabilitation of those fires and prioritise the investment in rehabilitation to ensure that we have got a good fire management outcome and also a good environmental outcome.

There is a lot of opportunity to improve bushfire risk assessment, improve fire prediction modelling, with spatially enabling communication systems. At the moment, we have got a very simplistic radio system. We have the ability to spatially enable those radio systems and be able to track assets far more effectively. In light of that, we've also got the ability to improve command and control systems. It's not just about having a computer-aided dispatch system; it's about having a spatially enabled computer dispatch system.

We've got opportunities to improve fire recovery, as I mentioned, and also to improve coordination across jurisdictions. Knowing what is around the ACT is crucially important in terms of strategic fire management as well as operational fire management, and investment in spatial information can help us there.

It is important to recognise that some moderate expenditure in this technology will reduce our costs in the longer term. Having explicit knowledge in terms of fire fuels and fire management is going to reduce the cost of fires in the longer term, rather than counting the cost of fires after they've occurred. We've also got some opportunities here with the technologies in Canberra—it is a technology centre—to be selling some of the expertise that we develop in the ACT to other parts of Australia as well.

I might finish up there and hand it to Damien. Thank you.

**Mr Cassin:** I am from Mapinfo Australia, representing ASIBA. I'd like to continue on with Philip's theme and expand on justifying the expenditure on management of the bushfires. We don't look at spatial information in isolation of bushfires. Gaining this information can be used outside that arena. We could speak of the environmental issues.

If we can move to just looking at how that information can be used in an emergency response, such as a SARS outbreak, a flood or something else that we can't predict today, if we've got the information in place we can prepare for it a bit better.

Mapinfo Australia is a subsidiary of Mapinfo Global Corporation, based in Canberra. I'm the ACT regional manager. On 18 January, we contacted Rick McRae at the ACT Emergency Services Bureau, because we know Rick uses our software and data in the emergency services centre, and we volunteered our services, data, software and resources and sat there basically day and night for the next seven days producing hard copy output.

The McLeod inquiry does state that the spatial information was lacking in the systems. We extended those systems. As was said, the volunteering from private industry was enormous; people just stepped forward. Basically, the systems weren't there to send the

information out to mobile phones or laptops, so we had to use what we had at the time, and that was paper-based maps, so we were using those paper-based maps.

One of the things that became important was that natural disasters cross borders and, with the ACT government having ACT government data and the Rural Fire Service of New South Wales having New South Wales data, we were finding that the borders were being crossed by the fires, so we provided a national spatial data set.

Mapinfo plays an important role with the PSMA, Public Sector Mapping Authority, in partnership with government, in getting this information together from the jurisdictions, creating a national data set and then value-adding it, and that's important. Value-adding spatial data is important. Each of the state jurisdictions have their own centre lines or they have their spatial information. Private industry then takes that information and creates and maintains products so that they can then use it within these situations.

The importance is on a maintained product, because you really don't want a snapshot in time that's 10 years old, 15 years old. You want it as up to date as possible. Mapinfo plays that part in the spatial and vector data, or the line work on the map. You can see there a raster image overlaying the information, such as where the roads are, putting the road spans on there, putting the bridges and the heights of the underpasses and overpasses. There is no use sending a fire truck out to an area if they can't get under an overpass.

The small detail is sometimes the thing that might stop you from responding accurately to a fire or an emergency situation. That's where we feel we can add value to these proceedings, by value-adding the foundation data on a maintained basis. It's important to complement the investment of the fire trucks and the people by allowing those fire trucks to get to the places that they need. We spoke about the radio communications and various forms of delivery mechanisms.

The ACT government has spatial information and during the bushfires there was other information collected. The Federal Police, ACT emergency services and private organisations were collecting information and that was then used by the geographical information management unit to bring up a quick website to disseminate that information throughout the ACT government. A picture says a thousand words. It was easy for people to look at an area.

Going back to the previous discussion with FaBRIC, where are these people that are in danger? How can we prioritise which ones to get to first? It's very important to work out the location of these people so that we are not putting priority on areas that may or may not be in danger. It's actually allowing you to make informed decisions.

It is about adding value to the spatial data on a maintained basis for long-term decision making and justifying that expenditure by using it in situations other than bushfires. As I said, the McLeod inquiry was speaking about the adequacy of the maps. The adequacy of the maps requires appropriate data to facilitate, create and maintain but, more importantly, to make that data accessible in times of need. I would like to close on that.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks very much. The bulk of the budget request of \$28 million is, of course, bushfire related, either fixing things that were damaged, buying new equipment or upgrading existing equipment. There isn't a great deal of mention of equipment or additional systems for spatial data. Is that a flaw in the bill? Should the government be looking at that information now and much quicker?

**Mr Hocking:** I think it's important that the government recognise that spatial data is a critical infrastructure. I guess you'd expect our industry to say that, but it has actually been said by General Cosgrove. Two days before Bali he spoke to our members and spoke for a good deal of time on the importance of spatial information to homeland security, defence against terrorism.

It has also been recognised as a critical infrastructure by the critical infrastructure advisory council. It is very easy, I guess, to blame governments over the years for not putting a high priority on spatial information, but the reality is that spatial information has been collected for many, many years in what we term silos and this information is often duplicated. It's set up on different operating environments and it's very difficult to pull it all together very quickly.

The Australian Spatial Information Business Association and the international standards body in spatial information, the Open GIS Consortium, have formed a partnership to put to the federal government a proposal that we do an interoperability demonstration project specifically looking at bushfires. I have got a scenario here which will be run during that particular demonstration project, assuming that the federal government does fund it, and it will give you an idea of the importance of bringing all of this information together.

Once you have a look at the scenario you will quickly see that it's important that government does focus on this aspect of fire prevention and fire management. If we don't have this part of the infrastructure in place prior to a critical incident—I don't care what that critical incident is; the next one may be floods—all of the equipment and all of the human resources you have in place are at risk.

**MR HARGREAVES:** You made the point earlier that when industry went in to assist it had to do so on hard copy because the electronic facilities just weren't there. I am just looking through this list and there are amounts of \$430,000 and \$229,000 for broadband data links to the Emergency Services Bureau in suburban and voluntary stations. Is that the sort of thing that can address some of the problems that you're talking about?

**Mr Cassin:** That addresses a communication issue about getting this information from one place to another, but then you need the appropriate spatial software and data to create the information and then to receive it and use it at the end, whether that be, as I said, a mobile phone, a PDA, a laptop, or a standard computer, so that would address a communication issue, but not necessarily the facilitation of spatial information.

**MR HARGREAVES:** There is provision for a remote area communication relay vehicle and \$258,000 is being provided by way of capital injection. Are you saying that it is going to be underutilised unless the software actually is there with those sorts of vehicles and that sort of technology?

**Mr Tickle:** If the data is five years old, it doesn't matter whether you've got a broadband communications system or a Rolls Royce radio. If the spatial data is five years old, a poor decision is going to be made.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Whose job is it to keep the spatial data updated?

**Mr Hocking:** Perhaps I could answer that one. It's the state and territory governments. In fact, the firefighting effort in the Snowy Mountains was hindered by maps that were 30 years out of date. In Victoria some key mapping has been found to be 25 to 30 years out of date. I think I've said it many, many times: we would never question the need to maintain the infrastructure of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, because it is a very visible icon, but it is very easy for governments to forget about spatial information and maintaining it.

We are working in four dimensions in the spatial area, and the fourth dimension is probably the most important, that is, time, and that is something that governments need to recognise. We're not just talking about an infrastructure that's just great for fighting fires or floods or dealing with outbreaks of things like SARS. We're also talking about an infrastructure that is crucial to things such as environmental management and the water issue.

At the present time, as a nation, we've got no idea, none whatsoever, about how much water we've got. The New South Wales government allocated 150 per cent of the water in its licenses. Why? Because it doesn't know how much water it's got. This is all part and parcel of what spatial information is about. It is about knowing what you've got, where it is, and then being able to use that to make good quality decisions.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Do you have a relationship with Emergency Management Australia, which would have the biggest influence over the state services?

**Mr Hocking:** We have an exceptional relationship with Emergency Management Australia. In fact, they are offering support to us in the project that we are developing. We have an exceptional relationship with most government agencies, including ANZLIC, the Australia New Zealand Land Information Council, which deals with all of the spatial issues at a state and federal level. Lately, we have also been developing very close relationships with the terrorism area as well.

**MR HARGREAVES:** On whose side of the fence is that, David!

**Mr Hocking:** Questions like that have been asked of me on a number of occasions. The frightening thing is that two years ago I made that exact point to some of my members. I thought that if I was a terrorist and I was going to create havoc, kill people and destroy our infrastructure, I'd light a fire. Somebody did make the point that Osama bin Laden might like to have a talk to me. But the reality is that we really don't know where a critical incident is going to arise and what it's going to look like. The best defence against that is to have adequate information. It is the most important infrastructure that we can have.

**MS DUNDAS:** Moving on from that point, you've mentioned how you joined the effort on January 18 and the days following, but was any contact made with your organisations from about January 6 to help map the fires as they moved through the national parks? You were contacted only after the critical incident.

**Mr Tickle:** That's right, yes.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Actually, didn't you contact Rick McRae, not the other way round?

**Mr Tickle:** Both. In fact, I was standing on a hill with a mobile phone ordering imagery out of Denver in the US.

**MS DUNDAS:** And that was off your own bat more than actually being approached by emergency services.

**Mr Tickle:** Yes.

**Mr Cassin:** Emergency services are using our technology and they'd known that we were available for resourcing, if they needed extra resources. My initial contact was actually with the New South Wales Rural Fire Service because I knew that they had been working with them as well and we have got a good relationship with them, and then minutes later it was Rick McRae, because we knew they would use our technology. We've got to make the assumption on the technology that they're using that they've got adequate mapping facilities. We didn't make the contact on the 6th. We made it after the state of emergency was called.

**MS DUNDAS:** Do you think that the equipment that you had provided through contracts or whatever over the last number of years was adequate for the time leading up to January 18?

**Mr Cassin:** The only thing we provided different to what they had was a national data set of roads and infrastructure and things. That was the only thing. We extended licensing of what they had just so additional resources could sit there; instead of having five machines working, we would have 10 machines. We didn't actually bring in new technology at this stage; we just extended the existing licensing of the mapping capability.

**Mr Hocking:** Perhaps I could add some clarity to that. It does appear when you talk like this that there's some criticism of the way the people managed what they had. That's not necessarily the case. This is a relatively new technology in terms of the everyday use. In the past, it took large computers to actually manipulate all this data and bring it all together. All of this cost has come down considerably over the years and it's now all held on laptop computers and it can actually be sent out onto palm pilots as well using satellite imagery and so on.



So there's been a lot of change there and I suspect that the industry as much as anybody has been guilty of not promoting it, mainly because the industry didn't know it existed as a cohesive unit; but we haven't promoted it very well and it is a very fast-growing industry. Worldwide it's growing at 30 per cent per annum. So it's very hard for everybody to keep up with this incredible technology. It's also very difficult for governments to make decisions about the use of this technology when they themselves don't understand it.

So what we're trying to do, I guess, is to emphasise that there is a need for governments to educate themselves about this technology and how it can be used. I don't want you to think that we're being critical of people who had some technology but may not have known the full power. There's also this issue of silos of information. It's hard to believe that some government agencies won't give other government agencies information, just as some state governments won't give other state governments information.

**MS DUNDAS:** So it's not that the resources and the information weren't available before January 18; it's just that they weren't being fully utilised and perhaps there is scope for greater education within the people who have the technology in government to utilise it better and perhaps upgrade it to make it more efficient. Is that what you're talking about?

**Mr Tickle:** Absolutely, yes. In our case, we're bringing things to market now that weren't here 12 months ago, weren't here six months ago, and often the technology, the capability, is doubling or tripling every year in net terms. So there is a big issue there in terms of government keeping up with new technology and industry's ability to educate the users as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Is the real-time ability there? For instance, one of the things that happened was that the fire moved faster than anybody expected. Can you real time and update that information so that when smoke obscures the area of the fire, using infrared and satellite technology you can actually tell people where it is, when?

**Mr Tickle:** Yes, using a range of technologies. No single technology can do it, but using a combination of satellite technology, airborne technology and smart communication systems, it is possible to be operating at a near real-time environment; there's no doubt about that.

**THE CHAIR:** Going back to your theme that it's not just for fires, that you need to take the broader approach as it can be environmental and it can be anti-terrorist, the government has a number of initiatives in the appropriations. One is for computer-aided fire data management, at a cost of \$185,000 for the purchase of the services and \$50,000 for capital injection. There is another one on which they want to spend \$1.6 million on fuel management. You're saying that you've got the technology and the data. From the technology you can go to the data and from the data you can explain where that management will be best applied.

**Mr Tickle:** Absolutely. We have an opportunity to improve the assessments of biomass and fuel build-up and to monitor the recovery of the fire as well.

**THE CHAIR:** If the committee were to make a suggestion to the government on behalf of the industry and what it can do, it would be that the government should be looking at buying better systems to get better spatial data so they can actually spend taxpayers' money better.

**Mr Tickle:** I would like to see a formal review done of the appropriate use of the technologies in the post-fire period, something that hasn't been done yet, in an open forum.

**THE CHAIR:** Gentlemen, thanks very much.

Appearances:

Australian Council of Social Service

Mr D Stubbs, director

Ms K Nicholson, senior policy officer

**THE CHAIR:** Members welcome ACTCOSS to this hearing of the Estimates Committee inquiry into the second appropriation bill. Before we start, I'll give you the usual warning.

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.

Please state your name and the capacity in which you are appearing today before you first speak. Would ACTCOSS like to make an opening statement to the committee?

**Mr Stubbs:** Thank you for the opportunity to come and speak to the committee on this appropriation bill. We'll be brief. We've only got two main points to present so, unusually, we'll probably help you make up some time. I would also like to let you know that we haven't had a lot of time or resources to put into analysing this appropriation, but we've done the best we can in the time allowed.

The two main issues we want to talk about are the allocation of money to how Emergency Services respond to fires and other disasters, and wage increase allocations around certified agreements.

As you may be aware, ACTCOSS, through me and others, have been heavily involved in the recovery process through our membership of the community and expert reference group which works with the fire recovery task force. One of the things that has proven to be absolutely true in that process is that—after the lights and sirens go away, after the flames are no longer on the televisions, after things seem to quieten down—the community services sector, through major charities, through regional community organisations and through small and large community service organisations, provides a wide range of services and really steps up in the process to assist a community to rebuild. That stepping up and that extended work are going on even now, and we expect they will go on for some time.

The initial response by the major charities, and then the other organisations, was nothing short of extremely impressive, from what we know and what other people know. So we would just like to draw the committee's attention to the fact that this appropriation doesn't recognise that extraordinary amount of work. Although we support the need to invest in the Emergency Services sector, we strongly urge the committee to recognise, and remind the government, that there is a need to invest in the community services sector and its ability to respond to major disasters like this.

Our other reminder to the government, through this committee, is that we see three major areas of contracted service having increased funds through this appropriation bill: the Emergency Services sector, ambulance workers and ACTION bus drivers. These are all contracted services to the government, and there is considerable similarity between them and the services provided by much of the community sector, which is one way or another contracted to the government.

As you'd be aware, there is a range of services that aren't directly contracted to the ACT government, but here we're talking about services that are contracted to the ACT government. Almost on a yearly basis we seem to have a fight on our hands to see increased payments, with just basic award increases, to a very low paid community services sector. The inability to have that decision made with a stroke of a pen or an appropriation bill is staggering to this sector.

After I finish here this morning, I'm going to meet with the community services sector to discuss the issue of how to ensure that this sector can enable funds to flow to it when it has to have award increases. We face a situation at the moment where a number of community services workers providing essential services to people in our community—people who are isolated and face small crises every day—are being paid lower amounts than people who provide cleaning services or checkout services in supermarkets, although they have much higher levels of responsibility.

It's a bit of a frustration for us, and we call on this committee to remind the government that some extremely important work is being done that doesn't cost them as much as in some of these areas. But we need just as easily to allow the money to flow to community services in the ACT.

That's the extent of our prepared statement. I don't know if Karen has anything to add to what I've said.

**Ms Nicholson:** There were a couple of other things we discussed back at the office. We appreciate the fact that this is another appropriation, so the process is good. It's a great opportunity for us to see what the government will be spending its money on when other issues come up to be funded, outside the budget process. We thought it was excellent to have this opportunity to come and discuss these issues—not that there's any criticism of any past or future governments for not doing it. It's a good process, and we appreciate it.

The other thing we noted was that McLeod's terms of reference didn't include the human scale response to the fires, but there was a generalised clause, after the specific terms of reference, that asked for the McLeod inquiry to respond to the government on the way the emergency was managed and the response to it. We put in a submission that talked about the community sector response, but it doesn't seem to have been picked up by the McLeod inquiry. That's understandable, given the enormity of what happened and the amount of material that they had to go through.

The fact is that the next emergency might not be as big as that; the next emergency might be as simple as something closing Canberra's hospitals. The same emergency response in

the community sector will be required, even if the Emergency Services personnel aren't, because it will fall back onto the community sector work force to pick up where that major infrastructure fails.

That's one reason why we feel it is important to recognise the community sector's response to emergency situations, how it picks up its workload and—like Emergency Services, like the ambulance service, like the police—responds with extraordinary work in extraordinary times. They were the only other things we discussed around the table about this appropriation bill.

**MS DUNDAS:** There's ongoing funding in here for the bushfire recovery effort, and the Bushfire Recovery Centre has been operating for a number of months now. Have you seen that centre work in a way that puts greater stress or, by having that focus there, less stress on the community sector? How did that operate with all the services that your members were providing?

**Mr Stubbs:** I have no criticism of the Bushfire Recovery Centre. They've stepped up on every occasion, and that's been very impressive. The people that work there have responded very well to the need and to the feedback from organisations like ours and groups like the taskforce and the reference group. The case management stuff, where they're working with specific families and individuals to help them through the process, has been very powerful.

We're very mindful of, and we're continually talking with the recovery centre about, the process that needs to happen whereby the recovery centre will taper off and those services will be provided in mainstream areas. Part of that will go back to government services; part of that will be transferred to community services. We're mindful of the fact that that will add a different dimension to all this. We need to get people to re-engage with the mainstream, standard processes and services usually provided by the main regional community services in that area. That's our main cause for concern around the recovery centre. The work they're doing is outstanding.

**Ms Nicholson:** Also, there's been a learning curve there. Everybody has worked with the best goodwill to overcome any difficulties that arose. It's a new model. It's the first time we've had an emergency of this size and a response like this, and there were absolutely no complaints. People decided that if there was an issue they would get in and resolve it. The model worked well, in that there was goodwill on all sides to make sure that this was done as smoothly as possible.

I don't see any conflict with the recovery centre model. The recovery centre model picked up a lot of things that were extraordinary demand in extraordinary times. The community sector worked with that, overcame problems as they found them and worked very well with the recovery centre.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there any emerging unmet need or area that needs attention? The Salvation Army was saying that more counselling was required, and I've had some constituent letters saying that some of the services were being wound back too early. Are you getting that feedback from the groups?

**Mr Stubbs:** We are getting a bit of that. We're now seeing the start of some second-wave requirement. People spent the first six months focusing on the physical nature of the disaster, which gave them a diversion from the personal trauma that it had created. A wave is starting to come through of just that—the trauma, the stress and the psychosocial aspects of the disaster—and we're seeing that in the community sector.

People don't usually present to counselling with the issue of being in a disaster. It's often something else, and then you scratch the surface or it takes quite a few counselling sessions to see that it is all wrapped up with having experienced this disaster. We are talking to organisations that provide counselling, and they are starting to see an increase in the need for counselling.

There is another, more systemic, issue that is along not dissimilar lines to what was recommended in this appropriation bill. The thing that's going on at the moment is the updating and review of the community aspect of the emergency management subplan, and it's going to be a much longer document—no doubt about that. Rightly or wrongly, it's going to involve a larger number of people.

We've now recognised a need to have some sort of subplan for the community sector that involves the major charities and the regional community services and how they fit into that subplan. A lot of community organisations, like a lot of businesses, don't have their own operations plan for when an emergency takes place. As you will be aware, a lot of organisations lost their premises. Some of them were able to move back into their premises, but a lot of them were not.

The ability to operate from somewhere else to keep your workers in the community, particularly when you're providing essential services like aged care and support to people with disabilities, is extremely important. But those emergency plans don't exist on an organisation-by-organisation basis. We need to develop plans for all community organisations, particularly for essential organisations, to be able to keep on operating through a disaster.

We also need to develop a sector-wide plan to enable us to see how organisations need to interact—whether it be at the level of the Salvation Army, the Red Cross, St Vincent de Paul and Volunteering ACT or at the lower level where all the organisations respond on an individual basis to enable that co-ordination. We believe there's a need to develop that plan and resource the planning process to put it in place so that it fits in with the broader disaster management subplan.

**THE CHAIR:** We heard from FaBRiC this morning, who are in Grant Cameron. For four weeks they had to go to Fyshwick, then they moved again and then they went back, and throughout the whole time they had to maintain their own services. One of the questions to them was: have you quantified how much that actually cost you? They haven't; they're going to get back to us. I would ask: is the government part of the subplan assisting the community sector with developing their own emergency plans?

**Mr Stubbs:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**Ms Nicholson:** In our budget submission, our first five recommendations were fire related, community sector recommendations. There were recommendations in there to fund community service organisations to quantify their losses over that period. A lot of them just managed it within their budget and, because of the emergency nature of the situation, they just got in and did it. They worked extraordinary hours.

People were working up to 20 hours a day to co-ordinate and respond to needs. They just do what they usually do: respond to their clients because they're human centred. Quite often they'll write off their own needs and their own responses. There were community service workers whose houses burnt down who couldn't find their families, but they were still going out and responding to their clients' needs.

You can't quantify a lot of that stuff. Going back and trying to quantify it afterwards is very painful when you're still dealing with the fact that you can't pay your SACS award increases and you've still got to manage your business. A lot of that time is not funded in organisations, and FaBRIC could be putting in extraordinary overtime to come up with those figures, I would think.

**THE CHAIR:** One of the lines in the appropriation is \$40,000 to provide for the continued bushfire recovery effort into early 2004. When, for instance, the recovery centre inevitably winds down, would you like to see the government prepare a plan that transitions us back into both the mainstream and the community sector and, where a transfer of costs is incurred and jobs are to be done, would you want to see that they are appropriately resourced?

**Mr Stubbs:** Yes, and I don't think it would be very hard to do that or to make sure that there's a dialogue about how that should be done. We're already engaged in the process; Let's use that opportunity. Everyone comes to this process with an extraordinary amount of goodwill, so let's have a dialogue about that so we can enable it to happen as smoothly as we can. There will be hiccups, but let's at least have a dialogue about how it will look.

**THE CHAIR:** On the initial point you made about the annual fight to get the cash to flow into the community sector, have you an answer on how to make that work more effectively? Is it training or five-year funding, or is it just the guaranteed CPI?

**Mr Stubbs:** There are a few aspects to this. Given that the industrial relations context in which we operate, with the federal legislation, is that the government does respond to negotiated certified agreements, maybe the committee could consider recommending that the government support the development of certified agreements for the community services sector to enable it to do its work, support its work force and have a competitive work force regime.

At the moment, this sector pays, for the most part, purely on the basis of the SACS award, which is a minimum rates award designed to have a certified agreement set over

and above it. A lot of organisations are unwilling or somewhat scared to go into the certified agreement process because they feel that, if they agree to even a small pay increase for some of their lower paid workers, the government won't come to the party. But we see them come to the party in a range of other instances and would never argue against paying for the certified agreements of schools, emergency service workers, ambulance workers, hospitals or public servants. An agreement to do the same with the community services sector would be extremely useful.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, any questions? Daniel, Karen, thank you very much.

**Sitting suspended from 11.42 to 12.09 pm**



Appearances:

Mr T Quinlan, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Business and Tourism, and Minister for Sport, Racing and Gaming

Chief Minister's Department

Mr R Tonkin, chief executive officer

Department of Treasury

Ms M Smithies, executive director, financial and budgetary management

Mr M Harris, Under Treasurer

**THE CHAIR:** We will begin with the standard warning, which goes as follows. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protection 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.

We'd like to welcome the Treasurer and his staff, and public servants who are joining us this afternoon. We just ask that, if anyone from the rear of the room wishes to add to an answer, they move to the table so that it can be picked up by the Hansard recording.

Treasurer, would you like to make an opening statement concerning your appropriation bill?

**Mr Quinlan:** Yes, just a few words. First of all, I apologise to the committee because the Chief Minister will not be available, as he is on leave between now and the next sitting. Second, I will rely more heavily than usual upon my officers, seeing as much of this was prepared while I was otherwise occupied.

I might also say that, since the major thrust of the appropriation bill has to do with bushfires and the McLeod inquiry, I've had prepared for the benefit of the committee a paper which contains the GGS operating result and the impact. What this paper tries to do is identify not only what we've appropriated, but also what is likely to come up in relation to the bushfires, to try to put one picture on the bushfires. We'll make that available to you. That's hot off the press. I've been tied up this morning, so I haven't actually seen it myself, but that has been prepared by Treasury. That will do for a statement.

**THE CHAIR:** Treasurer, the thrust of the questions that I would like to ask is how can we be certain—and what has Treasury done to ascertain this—whether this is the expenditure we should be undertaking in response to what happened on 18 January. Clearly, Mr McLeod has put forward what he believes should be done and, for instance, we heard from the spatial information community this morning, who said that, with more information and better systems, you can better predict what might happen, but there doesn't seem to be much of a mention of that sort of approach to emergency management in this document.

What rigour has Treasury applied to this expenditure and have they looked at alternate expenditures that might better protect the people of the ACT, prepare us for next time, and get better value for the approximately \$20 million that will be spent on emergency-related activity?

**Mr Quinlan:** I guess the answer to that lies in the position that the government finds itself in, or the territory finds itself in. It has, on the one hand, a report by Mr McLeod. I think the review by McLeod was conducted over the shortest practicable period, with a mid-year report date, which then did allow some action to be taken. The cleft stick that we as a government, and we as an Assembly, find ourselves in is that there is another summer approaching.

Imagine the situation if, during the course of the next summer, there are further bushfires and there is damage or human suffering arising from those bushfires. Where would the government be—and I mean government in the widest sense: we, all of us—if we had not done all of those things that were reasonably recommended to us. I think that is the underlying reasoning behind the Chief Minister’s statement, right at the outset, that all of the McLeod recommendations would be implemented as soon as is practicable.

It’s not possible to implement them all before the next fire season starts. It is a case of making a judgment and saying, “Will we now go through a whole review process? Will we, as a government, turn around and weigh up the competing arguments for and against some of the strategies that are recommended or alternate strategies, or will we accept the report?” And that report has been weighed up in the first place by an eminent person, in Mr McLeod.

On balance, it would seem to me to be common sense for the government to implement all of McLeod’s recommendations as soon as is possible, because the alternative would not only leave the community exposed to possible risk, but it could also leave the government exposed as being responsible for not taking actions that were recommended. That is the cleft stick, the trade-off that has had to occur.

**THE CHAIR:** But the government had said, even before the McLeod report was delivered, that it would accept and implement all the report’s recommendations. What if Mr McLeod had come up with a vastly more expensive set of options, doubling the size of the ESB or doubling the size of the fire brigade? The government had already assumed a position that it was going to implement them. What I’m asking is, since you’ve received them, has there been some sort of critical analysis as to whether this is the path we should go down.

For instance, McLeod recommends a structure in his report, that we’re not sure the government or volunteers will accept. The new leader of that organisation, the new chief executive officer of emergency management in the ACT has not been appointed. Decisions are being made in this appropriation bill that will affect that individual. Are we, therefore, putting the cart before the horse? Notwithstanding the rapid approach of the next fire season, for which I think we all want to be as prepared as we can be, are we as Assembly members, as members of the committee, going to indicate that this is the best expenditure? Is it based on actual knowledge or is this just based on acceptance of what Mr McLeod said?

**Mr Quinlan:** The Assembly has already had the benefit of the government's response to McLeod. There you have the government's evaluation, if you like, an acceptance of the recommendations and any minor qualifications that might have been made to them. So that process has happened. But the government is acutely aware, before it appears before a committee like this, that the committee will either be saying "You're acting too soon" or "You're not acting soon enough", if we get into adversarial roles. The choice the government has made—and I think, virtually the only choice it can make—is to, yes, look at the McLeod recommendations. I don't think you'll see in any of those anything that is outrageous as you suggested in your hypothetical.

If we can leave the hypothetical aside, we now have a set of practical recommendations born of deliberation, subject to a government response, tabled in the Assembly and now being implemented. It seems to me that, in the timeframe in which government is permitted to respond as it ought, everything that ought to be done has been done.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Further to the place not being prepared, was there any risk that, if we didn't fund, at least in a preliminary sense, the implementation of the McLeod recommendations—

**Mr Quinlan:** Sorry, John?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Were there any implications if the government of the day did not fund all the recommendations of the McLeod report, knowing of course that it would take time, and that the exact amount of expenditure would depend on the contracts let? This is best guess stuff. Is there an implication that, if we didn't pick up those recommendations and at least provide resources for their implementation, the place might have been subject to litigation later?

**Mr Quinlan:** Yes, well, certainly subject to risk. Can we leave it just at general risk? We are, as a government and as an Assembly, responsible for the safety of our citizens and their property. If we had in front of us a considered set of recommendations and our response to them, and then we decided to go through and elongate the evaluation process beyond that, I think the criticism would come hard and heavy that we were leaving the town at risk, that we were sitting on our hands, or whatever the inverse of "You are acting too hastily" is. On balance, I think that the government has actually taken what is really the only course of action that it could take in the circumstances.

**THE CHAIR:** If I could go back to your statement and the use of the words "hypothetical" and "outrageous", and your implication that I might have suggested to you that this was outrageous, I did not at any stage suggest that any of this was outrageous. I simply asked—

**Mr Quinlan:** No, but you asked a hypothetical question—"What if there were some outrageous recommendations"—and we're saying there are not, so it becomes a hypothetical question.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for that clarification, because—

**Mr Quinlan:** That's fine.

**THE CHAIR:** It was about possible outrageous suggestions. I've not suggested that any of this is particularly outrageous, but I do go back to my first question: given that we haven't appointed a head of the new ACT emergency services authority and indeed the government hasn't made available information about what form that authority will take, what work did Treasury do to analyse the bids as they came forward from the various departments to ascertain that this would be the best expenditure of taxpayers' money and best fulfil the recommendations of the McLeod report?

**Mr Quinlan:** I will ask Mr Harris or Mr Tonkin to address that, but I think it's more appropriate if Mr Tonkin does it. We do have working groups and we do have a lot of people involved in this recovery process. The government has, I think, since the event of that bushfire, applied the maximum resources and consideration to a speedy recovery. However, let me say this: there is a limit to what Treasury can do. These people are not experts in the evaluation of equipment required to fight fires. It's not their role. This appropriation bill is one put forward by government. Mr Tonkin might round out my points.

**Mr Tonkin:** In preparing to advise the government of its detailed response to this inquiry report, I chaired a committee comprising all chief executives of ACT government agencies, plus the chief police officer. We went through, in detail, each of the 61 recommendations and determined and advised the government what was the appropriate response to each of those. That's what you see in the tabled government response. So we had looked at how each of the recommendations could be implemented.

The comment I would make is that you see in the appropriation bill before you, in response to the bushfires, two things. One is an initial set of responses to specific recommendations made by the inquiry report. The inquiry report made some specific proposals about a number of pieces of equipments and enhanced capability, and the appropriation bill addresses those.

The other part of the inquiry recommendations relates to the establishment of the new authority, and the government's response states that it agreed to recommendation 53, which recommends the establishment of a statutory authority.

The government response, inter alia, says:

A final model for the new authority is, therefore, yet to be agreed and the Government is committed to ensuring that this process occurs in close partnership with all the existing professional and volunteer services—

and so on.

So there is nothing in the response and there is nothing in the appropriation bill which closes off the nature of the organisational outcome beyond the fact that it will be a statutory authority and it will have a commissioner in charge of it. The process that has been put in train by advertising for the commissioner is to enable us to get

a commissioner on the ground as soon as we can, so that that person can contribute to the final design.

I'm chairing the implementation task force. One of the priorities of that will be to progress the design and establishment of the statutory authority in consultation with all the parties. That is part of the process that we're about to set in train. The head of the Department of Justice and Community Safety has had some preliminary discussions with a range of groups. That is where we stand.

The other point I would make is that the responses to the McLeod report, which are in this appropriation, represent the initial responses to the initial recommendations. Once the authority is established and it starts to work up its ongoing approach and procedures, more propositions may well come forward in subsequent budgets. That's just the way the organisations will progress.

The other aspect of fire-related bids in this appropriation concerns recommendations coming from areas such as the non-urban study or the bushfire task force, which have recommended other measures. Departments have come forward with their proposals to increase hazard reduction, respond to other costs and so on. So there are two bushfire responses, two aspects: one is the McLeod report recommendations and one is more broadly based responses to the recovery process.

**Mr Quinlan:** I will ask Mr Harris to respond to the question about Treasury's role in putting the bill together.

**Mr Harris:** To come to your question about whether or not Treasury applied rigour to the process, the answer is yes, as we do, not surprisingly, to every budget process. That rigour comes in a number of forms. Primarily, it comes from questioning the dollar bid against a particular item. I'm sure the committee would not be surprised to know that, in some aspects of this appropriation bill, the initial bids were significantly higher than the final number that appears here.

That variation is due to a number of factors. One is our natural tendency to ask whether the number is the right number or the wrong number and another is our general preference for a lower number. We do that with every proposal that comes to us from a pure expenditure perspective. In that regard, the rigour that was applied to this bill is no different to that which is applied to any other appropriation bill for which we have responsibility.

In terms of the particular items that are here and whether they're appropriate or not, as the minister said, we rely to a very large degree on line agencies who have particular expertise to come up with the appropriate solution to a particular problem. That is their area of expertise, not our area of expertise. Our expertise is in ensuring that the financial estimates are as accurate as possible and within the affordability of the territory and, in that sense, the usual amount of rigour has been applied.

**MS DUNDAS:** There are some initiatives in here that relate specifically to the outcome of the McLeod report, but there are a number that aren't necessarily related to the McLeod report but are still related to the bushfires: landslip remediation, removal of

damaged trees, signage, soil conservation and things like that. What was the process that said these things weren't picked up in the 2003-04 budget when the 2003-04 budget had a significant list of bushfire-related initiatives that include, in fact, landslip rectification? It's almost the same thing; it has been looked at twice. What process happened between the development of this budget and this appropriation bill, separately to the McLeod inquiry, that gave rise to these other issues?

**Mr Quinlan:** Mr Tonkin will address most of this but I'd just say, as an opener, that that's a process of reality bites, that given the all-pervasive nature of the bushfire and its damage, you have people trying to estimate, in very short order, all of the work that needs to be done and it's just not possible. It isn't possible in a practical world for everybody to think of everything and to get the estimate right about the extent of the work that is to be done. I wouldn't sit here and guarantee that we have it all together now because, with the best will in the world, we will still be faced with information that will only emerge at a later stage.

We would expect a degree of tolerance in the process of finding all the trees and measuring how many dangerous trees need to be felled, so that they don't later fall on somebody and cause injury. It's not as if we've ever been here before; it's not as if everybody is able to scour every square metre of the territory and work out exactly what's done with it.

**Mr Tonkin:** I think the Treasurer has summed it up very well. One example—this is in Urban Services rather than the Chief Minister's Department—is the removal of bushfire-damaged and dangerous trees, \$1.25 million. There was an assessment done of the trees that were dangerous at the time. It was a belief that some trees would regenerate so they went through and removed from public and other places a large number of dangerous trees. This items has come about because they have now gone back and reassessed, over a period of some time, which trees are regenerating and which aren't. The ones that it was hoped would regenerate and have not will have to be removed. So it is a changing assessment as we go forward.

We get better information on geotechnical surveys of landslips and so on, so there are revised estimates because the extent of the problem becomes clearer. I remind you that the budget was tabled back in May, therefore it's based on data which really represents the position in about March. We had the fire in January, we're making estimates in March. We now have six months' more knowledge, so we have a clearer view and some of these costs continue to emerge.

Some policies have been introduced to assist the response. We made estimates at the time about how long we would keep the bushfire secretariat in the recovery centre. We're now seeing a need to keep some of that capability longer. We did the best we could at the time to estimate it. We're now coming back to say, "With greater knowledge of the community demands, we have a higher cost", and that's what we're bidding for.

**MS DUNDAS:** So between the second appropriation bill, which happened in February-March 2003, and was based on February estimates—

**Mr Tonkin:** It was based on the immediate snapshot: “We have to do some things”, bang, so we produced that to deal with some of the immediate costs. Then we had a budget process, further information was available and we produced the budget. If we had had a budget, under the old traditional timetable, in August, we wouldn’t have had this additional appropriation, because the thing would have been shifted back. We’re just getting more information. This is an evolving event.

**MS DUNDAS:** Treasurer, you were saying that obviously we don’t have all the information yet, and this might be an ongoing process. Do you have a timeframe for when you’ll reassess? Would it be, say, in August, that you would reassess the need for a subsequent appropriation? Is there an ongoing timeframe and are you meeting regular reporting dates?

**Mr Quinlan:** Do we have a schedule? No, we don’t, because we would like to think that we’ve thought of everything now, or that we’ve identified in the paper that you’ve been given those items that will firm up later as expenditure items. We would like to think that.

However, as I’ve said earlier, I don’t guarantee perfect wisdom in this because there’s no such thing. What I do guarantee is that you have the best efforts of the people within the administration to identify what needs to be done and to cost it where they can. You also have the best efforts of the people within the administration to identify further recovery items for which we may need to come back to the Assembly. That’s why that piece of paper that I submitted has been prepared, so that we can say, “We’ll tell you as much as we know about it now.”

As I said, I really can’t guarantee perfect knowledge at this stage. This is a road that we’ve never been down before and there will, no doubt, emerge some other issues that have not been identified, couldn’t have been identified, but will be identified as required for part of the recovery. We just try to be as open as we can, to involve the Assembly to the maximum, and we are very happy to receive input from any other source as to areas that we may not have addressed and may need to address.

**MS DUNDAS:** What if that extra information coming from other sources about areas that need addressing actually runs counter to the information provided in the McLeod report?

**Mr Quinlan:** If someone comes out with a lightning bolt that says these things that you’re doing are absolutely wrong, they will be counterproductive and there’s a whole better way, then the government would have to make the appropriate adjustment. However, so far, there’s been no such matter brought up. So far, the bulk of the recommendations that are now being implemented, and implemented as soon as is practicable, will not really affect roles and administration.

Basic equipment and basic elements of firefighting paraphernalia will be and have been identified as necessary, and will be necessary no matter what finer points of administration are later decided. So many of those McLeod recommendations are just eminently practical recommendations and are independent of the administrative structure.

**THE CHAIR:** Following on from that, though, some of the work has been done by Chief Minister's, some of it has been done by ESB, and then some of it has been done by Urban Services: is it impossible to have a more coordinated approach in that regard?

Mr McLeod's structure has a box off it that says, "Community Education and Prevention" and "Operational and administrative support". However, if you look at some of the elements in, say, Urban Services, DUS itself is going to develop its own fire management unit, and some of that goes to the model. Will the model have total fire safety resting with ACT emergency services? Will they have the power to overrule land managers, for instance?

If DUS is off building its own fire management unit, and therefore its own fire management activities and systems, how does that interact therefore with emergency services and the new commissioner? Is DUS pre-empting what the commissioner may want to do? Is the DUS \$120,000, even though it's not a great deal of money, simply just to coordinate what goes on inside DUS? Is that a function not better carried out by the new fire authority? They're the sorts of questions I want answered.

The government said before it had received the McLeod report that it would accept and implement the recommendations. Some of the McLeod recommendations have been funded in this bill. The numbers have been questioned by Treasury but has the whole approach been questioned? The spatial industry representatives said this morning that they can provide mapping that will tell you where better to apply your fuel management, where better to conduct your strategic, as well as your tactical, approach to fires but, for instance, I don't see anything in here that says that we're going to increase the ability to purchase data and therefore manage that data, which will direct what we do.

Is this the cart before the horse? We're buying some gear, yes, and I really don't disagree that some extra tankers would be useful, but are we just setting ourselves up the same structure and the same approach that we've had for some time? Is this the opportunity for you, as a government, to say, "Okay, let's take a far more strategic approach to this. Let's get the data first and then work them down to tell us what our needs are, to accommodate our objectives", rather than saying, "McLeod said in this one, buy that, and McLeod said this one, do that"? That was the issue raised by the spatial management people this morning, who were saying, for instance, in spatial information and emergency management, how they can help you identify and control what it is you're doing, but I don't see any of that approach in this.

**Mr Quinlan:** I will just say one or two things before I allow Mr Tonkin to answer that. I will say this much: one of the features of the response to the bushfires in the ACT has been cooperation and coordination. That has worked because of the structures that we put in place. This government will, like any other, be flexible but we do have to get on with the job.

**Mr Tonkin:** We have a situation where we have to manage the coming bushfire season. We have a real requirement to have real capability now. We don't have the luxury of deferring any strategic or decisive action until later. We have to take the best measures that we can take now to enhance our bushfire capability for the coming bushfire season



first. That's what we've sought to do in responding to the specific equipment and personnel recommendations in the inquiry report. That's a first stage.

As I've said, we have yet to settle on what the structure of the authority will be and how it will integrate and coordinate the various elements that presently provide bushfire response. Mr McLeod, in his report, addresses the issue of whether there should be separate firefighting capabilities for those areas which are managed by government land management agencies on the one hand and the bushfire service on the other, which is the model that operates in Victoria. It can operate in Victoria, although it does have issues at the interface between public lands and private lands.

However, the scale of Victoria is such that it can run the two things. Mr McLeod specifically addressed that in his report and said that the ACT is too small for that. That doesn't mean that you don't still require professional services inside the land management agencies that have the full-time staff on the ground to respond initially to fires which commence in the areas that they manage, be it forests or be it parks. That is also recognised.

What Urban Services is doing is ensuring that, within the areas for which it has land management responsibilities, it has the capability to produce a coordinated response as part of the overall capability which will be run and managed by the authority. It's not a competition thing. It's asking how we can optimise the capability and ensure that we have the right levels of training and coordination of the parks brigades and the forest people. But, when we come to a larger emergency, those people form key components of the total organisation.

How we make sure that that sticks together in the future is part of the design of the new authority, and will be part of the role of the commissioner once the commissioner is selected. So, as far as the spatial data are concerned, yes, there are opportunities to get data from various sources to improve our predictive ability, to be able to track the fires more accurately, and all that sort of stuff.

They are things which can be progressed over time. You've evidently had a presentation this morning from a company with a product. There is, no doubt, a range of companies with a range of products. I've had discussions in the last week with IBM and Telstra on a range of capabilities that they can offer which would assist us in bushfire coordination and response. There are a number of people in the marketplace. Our problem and challenge is to deal immediately with next bushfire season, to fill gaps which Mr McLeod identified—we're doing that—and to improve the organisation, and we are seeking to do that.

As we go forward to the next years, we will seek to improve it further. I also remind the committee that we are talking about an emergency management organisation. Its job is not only bushfires: it needs to do other things as well.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. We might move through the various departments now, if there are no more general questions. Do you have a general question?

**MR PRATT:** Just one, picking up on something that Mr Tonkin said. Presumably, what you mean there is that the DUS agencies, where they have that land responsibility interface, would have a first-response capability, which means that, when the ESB eventually deployed, they would come under its command?

**Mr Tonkin:** No. Let's say you have a fire which is up in the park somewhere, and you have a team of full-time professional people with the skills and the equipment to be able to respond more quickly than the voluntary brigades, which tend to be the larger part of the bushfire service, it makes some sense to have the best capability you can in the professional capacity, and they should respond first.

Who becomes the incident controller is a matter for judgment and management by the emergency services bushfire component. It may be the person who is first on the ground. It could be the captain who has the first team that deploys. It could be that that person does it initially and someone comes in to replace him or her, or comes over the top. It depends on scale and it depends on duration. That wouldn't necessarily be the case, but it could be. You could have someone going up there, the incident controller, and although you then reinforce that effort, the person on the ground remains in control, as incident controller, for that event for a period.

Then there are judgment calls that are made by whoever is in charge of the bushfire component of the authority as to how you might scale up or change that, depending on the circumstances. You can't necessarily lock in any particular decision on that, I think.

**MR PRATT:** But that DUS funding that we've seen further down the presentation is essentially aimed at that first-response capability.

**Mr Tonkin:** The DUS funding you see, for the extra 24, was one of the recommendations made by Mr McLeod. He said there would be benefit in having more people available on a full-time basis over the summer period so we have a greater first-response capability. Those people would be brought on for the summer period. There are some bids in there for some equipment that goes with them. The aim is that, while they're not doing fire fighting, they could be doing things such as improving trail accesses and other things which will assist us in the response. But then you would say, "Stop doing this and get on the trucks and go hither and deal with the lightning strike", or something else.

**MR PRATT:** That sounds fine to me. Thanks.

**MS DUNDAS:** You've just opened up a question. Would you clarify it for me? The 2003-04 bushfire season is fast approaching. Will the operations be managed in the same way that they were for 2002-03 or are there changes already in place?

**Mr Tonkin:** This is a question that you really should ask JACS, but the general thing is that we have an Emergency Services Bureau at the moment. We're aiming to increase its capability, have a different form of administration and different structures going forward, but at the moment we have what we have. We're going to reinforce its equipment and its capability as fast as we can. Largely, the arrangements will be as they were, because we've got this interesting choice: we will seek to make the change as soon as possible

but we won't make the change, I wouldn't think, slap in the middle of a high-risk time. My experience would be that that's not really a wonderful time to make any fundamental changes.

What you want to keep doing is reinforcing it and growing it, and then you might do the restructuring at the end of the bushfire season. What we want to do is improve a number of things where there are identified shortfalls, such as the public information stuff. We'll fix that. That will be ready.

**MS DUNDAS:** But the on-the-ground activity, the command structure—

**Mr Tonkin:** Some things I think will have changed: there's a recommendation in the McLeod report about the nomenclature which is used as we have a different nomenclature than everybody else for some of the activities. The report raised this, asking why this was so. If you're bringing in reinforcements from New South Wales and Victoria, they're used to a particular terminology and a particular philosophy and they've got to change for us. In that case, the one is out of step and he has recommended we change to be in step with everybody else. That can be done pretty quickly.

Relationships between the police and emergency services during evacuations and so on will be done before the fire season. That will change the way we respond. There is a series of things.

**THE CHAIR:** But, fundamentally, the command and control structure of which Mr McLeod was critical—of the Christmas 2001 fires and this January—will still be the structure we carry into the coming season?

**Mr Tonkin:** I can't answer that comprehensively. It depends how fast we can move. Our bushfire season starts on 1 October, but the bushfire season moves from north to south generally, progressively over the summer period, so we probably have some time before we get into a higher risk zone, to give us a chance. I'm just making the observation that, once you get to a high-intensity period, that might not be the sensible time to make changes. However, you can evolve it. We'll be looking to do all of that. That's why we want to get this person on the ground as soon as we can, to start to lead that change process.

**MR PRATT:** Would the relocation of ESB away from JACS occur before the fire season?

**Mr Tonkin:** I don't believe we'll have a statutory authority before then. We won't. It is impossible. You have to design and write the legislation, and get it through the Assembly, and I wouldn't have thought that would be the most rapid process.

**MR PRATT:** It's not our fault.

**MR HARGREAVES:** It can be, with a little help from your friends.

**Mr Tonkin:** Organisationally, it will be the same thing. You can virtually set it apart and make it an agency, and more separable and so on, before that. You can do it

administratively, which is the purpose of having this commissioner in place early. You can then say, "Here's your chunk of resources, your command structure and direct reporting to the minister. Off you go."

**MS DUNDAS:** If we have further questions about the new commander coming in, would you prefer that we directed them to Minister Wood?

**Mr Tonkin:** I'm chairing the task force that implements it, but it is the minister's responsibility. That's a dual responsibility: the Chief Minister has responsibility for the overall response and Minister Wood is responsible for emergency services. I'm happy to take the questions.

**MS DUNDAS:** You were just saying, then, that the new appointee will have his or her own command structure and be developing the authority.

**Mr Tonkin:** Direct accountability to the minister.

**MS DUNDAS:** But will that person have a role in the direct on-the-ground operations this season?

**Mr Tonkin:** If we get the person in place, absolutely. That person will be in charge of the existing structure and will have the ability and authority to change that structure or to evolve that structure as that person sees fit, in consultation with all the other people who have an interest in this: the Bush Fire Council, the volunteer brigades, the fire brigades and so on. This is a significant change management process and a lot of the people engaged in this process are volunteers who give their time freely. They have to be listened to and their views must be taken into account.

There are issues about the various people who have concerns: the rural leaseholders and a great long list of people. It's quite a complex business, but that person will have the authority to lead that process forward.

**MS DUNDAS:** I just wanted to clarify that. It's not just about leading the process forward, it's about dealing with the immediate issue of the 2003 season.

**Mr Tonkin:** That person will be in command. Once appointed, in command.

**MR PRATT:** Regarding the time line for the selection of that person and giving him or her that authority, I take your point about the procedures that have to be undertaken, stakeholders that have to be consulted with and so on. Given that the next fire season is landing upon us, how quickly do you think we might fast-track it? Do you feel that it's necessary, in terms of the state of the territory in this current year, with that fire season almost upon us, to move as rapidly as possible to fast-track that process?

**Mr Tonkin:** The selection process?

**MR PRATT:** Yes, the process of selecting the person and giving him or her the authority to implement these recommendations.

**Mr Tonkin:** We've advertised the position. Applications close I think at about the end of this week or close enough to that, or may have already closed. The selection panel is rapidly being established. We'll be doing the short-listing with the consultants who have done the search for us within the next week. My aim is at least to identify the selected person and make the recommendation to government—because this is not my choice, it's a government choice—before the end of this month.

Who the selected person is, where she or he is and what she or he does will have some effect on how fast you can access that person. If the person is currently in a job, there is usually a notice period and things like that have to be dealt with. But the aim is to complete the selection process absolutely as fast as we can. We have it on as fast a time line as is possible.

**THE CHAIR:** In the document that you've just given the committee, I notice that, on the second page, the total estimated return from the NDRA, the Commonwealth funding, has declined from \$17 million to \$15.2 million. Is that because they've rejected some claims or is it just that we haven't received the money yet and we expect to get the other \$1.8 million?

**Ms Smithies:** There's been a little bit more of a firming up between Treasury and DOTARS, which is the Commonwealth agency responsible for running the NDRA, in relation to what will be acceptable and what won't be acceptable in our claim. I think also there has probably been a bit of substitution, removing elements from the NDRA claim and placing them into what will be covered by the territory's insurance. So, under the agreement, if it's covered by insurance, we won't be able to get it back through the Commonwealth, which is obvious.

**THE CHAIR:** So the expected return, now, from the insurance is what?

**Ms Smithies:** The revenue? \$114 million revenue from insurance.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that 114 more than we initially expected?

**Ms Smithies:** It's gone up slightly, I think by a factor of maybe \$3 million.

**THE CHAIR:** So what the NDRA hasn't covered, the insurance has?

**Ms Smithies:** It's not a complete substitution, no. There are just some things that are falling out of the NDRA guidelines.

**THE CHAIR:** What work does the line "work funded from 'self-insurance' fund" cover and is that the money held by the ACT insurance agency?

**Ms Smithies:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. What's the nature of that work?

**Mr Harris:** It's not specific to projects. It is simply their self-insurance premium, if you like.

**Mr Quinlan:** It's the excess.

**Mr Harris:** Yes, it is the excess, thank you. It's the excess that they hold which is not reinsured by other people.

**THE CHAIR:** So the \$9 million is the excess.

**Mr Harris:** There are two excesses: one for general property and one for forestry. They are about fifty-fifty: they are each \$4 million, if my memory serves me correctly.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, that's my memory of it. Four and four adds up to eight.

**Ms Smithies:** No, it's actually five and four.

**THE CHAIR:** It's five and four is it?

**Ms Smithies:** Yes, that's right.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, cool. The last page of the document you've tabled, table 3, has potential contingencies. Clearly, this is looking into the future. Have you put costs against these?

**Mr Quinlan:** No, that's why they're on the last page.

**THE CHAIR:** Point taken, but is there an indicative figure, or are these the issues that we need to be aware of that will emerge over time?

**Mr Quinlan:** They're presented with that in mind. We thought that what we should do is try to communicate to the committee, and to the Assembly through the committee, the other matters that we're aware are highly likely to arise. That's as much as we know. We could take some wild guesses, but they're wild guesses.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. Moving on to the Chief Minister's Department, if there are no more general questions, I noticed the first item is the bushfire rebuilding grant, \$1.2 million. I guess if you divide that by 5,000, that's 240 homes. Is that the indication at this stage of the number of people who intend to rebuild?

**Mr Quinlan:** There's a lot of people not rebuilding, anyway.

**Mr Tonkin:** Two hundred and forty is the estimate, based on the surveys that we've undertaken so far, so we think that's the proportion of people who will seek to rebuild. Remember, this grant goes to those people who were burnt out and are rebuilding. It does not go to people who buy those blocks and then choose to build. That's the estimate.

Whether that's all achievable in the balance of this financial year we'll have to see, but we have to work on the basis that, if they come forward, they're entitled to the grant. I think there are something over 80 development applications. There are 140 DAs,

development applications, and there's something of the order of 80 of whatever the next step is.

**THE CHAIR:** Approvals.

**Mr Tonkin:** Approvals. So you can be confident that those with approvals will commence, because people tend to proceed very quickly after approval to actually building. People going for development approvals may not. They may change their minds. A significant chunk of people either haven't decided yet whether they're going to rebuild or sell. Some people have sold, some people are in the middle, some people have got to development application stage, and others have got to approval stage. The aim is to assist as many people as possible to rebuild in the affected suburbs. That's our estimate at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** Can any of that be claimed against the NDRA? There's a catch-all clause in the NDRA—clause g, I think it is—that includes any other expenses related to the disaster. Is this the sort of assistance we can squeeze out of the feds?

**Ms Smithies:** We will try. There is a general rider in the NDRA which talks about a means-testing sort of approach, so we may well start to get towards that boundary.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. We haven't as yet, but you said we will try?

**Ms Smithies:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**MS DUNDAS:** The funding in this particular point—and it might have been covered in the last lot of estimates that were done—is specifically for people who are rebuilding, to help with fences, and so on. What support was given, or is being given, to people who lost fences but didn't lose houses and are still living in the affected areas?

**Mr Tonkin:** We haven't given any support to those people.

**THE CHAIR:** Do we know how many people—

**Mr Quinlan** Will be generally covered by insurance?

**Mr Tonkin:** Yes, they're covered. They have insurance.

**MS DUNDAS:** But I know a number who didn't have insurance for their fences and lost fences and garages and those types of things, not to the point that they lost their houses but their block of land sustained significant damage. There has been no decision to support them?

**Mr Tonkin:** Assistance had been given through a gardening program which has been helping people, through voluntary groups and programs such as those. They help people restore gardens and things, and that is effective. But the assistance that the government has provided has primarily been to those people who lost their houses.

**THE CHAIR:** If you look at page 15, DUS has asked for \$1.1 million to reinstate damaged fences, so clearly the government has suffered the same problem. Do you know how many people had damaged outbuildings and fences or lost them? I've never heard of or seen a number for the others affected.

**Mr Tonkin:** I'll seek some advice for you and come back on that, if I may.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. The government itself has been caught and obviously our fences haven't been insured, which is often standard for some of these insurance policies. Would the government give ministers some consideration to assisting those people who either didn't have insured outbuildings or fences, who lost gardens and suffered not as grievously as some others, but actually now live in the reconstruction zone? I've heard murmurings and talked to people who are still there, and some of them do feel that they've been overlooked in the whole process. Is there the possibility of considering assistance to them?

**Mr Quinlan:** It's an issue that has no doubt already been canvassed within the recovery task force and we can refer it back to them. The difficulty the government faces in relation to this exercise is that it is just in the nature of being the government that we have to make rules. There has to be an equitable rule of application and to some extent we have to draw a line. At this point, we have not said we will put everybody back where they were because, if people were severely underinsured, they will have actually sustained a loss as they would if theirs were a single residence lost, as opposed to being one of 500 residences lost.

What we've tried to do is keep communities together where they want to be together, and it's quite clear that many people don't want to go through building from the ground up again. I would be one of those if I'd lost a home, I'd have to say. I don't think I'd be going through that exercise. But where people want to re-establish, we want to put them on an equal footing with everybody else.

When it comes down to the more minor losses, those people haven't been in the front of the queue, of course. Many of them would have had insurance. In my lifetime, I've had fences damaged and they could be claimed on insurance. I would have thought that was a normal part of insurance cover, but I take what Ms Dundas says on board—some people haven't had insurance on their fences. I don't know why or which policies don't cover those things.

It's not been an issue that has just raised itself, to my knowledge. Mr Tonkin might know better. Certainly, there were people who were concerned about gardens. There is a process where loss sinks in for everybody, and when they see other people getting help they may think, "Even though I didn't suffer severe damage, I still suffered. What is the government doing for me?" We've tried to strike a reasonable balance.

We're prepared to listen to and review anybody's circumstances, because it's important for the city and the community to get physical damage behind us. That won't be the end of recovery but it'll be a watershed point in the recovery process. We are concerned to



make sure that we get all of the physical damage rectified as a first stage in the community's recovery overall.

**Mr Tonkin:** Of the around 500 houses destroyed, our data says that only about five were not insured. So, if that is a pretty good sample, and if you assume that a lot of other houses had fences damaged, the ratio is 1 per cent who were likely to be uninsured. You can make a pretty good presumption that most people will be able to claim against their insurance policy for those sorts of structural elements which were not housing but which were damaged or destroyed.

**MS DUNDAS:** On that point, the government was quite swift with its clean-up procedures in clearing the blocks and getting them ready for redevelopment, but there are still a lot of private burnt fences and so on around the affected areas that present dangers and a whole lot of other problems. Also, in terms of people rebuilding and looking at the landscape around them, you've still got scarred fences next to properties that weren't severely damaged. Will the government be stepping in in that process and supporting the owners of those houses to get those fences rebuilt as quickly as possible?

**Mr Tonkin:** The government already ran a program of waiving tip fees for quite a considerable period. The government has also run a very extensive and continuing program, through the bushfire recovery secretariat, of community updates. So, in these areas, people have been getting a lot of advice over a long period of time about all the measures and things put in place to assist them. At the end of the day, you have to make a judgment about when that stops. We set up a new tip to take all the demolitions materials and make them separable. A whole series of things has been put in place which people could take advantage of if they had such things to clean up. It just comes to the point at which you have to ask when it should stop.

Ultimately, there is a pressure point in the community. Recovery, as the Treasurer says, is a long-run thing: there's the physical and then there's the emotional, and everything else. We've certainly discussed this in the bushfire task force, under Sandy Hollway—at what point does a level of assistance provided to people affected by the fires result in a negative reaction from the rest of the community. It's a fine judgment.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving on to the community awareness/education package, I guess the questions there are: what will be in it, when will it be delivered, and is it on time?

**Mr Tonkin:** The kit has—and I will be corrected if I get this wrong—a booklet which provides quite detailed guidance on household preparation before, during and after a bushfire event. There is a checklist, as a separate document. There is a fridge magnet, which again is to give you the key telephone numbers and so on. The document has been prepared on the basis of information collected from around Australia, from the various expert agencies across the country.

We've tried to produce something that contains all of the relevant information. We think it's better than those done by anybody else. It tells you what sort of preparation to do in the pre-bushfire season, how to prepare your houses to reduce bushfire hazards, the sorts of equipment that you need, the sorts of clothing you should wear, it sets out a procedure to develop an evacuation plan or a bushfire plan, depending on what you want to do, it

tells you how to respond when a fire comes, and so on and so forth. It tells you whom to ring. It encourages people who are less able, less mobile, aged and so forth to talk to other people to develop a plan. It encourages people to talk to their neighbours and so on. So it is a comprehensive package.

That is at the printers. It's being printed as we speak, and our plan is that it will be delivered to every household by the end of September, earlier if possible. That is to be supported by a television campaign with, I think, five different ads. Lucille Baillie and Mal Meninga are the talking heads in this process. Again, the ads, one, alert people to the fact that the kit is available and, two, three, four and five, go through the various stages.

There will be media advertising in the *Canberra Times* and so on, opportunities at various events including Floriade, and so on. We've negotiated with the *Yellow Pages* so that, inside the front and back cover of the *Yellow Pages* for next year, will be a summarised version of that, on the theory that people might lose the booklet but will rarely lose the *Yellow Pages*, unless they chuck it at somebody or whatever. The aim is a comprehensive package out in a timely fashion. We think we've got it right.

**MR PRATT:** In fact, I have to say that that sounds like a pretty good, comprehensive package, and it's a universal one. Does that also include distributions to every business and every government department, so that it reaches every mailing address?

**Mr Tonkin:** It will go to every mailing address.

**MR PRATT:** Okay.

**Mr Tonkin:** So it will go to every business, every small business, every building and every rural leaseholder. We know that there may be some supplementary advice needed for rural residents, because they have particular requirements. Often they're more experienced at any rate but, even so, they're going to get the stuff.

**MR PRATT:** Federal departments, given that they are under our list?

**Mr Tonkin:** Every mailing address.

**MR PRATT:** All right. Okay, that's the universal package. Has there been any thought given at all to doing specific subsets of that program for vulnerable suburbs, for example, for the Arandas and the Farrers? It might perhaps be a secondary document that would specifically identify the environmental safety factors in that suburb?

**Mr Tonkin:** No, not in an information sense, but one of the initiatives that was in the budget and is being expanded is community fire units, which are being vectored towards areas that are more likely to be at risk than others. I drove past one on the weekend. I think the Parkes brigade or somebody was up at the back on Dryandra Street with one of the vehicles and there was a community meeting going on, apparently addressing those sorts of issues. They seemed to have a lot of people standing around one of our bushfire vehicles, so I presume that was a productive event.

**MR PRATT:** I'd like to ask more questions about the community fire units later, perhaps when I question Mr Wood, but in terms of the education program, you wouldn't have thought that we might need to send out supplementary—

**Mr Tonkin:** We think that the information in this booklet is as comprehensive as you can get.

**MR PRATT:** All right. You don't need to be specific for individual suburbs?

**Mr Tonkin:** Our message to the people of Canberra is that every house is potentially at risk of bushfire attack either directly, with radiant heat, or by ember attack, and so you can't presume that you are safe. All you have to do is look at the map of the effect in Weston and other places to see the depth to which the fire penetrated, so you can't presume you're safe just because you live in Forrest or somewhere like that.

**MR PRATT:** Which is why we have a universal program?

**Mr Tonkin:** Yes, so the answer to your question is no.

**MR PRATT:** Okay. I'll take that on board. Thanks.

**MS DUNDAS:** A lot of money is going into getting this package out to make households aware of the risks of bushfires. Was there any discussion about making it slightly more generic in terms of emergency situations? We were discussing earlier today that bushfires are not the only things that are waiting to threaten the ACT. We've had the floods—okay, it was for a couple of days and it was a very long time ago—but there are other risks that can affect the ACT. As we are spending so much money on this, was there the scope to make it broader, to deal with a whole range of emergencies that could threaten the ACT?

**Mr Tonkin:** You have to make a judgment there. There is material in the document which tells people, in respect of any emergency, who they should communicate with. So there is material there that tells you, if you have a problem that requires an ambulance, or whatever it is, where to go. It pushes the Canberra Connect measures, it pushes the radio and all those things. It is applicable to all emergencies.

It's there, but you do have to make a bit of a judgment. You want to make the message quite clear, and the more you try to expand the scope of the message, the greater the danger that you'll lose the particular immediate focus, which was what we were trying to maintain. This booklet has a dual purpose: to give people the practical, sensible information that they need and to promote community confidence. The community should know that these things have been thought through and that they are being looked after. A lot of the time they have to look after themselves, because that's the reality—giving people the confidence to be able to respond.

We try to keep the message pretty well focused, so it is a booklet about bushfires but it does talk about the other response numbers and how you generally do it. However, our judgment was that we shouldn't widen the message.

**MS DUNDAS:** I know you're not going to be able to change it at this stage, but does the magnet say "In case of emergency call" or does it say "In case of a bushfire call"?

**Mr Tonkin:** "In case of emergency", it says.

**MS DUNDAS:** Okay.

**Mr Tonkin:** And it talks about having an emergency kit—a battery radio, a torch, thinking through drugs and children, the things you collect when you are going to evacuate. Don't forget the child, the dog and the medication. If you have the bushfire kit then you're pretty well equipped to deal with the other likely hazards. There's more likelihood of significant damage in the ACT from violent storms than there is from bushfire, if you take the long view. Floods are less likely, unless Googong falls down.

**THE CHAIR:** Following on from that, though, if you go to the JACS section on page 57, there is \$403,000 for risk management and community education for emergencies. I take from that, therefore, that it would be quite different from your as-comprehensive-as-possible community awareness education package?

**Mr Tonkin:** That is the ongoing capability. What we are doing with the material that the Chief Minister's Department is organising, which is being done through our department with the bushfire secretariat, is a one-off hit to get this thing right. Then you have the ongoing program, which is the DUS thing. It is building inside the new agency an ongoing capacity in that area. One is first off and the other one is continuing.

**THE CHAIR:** We might move along to continuing the bushfire recovery effort. Is it possible to have a breakdown of the bushfire recovery effort? What will the \$440,000 be spent on? For instance, the document says that it is to provide for the continued bushfire recovery effort into early 2004. How much of that goes, for instance, into the recovery centre? We heard from ACTCOSS this morning that they still see need emerging, particularly in counselling, but do understand that eventually the recovery centre must wind up and we will again mainstream or rely on community organisations to provide a lot of those services. How much of it goes into the newsletter and regular substantial newspaper advertising? And how much of it is for the automated weather station in the Brindabellas?

**Mr Tonkin:** The automated weather station in the Brindabellas is separately funded at \$40,000, I think. The costs break up as follows. Of the \$440,000, \$200,000 is for staff and \$240,000 is for administrative expenses. The staff costs primarily relate not to the recovery centre, but to the secretariat, because we have needed to maintain the communications group going forward. So there are staff costs in the bushfire recovery secretariat, which forms part of the Chief Minister's Department.

**MS DUNDAS:** Can I just ask a quick question on that point? If the main focus of that staffing money is for communications and secretariat support, what about the money that was in the 2003-04 budget to improve communications services and pay for the new person coming into Chief Minister's?

**Mr Tonkin:** This is for the communications group of the bushfire recovery secretariat, whose job is to run the community updates and support the community and expert reference group. It is for the bushfire-specific activities, not the other activities. There are full-time jobs for quite a number of people producing the newspaper ads and the community updates that go out to all the people who were affected, and supporting the community and expert reference group.

There is also a reinstatement for a period of six months of a SOG B in the insurance advisory service, because we see a continuing demand for that service. In the administrative costs, \$150,000 goes to the community update and the newspaper advertising, which is the answer to one of Mr Smyth's questions.

As I said, \$40,000 is for the weather station and \$50,000 has been allowed for general administrative costs, for the costs of all these people.

**MS DUNDAS:** It was my understanding that it was always the plan that the work being done by the Bushfire Recovery Taskforce would slowly be moved back into line agencies. With the establishment of, I think, two new positions in Chief Minister's and a greater focus on communications across the whole government sector, there isn't scope for these jobs to be picked up by—

**Mr Tonkin:** Our judgment is no, there is no scope.

**THE CHAIR:** How many jobs are there involved in this?

**Mr Tonkin:** This is a continuation of a senior executive position. One manager and an ASO 6 through until March, and a SOG B and a SOG C to December. This reflects a review by the task force of what it considers to be a strong continuing demand for that part of the recovery efforts. It is specifically focused on that and totally distinct from the activities which we want to undertake on a whole-of-government basis to do other community enhancement.

We are just continuing what we were doing. Our view is that the workload remains high in that area. We've gone this far very successfully with the recovery and to fail to properly fund it until the task is finished would be unwise, in our view.

**THE CHAIR:** But you're talking about seven additional positions—

**Mr Tonkin:** No, they're not additional. They're current positions, we're just continuing them. They are being seconded.

**THE CHAIR:** If you would let me finish—seven additional positions over and above what the government had before the bushfires. You're talking about four in the group you've just mentioned. ESB has a new media person. You're talking about two new media people in Chief Minister's, so you're talking about seven additional positions.

**Mr Tonkin:** Some of those are short-run positions. They are only there until we complete the recovery task, then they disappear.

**THE CHAIR:** You expect that to be by Christmas?

**Mr Tonkin:** By March. We want to make sure that we have the capability to provide an appropriate level of community information in relation to bushfire recovery through to the anniversary of the bushfire event. We think that providing that information remains a critical part of the psychological aspect of the recovery program.

**THE CHAIR:** If that is important then why are, for instance, counselling services being diminished? Surely they're—

**Mr Tonkin:** They're not being diminished.

**THE CHAIR:** There's no wind-back in counselling services?

**Mr Tonkin:** No. There are three counsellors presently engaged at the bushfire recovery centre at Lyons and there has been no diminution of that service.

**THE CHAIR:** How many were employed there after the crisis?

**Mr Tonkin:** I think about three is as many as there has been.

**MS DUNDAS:** Can I just pick up on that point about the three counsellors? The original estimate, in the 2003-04 budget, was that the bushfire recovery centre would be winding up by about the end of the 2004 financial year. Is that—

**Mr Tonkin:** It has always been intended to keep the Lyons recovery centre at some level of capability until past the bushfire anniversary, until March. We thought we could wind back the secretariat function of the task force faster than that. The judgment now is, with the other things that they have been doing—and this bushfire awareness kit has been done by the secretariat, not anybody else—that the workload is there to justify it. We wouldn't be asking for it if we didn't think it was necessary.

**MS DUNDAS:** The Chief Minister provided all members with a document about the ongoing needs of bushfire support which said that the three counsellors based at the recovery centre will be maintained as long as required. Where would they then be established? Would the Lyons centre remain open just to support three counsellors or do you see that—

**Mr Tonkin:** No, the process is that you would then mainstream any ongoing requirements. At least two of these counsellors are being provided by Mental Health, so if they've been seconded from Mental Health, they then go back to Mental Health. If there is a continuing requirement for that client group, that process will be provided within the normal work capability of Mental Health. You take the functions. You keep the recovery centre there while there is a particular requirement. Once we've got it to the point where the case management load has reduced to such a level that it can then be allocated to the normal agencies, we will do that. The aim is to manage the move seamlessly.

We've now established a new group with a bunch of executive directors from the line agencies for the specific purpose of picking up the work that the task force has been doing and managing that transition back into the line agencies, so that there is no perceived loss of support for the people who need it, and we have a continuity of effort.

**MS DUNDAS:** Over the last two estimates, there has been discussion about having ongoing flags in the information that is provided, through the budget papers and quarterly updates, to indicate to an extent that this is a bushfire service that has been moved into a line agency. Have you had any further thoughts on tracking the resources for these three counsellors as they move back into line agencies?

**Mr Tonkin:** No, I can't say that we've had any further thoughts on that. At some point, it will become unidentifiable because it will become bits of people and so on. At some stage, you don't have a trackable item. What we really want, though, is that the people to whom we're providing services have a very clear understanding of where that ongoing support is going to come from. They're the people who need to be able to track what goes on, because ultimately the service just becomes part of Mental Health or part of family support, in the normal run of business. It is the clients we want to focus on and the strength of the recovery centre has been that focus on the individual clients and case management.

**MR PRATT:** Has the task force recovery counselling program been supplementing the counselling available in schools?

**Mr Tonkin:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** Right. We're getting reports that some of those counselling services have diminished in schools. Is that because the recovery task force can't—

**Mr Tonkin:** My understanding is that there has been no diminution of the counselling services available in schools. Those reports are incorrect.

**MR PRATT:** Okay, that is on the contrary.

**Mr Tonkin:** I think there was a question in the Assembly, wasn't there, last week on that subject?

**MR PRATT:** There may have been.

**Mr Tonkin:** I think that's the answer that you got.

**MR PRATT:** So there hasn't been a reduction in service to schools, as far as you know?

**Mr Tonkin:** Not to my knowledge, but you can ask Education.

**MR PRATT:** I will do that, too.

**Mr Quinlan:** As best I recall, the last full budget we brought down included an increase in the school counselling service, didn't it?

**MR PRATT:** Yes, as a general policy it did, but not as a part of the specific recovery process.

**THE CHAIR:** ACTCOSS said this morning in their briefing to the committee that they believed there is an increased need for counselling. They said that, as some of the trauma of the physical event, the rebuilding and the coming to grips with what occurred disappears, the emotional trauma emerges. The document that the government tabled about the continuing bushfire recovery effort and the continued provision of counselling and other services also acknowledges that. What facilities have been put in place to meet this assumed extra need that will emerge from the six-month and 12-month anniversaries?

**Mr Quinlan:** The process is that the counselling service remains and continues through.

**THE CHAIR:** But that's at the current level. The indications are, and your own document says, that you can expect them to increase. ACTCOSS said this morning that they are realising an increased need for counselling.

**Mr Tonkin:** My advice is that the counselling services professionally provided at Lyons are not being fully utilised. In other words, we have surplus capacity with the three counsellors there.

**THE CHAIR:** There is still capacity there?

**Mr Tonkin:** There is still capacity there to pick up some extra load. There is a process occurring with the client group. I think there were 1,400 families who were clients of the Lyons centre. It's now down to about 900, so they go through a careful process of case closure and so on. About 200 people either are or have been receiving counselling through the counsellors at Lyons, of whom 60 are children.

Most of the people have received one to two counselling sessions; some of the children, I think, have received three sessions. There's been a high degree of success through the counselling process. Often, one session is enough to allow people to express their problems and talk them through. The issue is then resolved or people can then manage it. So there is a capacity for more. I think people with an urgent requirement can get in within a day.

**Mr Quinlan:** I think we ought to remind the committee that each person who sought a copy of the McLeod report was registered and invited to access the service if he or she needed it.

**Mr Tonkin:** We expected that there would be spikes. When the coronial inquiry started it was like the McLeod report—there was a spike of concern and then it goes along and it continues down.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, six months, 12 months. Overall, you've put \$440,000 against continuing the bushfire recovery effort. In the breakdown, you said there was \$200,000 for staff, \$240,000 for admin and \$40,000 for the weather station.



**Mr Tonkin:** Sorry, the \$240,000 for admin includes the \$40,000 for the weather station.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, right.

**MS DUNDAS:** Regarding the bushfire recovery effort, when ACTCOSS was making a presentation to us this morning, its staff made the point that community groups and non-government organisations have taken on a big load in terms of helping the recovery process, coping with the extra demand from their general pool of clients and managing that stress. Yet, that hasn't in any way been financially quantified and those community groups haven't necessarily had their extra work funded in the same way that government agencies have had extra resources to deal with this demand. Is there going to be that discussion with the community sector about providing them with proper remuneration for the work that they have been doing, as part of the recovery effort?

**Mr Tonkin:** I think the answer is in two parts. One is that, if they feel they have absorbed financial cost, then it's open to them to come forward and seek additional funding. I'm not aware that any have.

Second, a lot of the work that was done in the community sector in response to the fires has been done by not only the established service providers who are funded through government programs, but by a range of other voluntary groups who have done it, literally, voluntarily. Getting financial recompense for what they've done has not been sought nor has it been thought of. They're community-minded citizens and there are thousands of them around Canberra who have done this. There are people around Australia, of course, who contributed as well. A lot of the effort is truly voluntary.

If there are organisations who feel that they have absorbed a cost which has been detrimental to other people that they support, then it's open to them, as it is always, to come forward and identify that cost and argue for additional resources.

**MS DUNDAS:** However, in the way that departments, over the last three appropriation bills, have been supported to quantify their costs and get extra resources for that, community organisations don't always have the time to sit down and say, "We absorbed x, y and z." Specifically, FaBRiC moved twice as its office was damaged in the fires, yet it was still providing high-need respite care. What kind of support will be given to that organisation to help quantify that extra loss or extra cost?

**Mr Tonkin:** I don't want to diminish in any way the efforts being put in by these fabulous organisations. They have done a tremendous job but they should go and talk to the departments they get their funding from. However, I would make the point that a lot of the ACT government agencies have also absorbed lots of costs. What you see in the appropriation bills are some specific initiatives, but I know that my department, for example, absorbed hundreds of thousands of dollars of costs. We just go and do it.

**Mr Quinlan:** As a former director of FaBRiC, I don't think they'd have a lot of trouble identifying the costs. I think the organisation is quite capable of doing that.

**THE CHAIR:** They're going to go away and do so. They promised us they would.

**Mr Quinlan:** I'm sure they will.

**MR PRATT:** Regarding the automated weather station in the Brindabellas, can you explain how much that will enhance the ACT weather warning system?

**Mr Tonkin:** No, I can't.

**THE CHAIR:** Will you undertake to find out?

**MR PRATT:** Has somebody identified a gap?

**Mr Tonkin:** I think this extra thing came out of the McLeod report, so we are doing it. They wanted it.

**MS DUNDAS:** Mr Tonkin, who is "they" at this point?

**Mr Tonkin:** I think it's in the McLeod report somewhere. I think there's a mention of the need to have an enhanced capability, so we'll provide that enhanced capability. Clearly, it fills a gap.

**MR PRATT:** So the money has been identified—

**Mr Tonkin:** To purchase it.

**MR PRATT:** But the specific kit hasn't been identified?

**Mr Tonkin:** No.

**MR PRATT:** Has its role been identified yet?

**Mr Tonkin:** Its role will be to provide information to the weather bureau and emergency services, so we know what the temperature regime is. When you're assessing bushfire risk, a complex calculation is done with data in relation to humidity, temperature and a range of other factors. That produces that fire weather warning of moderate, extreme or good luck, or whatever the highest particular classification is. What we know is that, in the last fire season, it was well above extreme.

We'll get more information so the weather bureau can advise us more accurately about the regime in that part of the country.

**MR PRATT:** So you reckon that will be enough to perhaps produce more accurate and faster fire and weather intelligence?

**Mr Tonkin:** I'm told the met bureau were the ones seeking this extra capacity so that should give us more information and, one presumes, better information. Whether it's any faster—I didn't detect during the bushfire emergency any lack of speed or comprehensiveness in the support provided by the met bureau.

**MR PRATT:** There are questions about whether the met information two days prior to the 18th was sufficient to confirm the level of threat. Is this going to upgrade that capability?

**Mr Tonkin:** All I can say is that, if it's in addition to the current capability, it can't degrade it.

**MR PRATT:** Is it enough, though?

**THE CHAIR:** Treasurer, it is actually recommendation 33 on page 235 of the McLeod report. It is listed under the heading "Commonwealth and interstate contributions". It says that an automatic weather station should be located in the Brindabellas to assist with fire weather forecasting. Did we actually approach the federal government or the interstate governments to contribute to this, given the Bureau of Met is a federal responsibility, or have we just gone ahead and done it?

**Mr Tonkin:** No, we just did it. With \$40,000, by the time you go through the negotiations, you could just get on with it. For \$40,000, they're just going to look at you laugh.

**THE CHAIR:** I just wonder whether the cost of siting and maintenance of it will be transferred then to the Bureau of Met or is something that we will continue to do?

**Mr Tonkin:** I think that's something we will explore. Our aim is to respond properly. This is the best way of responding properly.

**MS DUNDAS:** So we're appropriating the money and we're still going to work out who will be managing that thing or whether or not we're just actually buying another piece of equipment for the Bureau of Met?

**Mr Tonkin:** It's a piece of equipment which will provide information to help us. We get the benefit of it. I would imagine that it would be a solar-powered facility with a microwave link, or a link like that, to the weather bureau and that ongoing maintenance of these sorts of things would be minimal.

**THE CHAIR:** In this line note, there is also the community update newsletter and regular substantial newspaper advertising. Can you tell us how much the ads cost each day in the *Canberra Times*?

**Mr Tonkin:** I'll take that on notice. We'll try to give you an answer before we finish this hearing today.

**THE CHAIR:** Given that the Chief Minister said in the Assembly last week that he intends to run very hard and very strong on the bushfires in his campaign at the next election, should pictures of the Chief Minister be authorised in those adverts?

**Mr Quinlan:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you sure? I recall, when the urban update was done when I was the urban services minister, that photos of me often had to be authorised. I think in that case they were authorised by Alan Thompson, to be compliant with the Electoral Act.

**Mr Quinlan:** You might be right. I don't know.

**THE CHAIR:** I'd hate for you to be in trouble, Treasurer, for breaching the Electoral Act.

**Mr Quinlan:** It sounds daft to me but that doesn't mean it's not possible.

**Mr Tonkin:** I've just been advised that it is within six months of the election and, as the elections are on a fixed date, it therefore means February next year, or April or whatever.

**THE CHAIR:** How long will the adverts in the community update continue?

**Mr Tonkin:** Our present plan is to continue them through to the bushfire anniversary, which is well short of six months.

**MR HARGREAVES:** It's fairly common knowledge that, in the event of big disasters like this—and the earthquake in Newcastle is a good example that comes to mind—on the anniversary of the disasters people go back, regress, and have a significant crisis again. Have you made provision for the relief of people who do that?

**Mr Tonkin:** Sorry, say that last bit again.

**MR HARGREAVES:** We have been providing succour at the moment though numbers have been diminishing, thankfully, but if the trends are right, come the anniversary of the fires, we will see a spike of people who are needing—

**Mr Tonkin:** That is precisely why we are keeping the recovery centre operating until well beyond that date.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Do you see any need for additional resources to cater for that spike?

**Mr Tonkin:** We think the resources that we have available for that will be sufficient. You may well find that there is a degree of underutilisation of some of the capacity of recovery centre as we run towards the end of this year, but then we will hold it in place on the precautionary principle for exactly what you are describing. You would expect it to tail off after that.

**THE CHAIR:** I'm delighted to hear that the government is supportive of the precautionary principle, given Mr Corbell didn't want to vote for it with the Gene Technology Bill the other day, but that is another story. We might move on to the industrial relations position. Is this for one or two officers?

**MR HARGREAVES:** I think this is a question for a different minister.

**Mr Tonkin:** This is the responsibility of a different minister.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you want us to ask Ms Gallagher? Okay, that's fine.

**Mr Tonkin:** The answer to your question, though, just to get the facts out, is that those are two positions at SOG C level under IR.

**MRS DUNNE:** I have a question for the Treasurer which is not related directly to the Appropriation Bill. Mr Chair, I seek your guidance on whether it might be better if it were directed to the Acting Minister for Environment. Who is that at the moment?

**Mr Quinlan:** Bill Wood, I think.

**MRS DUNNE:** It's about the commitment last week of \$5 million over five years to the Murray fund. Where is that appropriation coming from? Does it have to be separately appropriated?

**Mr Quinlan:** It isn't appropriated at this stage; that I know. As far as I'm aware, in probability it won't be called upon until the next financial year anyway, so it may be in next year's budget.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay; that answers that question.

**Mr Quinlan:** I did ask the same question.

**MRS DUNNE:** Feel free to hospital-pass this question to Mr Wood: is that money the same as the money for the water resources strategy?

**Mr Quinlan:** No. You had better ask Mr Wood about that anyway, but as far as I am aware the water resources strategy is our stuff and the \$5 million is our contribution to the much larger pool contributed to by states on a pro rata basis and the Commonwealth to the wider issue of the Murray-Darling.

**MRS DUNNE:** My understanding is that the \$500 million over five years to which we are committing \$5 million is to address the overallocation issue.

**Mr Quinlan:** Before I get in any deeper, you had better ask Mr Wood about that, because he will at least have people behind him who will know exactly how much overlap there will be between our water resources strategy, because obviously there will be some overlap once we get into environmental flows and that sort of thing. They'll know exactly what that is. I haven't got the details.

**Mr Tonkin:** The details of how the trust is going to work are still being worked out and the communique that came out from COAG indicated there's some further work. What we were getting at the Council of Australian Governments was levels of various government commitments to the broader objectives and there's a fair bit of work to be done as to how that's turned into action.

I would expect there will be some overlap between things that we will do inside the territory which are part of our water strategy and which in turn, of course, contributes to the management of the total catchment. So there should be some overlap, but we have to work all these things through. The trick was firstly to get the Council of Australian Governments to agree to that initiative.

**MRS DUNNE:** I'm open to correction but, having pored through the 2003-04 budget some time ago, there is no money in it directed towards the water resources strategy. Is that right?

**Mr Tonkin:** I take your word for it. I don't think there is. I don't recall any specifics.

**MRS DUNNE:** There is no initiative that says its for the water resources strategy.

**Mr Quinlan:** No. There might be work being done on it.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, but it's not something that's a free good.

**Mr Quinlan:** A separate good.

**MRS DUNNE:** Where is the funding for the water resources strategy?

**Mr Tonkin:** First, get your strategy and then develop the initiatives that flow from that strategy and fund them in the sequence in which I would approach it.

**Mr Quinlan:** We do have an agency. I don't know whether they need extra funding; I couldn't tell you.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any other questions of the Treasurer?

**Mr Quinlan:** I'm happy to take questions on the acquisition of the Kurrajong, because that's been more out of our area.

**THE CHAIR:** Would you like to explain how we're managing to purchase a hotel for \$350,000?

**MRS DUNNE:** If you can buy it for \$350,000, I'll buy it instead.

**Mr Quinlan:** You might have had the opportunity to buy it if you had a 40-year lease on it, as we do. It is effectively alienated in terms of value from the Commonwealth by virtue of that 40-year lease that we hold. On the double-edged sword, the other side says that, under that 40-year lease, we've committed to keep it in good order and condition. It's a heritage-listed building and the last estimate I saw on the net present value of that 40-year commitment was about \$12 million.

So here we have the synergy, if you like, that the Commonwealth doesn't really have any use for it because it can't really use it and we would like flexibility in the future as to what is done with it. I can assure the committee that there is active interest in the use of the premises and some of the applications would be excellent applications for the

territory. We are still going through the process of winding down the hotel school. That will be an elongated process because of the contractual commitments they have with students. We've said we'll fund it through to 2006, so we may need it through to then anyway. That's about it. The Commonwealth put no value on it because it is of no value to them.

**MS DUNDAS:** You said that it's of no value to the Commonwealth because of the lease. When was the 40-year lease going to be up?

**Mr Quinlan:** There might be 35 years left or something like that.

**Mr Harris:** Yes. The significant majority of that lease time is still to run.

**MS DUNDAS:** When did the lease start? That might be an easier question for you.

**Mr Quinlan:** When the school started, I thought.

**Mr Harris:** We can find you an exact date, but there is quite a long time for the lease to run, which is why the value to the Commonwealth is so low.

**MS DUNDAS:** You noted that you're still going through the process of winding up the hotel school and the supplementary budget papers indicate that there will be a review of the ongoing use and management arrangements of the site. What are the terms of reference for that review and the time frame for that review? Who will be overseeing that review? Will the results be made public? All of the general questions I have about reviews.

**Mr Quinlan:** All the anal retentive questions, right.

**MS DUNDAS:** I am trying to keep you open and accountable.

**Mr Quinlan:** Yes. I haven't got all the detail. We have called for expressions of interest, closing at the end of this month; is that right?

**Mr Harris:** They are open now and they run for approximately a month.

**Mr Quinlan:** It is for various bodies that are interested in the continuation of the school in some manner or form, which would make it just an agency on its own feet. Those expressions of interest, depending on which one is decided upon, will have a material impact on the future of the building, because some of that expression of interest might relocate the school, some may presume that the premises are available to continue the school for a period of time. We want to work in with the outcome of those expressions of interest.

**MS DUNDAS:** Will the process be finished in time to be part of the next budget? Will it have financial implications for the next budget, or is that still to be decided?

**Mr Quinlan:** I certainly hope it wouldn't, other than positive implications, other than the fact that if we go through to 2006 with the hotel school, it's still going to cost us some

money. But that's if nothing comes of the current call for expressions of interest that is of benefit to us other than just running the school down.

**MS DUNDAS:** But you hope those decisions will be made in time for the next budget.

**Mr Quinlan:** Yes. I am confident, but with no guarantees. I'm confident that events will accelerate and a logical conclusion to the whole process will emerge over the next six or seven months in the process which will include both the future of the school and the future of the building. But I can't give you some terms of reference because all I've had so far is a number of organisations express some interest in the school and others express interest in the premises.

**Mr Harris:** The time frame will, in part, be dependent upon how complex those proposals end up being. We don't know that yet, obviously.

**THE CHAIR:** Treasurer, do you want to handle questions on the purchase of Commonwealth land or are they more appropriate of Mr Corbell?

**Mr Quinlan:** If you start asking me block and section, I'm in trouble.

**THE CHAIR:** We will keep it simple for you there.

**Mr Quinlan:** The Minister for Planning can quite happily handle it. There is some land out there. There is, let me say, some undercurrent occurring as we speak in relation to what will eventually be put on sale out there and what won't. A number of parties have an interest in this: there is the Commonwealth, there is ourselves and there is the airport. There is land that we thought was going to be put on the market, but may or may not in the future be put on the market.

We would like to acquire additional land in the Majura Valley that was previously occupied by the Commonwealth in order that we can provide for a correctional institution and to provide for a motor sport facility; in particular, a dragway facility. The fourth party interested in this is the motor sport push who have an interest and who will be affected by the outcome of what becomes available and what does not.

**MS DUNDAS:** You are looking to appropriate \$1.59 million for this purpose. I've heard ministers say over the last number of years that they are not going to tell us how much money they have got in a negotiating hole in terms of EBAs, et cetera. Is this the top price that you are going to offer to the federal government? Are you showing your hand on this?

**Mr Quinlan:** I think they were indicative prices given before the process got a little complicated.

**MS DUNDAS:** So the negotiations aren't concluded; you don't actually know the final figure for the price of the land.

**Mr Quinlan:** No.



**MS DUNDAS:** Do you expect that it will be more than \$1.5 million? If so, will you be prepared to pay that much?

**Mr Quinlan:** It would depend on the level of the price.

**Mr Tonkin:** And the precise piece of land.

**Mr Quinlan:** And the precise piece of land and the likely outcome of any EIS that is conducted on land out there. There is some land out there that has threatened critters on it. We need to take all of those things into account, but we still hope that the land that was originally available will be available and we will be able to accommodate the territory's needs using that land.

**MS DUNDAS:** Do you want to provide some more information on the complications that have arisen that have, I guess, sidetracked the negotiations?

**Mr Quinlan:** I can't. We only know—it's as much hearsay as anything—that the airport, as a party that would be affected by the use of nearby land, has expressed some misgivings or interest in having a say or influencing the government's final decision on what is available or not. I can't say any more than that because we're not party to those discussions; we just know that all of a sudden our process has slowed up a bit.

**THE CHAIR:** Has the process slowed up or has it just been overstated? My recollection of what the Chief Minister said initially was that they were close to purchasing.

**Mr Tonkin:** The Commonwealth Department of Defence doesn't have a continuing need for a tract of land to the east of the airport, running to the north-east. The government is interested in acquiring all or some of that land to provide us with an alternative site to the previously identified site for the—

**THE CHAIR:** Block 102 Malcolm Vale.

**Mr Tonkin:** 92, 102 and 147, I think, are the numbers that flash before me. Whether they're the right numbers, time will tell. The government was interested in acquiring some site within that area as an alternative to the presently identified site for the prison, because the existing site is close to the centre line of the glide path and just outside the A&R 20 line for aircraft noise. If we could provide that alternative site, good.

The airport has some interest in expanding the airport, developing the airport over time. I think it's in the public domain that they wish to extend the north-south runway 450 metres. There may be some interest in expanding the east-west runway. They have other issues about access to the VIP area and so on.

There's a range of considerations in play. We're hopeful that we can get an outcome with the Commonwealth and the airport which satisfies all parties. The present estimate is a reasonable estimate for the cost, but we'll see what happens once the negotiations are concluded. We're also sensitive to the issue of the earless dragon.

**MR HARGREAVES:** They can't hear you coming.

**Mr Tonkin:** Therefore, you have to be even more sensitive, because you might tread on the poor little things. We do have to go through a process. That whole area is not designated for that endangered species. The aim is to find a site for the prison which is in an area which is not affected by aircraft noise, which is in an area which not affecting endangered species or endangered landscape, and which accommodates the airport's needs as well. I think this will all be resolved fairly quickly.

**MRS DUNNE:** I wish to recap on a question Ms Dundas asked. Is \$1.59 million your top price?

**Mr Quinlan:** No.

**MS DUNDAS:** I assume that the rest of the money would come from the Treasurer's Advance, then.

**Mr Quinlan:** It depends on how much. We might be back to see you.

**Mr Tonkin:** It could be less.

**THE CHAIR:** You could get a bargain.

**Mr Tonkin:** It depends on the site. It is a quite complex process to get this right, but, as I said, it's a reasonable ballpark figure.

**THE CHAIR:** There being no further questions for the Treasurer, I thank you, Treasurer, and your staff for attending. I would like to note that four or five questions were taken on notice and the normal turnaround time is three days for those questions. We would be pleased if we could have the answers as quickly as that.

**Short adjournment**

Appearances:

Ms K Gallagher, Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Women and Minister for Industrial Relations  
Chief Minister's Department

Mr R Tonkin, chief executive officer  
Department of Education, Youth and Family Services

Mr T Wheeler, executive director, corporate training and audit education

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon, Minister, and members of her staff and department. Welcome to the Estimates Committee for the second appropriation 2003-04. Before we begin, I have to read you something you'll hear a lot in your parliamentary career.

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 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.

For the purposes of recording today, I ask that, when you speak for the first time at the microphone, you identify yourself and the capacity in which you appear. We will be adopting the convention that, with any questions taken on notice, we would hope for a three-day turnaround time, so the committee can put in its report and table it in the Assembly at the next sitting period.

Minister, welcome. Would you like to make an opening address to this committee?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, I won't, Chair. I'm fine to just hit the questions, if that's okay. We've got only half an hour or so.

**THE CHAIR:** I notice there's one line in the appropriation for the minister for education—that's the Birrigai bushfire recovery, which is \$150,000. I guess the obvious question is: what will that cover?

**Ms Gallagher:** The \$150,000 is to allow for essentially making the Birrigai landscape safe to re-open for schoolchildren. It covers areas that aren't covered by insurance. It is primarily to do with cleaning up and removing the damaged trees around the buildings.

This cost wasn't foreseen around budget time. We believed that the site could be made safe within the provisions of insurance. As it's turned out, that hasn't been the case—it's a lot more costly than we expected. Some of that \$150,000 may be able to be received back—about 50 per cent—from the Commonwealth government's natural disaster relief arrangements, given the fact that it's the removal of foreign species around the Birrigai building footprint. We think we might be able to get 50 per cent of that money back. Additionally, the department has met some of the costs, within existing resources, of removing a number of trees already.

**THE CHAIR:** What's the future of Birrigai? You might like to tell the committee what's left, and what the intention is for the future for Birrigai.

**Ms Gallagher:** As to the work being done at Birrigai at the moment, I understand the clean-up has almost been completed. Limited student activity will be recommenced on the Birrigai site in term 4.

Whilst this work is being done, there are a number of areas students are able to go into, like the Botanic Gardens, the Jerrabomberra Wetlands, Mount Ainslie—and there are a few other places. We've been running the programs, but not at Birrigai. That will continue as well, but we're hoping for some limited activity back there in term 4.

There's a lot of interest across the sector, as you can imagine, but the intention is to rebuild Birrigai as it was. That's our first priority. If other things emerge, in time, about how Birrigai could be different from just a place for students to go, we'll look at that. The priority is to get it ready, as much as we can, for term 4 and then work towards next year.

**THE CHAIR:** This work is preparatory to the total reconstruction of Birrigai. When will that occur?

**Mr Wheeler:** We've tackled the job in three phases. The first phase was basic repairs, which are almost complete. The minister has referred to those. The second stage is to begin planning for replacing the essential elements or facilities of the site needed to run an educational program for schools, in pretty much the same way as they were run before.

The third stage, which is a large one, is what might come out of the non-urban study and some of the precinct studies associated with that. There we look at whether there's wider and more collaborative use made of Birrigai and Tidbinbilla with environmental education and so on—but that's subject to that further study.

At the moment, we're looking at what we have to do to replace the essential facilities, just to bring it back so schools can keep using it. However, as the minister said, the repairs done so far would allow limited use part of the site in, say, fourth term of this year.

The second stage I've mentioned would be something we could undertake with appropriate funding. It's something that would have to go to government. It could be commenced early next year and be finished later in the year—replacing some of the facilities that were damaged, such as the dormitories, workshop, storage facilities and a lecture room.

**THE CHAIR:** When would that commence, and how long would it take?

**Mr Wheeler:** We've started planning at the moment. It's subject to final work and also getting funds from government. In theory, we could have it done within about 10 or 11 months.

**THE CHAIR:** When will the bid go to government, Minister?

**Ms Gallagher:** As soon as it's finalised. I haven't had a date given on that, but the intention is to get Birrigai ready as soon as possible. A lot of consultation work has been done, and there are people who have a view about what Birrigai could be and what role it should play. That work's all been done and we've been moving as fast as we can. There's a strong sense from the community that we need to have Birrigai open and running as soon as possible. That's certainly the intention of government.

To give some of the details, in terms 3 and 4 of 2003, the programs that are being offered have had 58 schools registering, with a total of 5,342 students involved. There are tentative bookings for the first program to take place in term 4. The remaining bookings for 2003 are from 13 schools—involving another 538 students. You can see there's a lot of demand there that we're trying to meet. We need that place to be safe.

**MS DUNDAS:** It was indicated that there would be further funding for second stage developments of Birrigai—and you want to do that as soon as possible. However, in respect of the availability of resources, do you see that you would have to wait for next year's budget, or do you think it can happen before then?

**Ms Gallagher:** I haven't been advised on the costs involved, so it's a bit hard to answer that. If there are large sums of money involved, I imagine we'll have to wait for next year's budget. There are insurance payments to come as well. I haven't been advised on it at this stage. I need to get that first. That will certainly assist me in working out how much money we need, and where to get it from.

**THE CHAIR:** The flipside to that might be: have you asked—and is it an urgent priority on behalf of the government to get everyone up and running? If the reconstruct time is 10 months from start to completion, the earliest it would be finished, given the budget cycle, is probably the end of next year.

**Ms Gallagher:** I'm briefed quite regularly on Birrigai. It is very important and it is something the government has prioritised. When it comes to advice about where it's going and how programs are being offered, I am being advised all the time. In relation to specific advice about the potential money involved, I haven't been advised but, as soon as that becomes available, it would come to me.

There are other things like the non-urban study. Other work is being done around that area concerning relationships with Tidbinbilla and the potential for interactions between Birrigai and, say, Tidbinbilla. The education component there is still being done. All I can say at this point is that it's not finished.

**THE CHAIR:** You said that the government has prioritised this. Where is it in the list of priorities? You haven't even come up with a budget for it and it's now six months since the destruction of Birrigai. It is going to take 10 months to rebuild; there is no money; and we're doing the second appropriation now for the end of September—unless you're going to bring an amending line in for this. We wouldn't have a third appropriation before the end of the year. That would mean there would be no Birrigai until the end of next year. How do you consider that a priority?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, I don't think that's true. It's a difficult situation. Our priority is to get the site open, for whatever activity we can have going on out there, as soon as possible. It would be difficult for me to have, say, a million dollars in the budget, or whatever, because I think we might need it down the track—if the work shows that we need that money. You would be whipping me around the head for it, if I did that!

**THE CHAIR:** There is \$28 million in the budget already. This is the opportunity for such bids!

**Ms Gallagher:** It's difficult. It doesn't mean it's not a priority, it just means that I don't have the advice on specifically how much it's going to cost for Birrigai to be rebuilt in the way we decide it is to be done. It wasn't ready for this appropriation. It doesn't mean it's not a priority. Do you know what I mean?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Is there a mechanical question for Mr Wheeler on this issue?

**Mr Wheeler:** We also need to finalise with the insurer what the replacement payout figure will be. We've got the repairs and continuity of business figures sorted out. We're busily spending that money—and there are the things we've already done.

In order to advise government on the cost of stage two—in other words, bringing Birrigai back to where students can use the facilities as they were before—we need to be sure not only of the costs of that in the current climate but also what is going to be recovered by way of insurance. Once we know that, we'll be in a position to advise government. It is the gap that will be the issue.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Please correct me if I'm wrong but, presumably, the main bulk of the money to reinstate Birrigai will come out of the insurance. What we're talking about is the enhancement of it, in respect of things like the non-urban plans for that area—and Tidbinbilla. Think how long it takes to build a sandcastle. There's no way in the world, at the moment, you can reinstate Birrigai before 30 June and pay all the bills. If the money starts to flow from the insurance companies, you can get on with it.

This is what you were saying. We probably don't need an appropriation until the budget of next year, at any rate, because you're telling me about the enhancement figure, aren't you?

**Mr Wheeler:** We'll need to get the program figure agreed and approved. In addition to the insurance moneys, we'll talk with Treasury about the capital works moneys, to see whether there's a way in which we can cash-manage that without requiring an appropriation. We're not making an assumption, at this stage, about needing another appropriation.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps Mr Tonkin can clarify something. Insurance moneys don't come back to the individual departments, do they? They go to the Treasury and are treated as revenue received by the government.

**Mr Tonkin:** This is really a Treasury question. They'll be treated as revenue received, but they can then be transferred back. It's not as if it's a bonus to revenue. If a process

needs to be undertaken by a given department, then the money can go across to that department. I don't think it needs to be reappropriated. That's a technical question.

**THE CHAIR:** Could you take that on notice?

**Mr Tonkin:** I will check that—as to the mechanism. The question would basically be: in respect of any insurance payment related to the fire, where does the money go to; and what is the process for it if it goes to consolidated revenue for allocation to line departments?

**THE CHAIR:** The follow-up question to that would be: what moneys have been received so far, against what claims? Could we please also know what moneys are outstanding?

**Mr Tonkin:** It's not in that. We'll take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** I am just checking. I can't see it. It doesn't give a breakdown. It just says here that education received \$4.5 million. I assume that is for the Grant Cameron Centre.

**Mr Wheeler:** Yes, we'll take that on notice.

**MR PRATT:** Do I presume that the funding to be appropriated for Birrigai doesn't include any ongoing expenditure to cover supplementary programs for students—in the absence of Birrigai?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, it doesn't. The \$150,000 is essentially for tree removal and for making the outside of the building safe—so some restricted activity can occur. The programs we're running outside of Birrigai at Jerrabomberra Wetlands, the Botanic Gardens and Mount Ainslie—and Outward Bound—are all ongoing, and not part of this money.

**MR PRATT:** Under the original budget?

**Ms Gallagher:** Exactly.

**MR PRATT:** There is sufficient?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** How close are you to signing a memorandum of understanding with Outward Bound? Has that been done?

**Ms Gallagher:** To my knowledge, it hasn't been. We are running some programs out there already.

**Mr Wheeler:** Not to my knowledge.

**Ms Gallagher:** We are already running programs out there. Teen Challenge will operate out there. That work has been done. I've had meetings with Outward Bound. My

understanding is that some of their concerns have been addressed, but we can check up on the MOU.

**MR PRATT:** You're still not able to run the OBA plan to full capacity?

**Ms Gallagher:** In relation to the proposal they were putting forward?

**MR PRATT:** Yes.

**Ms Gallagher:** We advertised. I think this goes to the situation of select tenders. Outward Bound came with a proposal about how they could assist us, but a number of organisations around the ACT were, or could have been, interested in that sort of work.

My recollection is that we advertised for services to be offered; that Outward Bound applied—and they've obviously won part of that work. However, we certainly didn't simply say, "Outward Bound are offering this, so that's who we'll do business with." That's not the way to operate. Nevertheless, we've certainly contracted them for parts of the programs. We're doing some with the Botanic Gardens for kindergarten-aged children. They have teddy bears picnics there, which are joyful occasions.

**MR PRATT:** We should have them here—they taste lovely!

**Ms Gallagher:** It's not appropriate, necessarily, for Outward Bound-type activities. Consequently we've had to be careful about choosing suitable locations, depending on the age of the children. We intend—certainly with ones like the Botanic Gardens and the wetlands, which have been so successful—to keep those going once Birrigai is established.

I think the view, from a lot of the work done, was that Birrigai had to be seen outside of just one location—that it was much more than that. So, some of the terminology we're using is Birrigai at Jerrabomberra and Birrigai at Paddy's River. We're extending the meaning of Birrigai out a little from that one location.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Birrigai and the pub.

**Ms Gallagher:** We'll see you there, John!

**MR PRATT:** No—we're trying to fix juvenile drinking. You're satisfied that there's sufficient funding in the existing budget to cover all classes, in the absence of Birrigai, and that the full program can be met—the one that existed prior to the destruction of Birrigai?

**Ms Gallagher:** I haven't been advised that people are missing out. Before you arrived, I gave numbers of programs and students using them. Fifty-eight schools had registered, with a total of 5,342 students for terms 3 and 4 this year. They're spread out across government primary schools, high schools and colleges; Catholic schools and independent schools; and two from interstate. It is my understanding that, within the framework we're working in, we are able to meet the demand at the moment.



**THE CHAIR:** Moving onto the industrial relations area, I notice there is \$177,000 for two additional policy officers. What work will they be doing?

**Ms Gallagher:** Primarily, the work will be around the reviews of the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the Dangerous Goods Act—the legislative reform program that we’re doing. By way of explanation of the work the safety labour policy unit does, at the moment, there are eight staff there. The work they do covers industrial manslaughter legislation, dangerous goods legislation, long service leave legislation, annual leave legislation, and workers compensation legislation.

In addition, they provide secretariat support to four consultative bodies; they prepare briefings and advices to me; and they represent the ACT at four national forums. There is significant work that needs to be done, specifically in relation to occupational health and safety—and also the Dangerous Goods Act. In my view, this work had to be prioritised, and there was not the capacity within that area, with those eight staff, for that work to be completed in the necessary timeframe. That is why I’ve brought forward this budget bid.

**THE CHAIR:** Were you not aware of that need when the original budget for the year was brought down? Here we are eight weeks into the year, and suddenly a need has been discovered in the department.

**Ms Gallagher:** I don’t know that it’s a need within the department. It’s certainly a need that’s been brought to my attention in respect of the agenda I want delivered. Around the fireworks issue, around the Queen’s Birthday long weekend, I had a number of concerns—that, if we didn’t have the people available to do the work, and prioritise this work, then that legislative reform couldn’t be done in time for next year’s June long weekend. It was of concern to me.

I can accept criticism from the committee that it’s a short time between the first appropriation and this one. Nevertheless, on this issue, I’m prepared to sit here and say it needs to be done—and that’s why I’ve brought it forward.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Presumably, that’s also being mindful that as much notice as possible has to be given to any company or retail outlet, because they are now going to have their regime totally changed. Presumably, the sooner the legislation changes, the better advice they have to get out of whatever they have to get out of. You don’t want to leave it to the last minute, where they’ve been purchasing stock, and find that they have millions of dollars tied up. That was one of the issues raised the last time there was a review.

**Ms Gallagher:** That’s right. The fireworks issue is a small part of the Dangerous Goods Act. At the same time, reform work needs to be done there, including implementation of national protocols and agreements. The drafting work which needs to be done is significant. When I sought advice from the department about how this could be achieved expeditiously, along with the other work they’re doing—around industrial manslaughter, long service leave and other reform areas—their view was that they weren’t able to do it within the existing resources, and with eight of them there. Understanding the pressure on that unit, I agreed with them.

**MS DUNDAS:** Will these two positions be ongoing, or will they be just for the life of those reviews?

**Ms Gallagher:** They're in the budget as ongoing. I have to say, as industrial relations minister, I think that area could do with more than eight staff. There's always going to be more work to be done, so I didn't have a problem with arguing for the positions to be ongoing. That would still mean 10 people in an office to do private sector industrial relations, where there is a lot of work to be done. Hence, whilst there are certainly priority areas, it's not as if there is not going to be work for those positions. It's just that there'll be more people to do the work that's currently there.

**MS DUNDAS:** You've also spoken about the need to review the Dangerous Goods Act. The 2003-04 budget allows \$345,000 for the destruction of fireworks, and there was TA money set aside for that as well. Weren't they aware, at the time, that this issue would be ongoing and that greater resources would be needed to look at it—especially considering the amount of fireworks being confiscated, and the ongoing process of looking after that?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. The Treasurer's advance and the \$345,000 were to support the enforcement of WorkCover's responsibilities under the act. This is a bit different. I think everyone in the ACT understands that the issue of fireworks has been very difficult to understand—and to get a grasp on how to deal with it.

We've probably got the right balance now. We hope that—by bringing the legislative reform into place, tightening up the regulations around storage, sale, and use of fireworks—some of the additional costs presented to WorkCover will be reduced. That's the intention and the hope but, at the end of the day, WorkCover has a job to do in responding to its responsibilities under the act.

That's where it is difficult. I don't see that we can use a TA and the \$345,000 as reasons why the legislative reform could have been part of that. This is a different thing. Again, I'm prepared to sit here and say that I didn't have a full understanding of the work required under that legislative reform process, when I was going through the previous budget. I was new to the portfolio. I now fully understand the work that's required.

**MR PRATT:** Some of the money that's been allocated—or at least the duties of one of those two positions—is any of that funding related to the disposal of fireworks?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**MR PRATT:** That's been previously budgeted for?

**Ms Gallagher:** That's right. No, these are SOG C policy positions.

**MR PRATT:** They're both review positions?

**Ms Gallagher:** Initially, the work will be very much around getting regulations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and progressing the recommendations of the Occupational Health and Safety Council. The other one will be to ensure that we have the Dangerous Substances Act ready to go into the Assembly as soon as we can.

**MR PRATT:** Do those tasks and duties include the research of proposed legislation for industrial manslaughter?

**Ms Gallagher:** These positions will be located within the work safety labour policy area, which has carriage of that work as well.

**MS DUNDAS:** Will it tie into the Office of Fair Trading work that was also in the 2003-04 budget, where they're setting up a new regulatory framework for the retail sale of fireworks?

**Ms Gallagher:** No. That's part of the government's response to the standing committee's inquiry, where the Office of Fair Trading takes over responsibility that WorkCover currently has. Correct me if I'm wrong, Rob. It was a tightened-up process in relation to the auditing of the sales of fireworks, so that will be covered under the act—but, again, that's not part of this.

**Mr Tonkin:** We want to improve our overall performance in the area of dangerous goods. A lot of attention goes to fireworks, but it's only one chunk of the total spectrum. Hence, the government wants to have an accelerated capacity to improve the legislation and the measures in this area.

**MR PRATT:** Are any of these tasks, with these extra staff, related to emergency management, relevant to the security claim?

**Mr Tonkin:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Regarding the Dangerous Goods Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act, when do you expect to table new legislation for each of those?

**Ms Gallagher:** With the Dangerous Goods Act, the intention is to table it in October. This always make ministers nervous, doesn't it? That'll send all the drafters running! I have been advised that that may slip to November, depending on some of the drafting requirements, but I'm hoping for October.

**THE CHAIR:** What about a new OH&S act?

**Ms Davoren:** We have a number of reviews of the OH&S act—one on compliance and one on the scope of the act. We'd be proposing to put submissions forward to government for those over the next financial year.

**THE CHAIR:** Those reviews started some time ago, though, did they not?

**Ms Davoren:** They did.

**THE CHAIR:** When do you expect that we might see legislation in the Assembly?

**Ms Davoren:** There'll be two stages of the review. We're hoping to put forward the first stage before the end of this financial year.

**THE CHAIR:** I see there's an occupational health and safety liaison officer to be placed with Unions ACT. What's the rationale behind that?

**Ms Gallagher:** The rationale is that this government requested that Unions ACT be involved in a number of consultative forums and tripartite bodies. I was approached by Unions ACT in May or June this year. They said they felt that some of the requests we were making of them were onerous on their organisation; that they had only a secretary and a couple of administration positions; and that they couldn't do the work we were asking of them.

The government is asking them to be in a number of forums. I felt that, as they have a significant role in the Occupational Health and Safety Act review, we should look at supporting their work—whilst we are asking them to be part of that. It was a position that was funded previously—that is my understanding—but it was discontinued some years ago. My intention is to see how it goes for one year and then have a look at it.

**THE CHAIR:** My memory of why the previous position was discontinued was that the position was being used to recruit for specific unions and to further the aim of the union, not necessarily the aim of OH&S education. What guarantees will you give the committee and, through it, the Assembly that this position will not be used to benefit the union?

**Ms Gallagher:** The fact is that I'd be wanting to look at how it goes over the first year—to look at how that money has assisted the union. Also, it is very much to participate in particular reviews and particular work. So I think it is one of those where you can keep an eye on what's going on.

I don't know the history of that position at all. I don't know if they were out signing up members or doing what you say they were doing. From my discussions with the secretary of Unions ACT, Peter Malone, he is struggling to do the work we're asking him to do. When you look at some of the bodies in relation to, say, occupational health and safety, he's involved in that work.

There are a number of public servants who are resourced to do this work—or will be, if the appropriation bill is passed—but the TLC sit there doing the same amount of work—input and consultations—but aren't resourced in any way. I took the view that it was unfair, considering the government was placing the demands on them, that we weren't backing them up with a bit of financial support.

**THE CHAIR:** Was there any assessment that led you to Unions ACT rather than to, say, the chamber of commerce or the business council? Would you countenance providing similar positions for those organisations which are similarly burdened by requests from government for constant submissions and assistance on things as diverse as the bushfires, through occupational health and safety reviews?

**Ms Gallagher:** This was raised with me by the union. It hasn't been raised by the chamber. I would look at it if the chamber came to me and said that. Unions ACT is the

peak body. I think I'd start off a union issue if I gave it to one particular union. Unions ACT seemed the logical place for that position to go.

**MR PRATT:** I would have thought this position was entirely unnecessary. Surely the responsibility for OH&S training, and the provision of information, is the responsibility of WorkCover and the employers under the guidance of WorkCover—you know, best practice. Surely, they're responsible for carrying out all this training, and there is no need for that position. Did WorkCover agree? Did they say there was such a need?

**Mr Tonkin:** It's not a matter for them.

**THE CHAIR:** Were they asked?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, WorkCover weren't asked for their view on this initiative. Unions have significant responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. They are a party which has very important roles to play—certainly whilst we're reviewing the act and getting that work done. They're involved in a whole range of other things, including the implementation of the Public Sector Management Act.

I don't have a problem sitting here saying that I think they should be resourced for that—even if it is additional resources on top of what's already provided in relation to occupational health and safety. I don't think that's an area to which you can't justify additional resources, when we're talking about the health and safety of workers, which is what we're talking about.

Unions have a significant role to play in that. They're on work sites; they're speaking with their members—they're representing workers in the territory. I don't agree with your view that it's just not worth it or there's no need for it. I think there's always need for more in this area.

**MR PRATT:** You don't accept the view that they duplicate a service and a role already being performed by a department?

**Ms Gallagher:** No. I think they have a particular role to play—that is, representing working people.

**THE CHAIR:** It's a small price to pay.

**MS DUNDAS:** You're also the minister for youth and family services. The chair has indicated that this is an issue which might have been raised by the chamber of commerce. The role of community organisations in putting representations to government, serving on boards and representing the community, has increased dramatically. I've heard from community organisations that they don't feel they're getting the resources to be able to continue that part of the work, as well as meet their client demands.

I know the management of all those community organisations is not necessarily always your responsibility. Nevertheless, is this something that you think needs to be taken up with your cabinet colleagues—in that, if we can do it for OH&S and workplace safety,

we can do it for community organisations working for the most disadvantaged in our community?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, I agree. I believe that is something this government thinks about. Where I can, I'm looking at it seriously in relation to one area in my portfolio. Like Unions ACT, we require the youth coalition to be involved in a lot of consultations. We see them as a peak advocacy group. We were able to give them \$40,000, to assist them to provide their organisation with someone to help us with the work.

Where I can, I am looking at it. It is something that I think is easy to overlook. At the same time, if government is wanting to work in partnership, then we need to recognise that those partners must be supported. In many cases in the community sector, that means support from government.

**MS DUNDAS:** Can we expect to see more of this type of initiative for the community sector in next year's budget?

**Mr Tonkin:** There has already been support. We have specific pieces of work or activities. We fund ACTCOSS, for example, to do things for the government, or with the government, in these sorts of initiatives.

**MS DUNDAS:** They're ongoing capacity building.

**Mr Tonkin:** There are two parts to it. One is the question of base-level funding for peak groups—and that occurs. There is also one-off funding, when there are particular initiatives where the government is seeking the engagement of particular parts of the community sector. It does already happen—there is a track record of it.

**MS DUNDAS:** Minister, these particular initiatives have come through on what is basically a majority bushfire recovery appropriation. I guess the question is: at what point would you have called for another appropriation, if the bushfire recovery appropriation wasn't there? How urgent do you see these being?

It's good to have them all in one package. We're looking at the second appropriation bill—not the third, fourth, fifth or sixth. What level of urgency were you putting on these activities, such that they are being dealt with eight weeks into the new financial year, as opposed to any other time?

**Ms Gallagher:** It's a good question. I wrote to the Chief Minister about my concerns around resourcing in that area of the department. Before I knew there would be a second appropriation, I was already looking for ways to find staff—and to see if there was any way I could find money to support Unions ACT.

The advice I got back from Chief Minister's was that there wasn't capacity to locate those kinds of resources, nor that sort of support for Unions ACT. I'd certainly started lobbying for it when the decision was taken for a second appropriation. Whilst I understood very much that it was a bushfire budget—that mini-budget—I thought it was worth while putting them in and allowing myself to be questioned.

**MR HARGREAVES:** That shows excellent initiative!

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, will there be a contract or service level agreement for this? What will the government get back from this? How will they verify, as you say, at the end of the first year whether or not the position should be ongoing?

**Ms Gallagher:** Rob is saying there won't be a contract.

**Mr Tonkin:** I think we will provide the unions with the funding. I expect the minister will write to Unions ACT, to indicate what the funding is for and advise, as the minister has indicated today, the sort of performance we require. The unions clearly have an interest in this continuing. The test will be whether the expenditure will produce the collective outcomes for government, unions and employers that we're seeking in these areas. That is the test we'll apply, to see whether the funding is supported in ongoing budgets.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that how we would normally give away money of this nature?

**Mr Tonkin:** Yes, it's a grant. You don't have to have an ongoing service level agreement to provide that sort of funding—you can do it in a number of ways.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you give us a list of examples of how other positions have been funded in that manner?

**Mr Tonkin:** We provide grant funding to a range of organisations annually. It is spelled out—I refer you to the annual reports of various departments.

**THE CHAIR:** Then it will not be hard to come up with a list of where similar positions have been funded through a grant?

**Mr Tonkin:** We will look and see whether that's possible.

**Ms Gallagher:** Although this committee won't be in effect then, I mentioned writing to Unions ACT outlining specifically what that money is to be used for, and how I'd like to see it reviewed within 12 months. I'd be more than happy to provide that information to yourself or to the shadow minister, if that helps clear things up for you.

**MR HARGREAVES:** I suggest that the PAC might be the ideal spot.

**THE CHAIR:** Later on!

**MR HARGREAVES:** In the fullness of time.

**THE CHAIR:** In the normal routine of government, when we fund positions like this or make moneys available, it's normal that there would be a contract, or some sort of service level agreement.

**Mr Tonkin:** We're in the process, at the moment—

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps you will let me finish. In a case where there is a grant, there is always a reconciliation of what the grant was given for and what was achieved. Are you saying that process won't be followed in this case?

**Mr Tonkin:** No—that process will be followed. As I said, it's more like a grant. We will give further consideration to the mechanism. We're in the process of reviewing—and have been for some time—the form of funding arrangements for all non-government sectors across the various departments.

There has been a process of review going on about that, to find the best method of providing funding and ensure that their performance against the funding is undertaken. As the minister has already said, we will provide the community with documentary evidence of the way in which this money is to be provided, and the performance assessment and measurement which will be undertaken.

**THE CHAIR:** What pool of money would this normally come from, if you hadn't had the second appropriation?

**Ms Gallagher:** It wouldn't have.

**THE CHAIR:** Normally, there are grants programs. We set up programs so people can compete for grants money. There are arts, heritage and environment grants, but there's always a process where normally it would go through a body independent of the minister. Could you give me an example of where this process has been followed, in relation to another grant?

**Mr Tonkin:** Whether it's a grant or whether we do it another way, as I said, we'll give further thought to the mechanism we set up to provide this funding. We'll come back to you on that. As to examples of grants, arts funding is a good example where there are annual grants and recurrent grants—sports.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, but the minister doesn't decide those. They would normally go through a panel, which selects and prioritises—and awards grants on the basis of merit.

**Mr Tonkin:** There are parts of the sports grants which are determined ministerially. When it comes to the level of funding to be provided on an annual basis to national sporting teams, the government decided to change the level of funding provided there.

**THE CHAIR:** Cabinet made that decision, I suspect.

**Mr Tonkin:** Yes, it was a cabinet decision—the minister is part of the executive. There is no existing grants program that would be applicable to this particular initiative. That is why it is being appropriated separately.

**MR HARGREAVES:** You indicated earlier that you gave assistance to ACTCOSS for a similar sort of service. What process did they follow?

**Mr Tonkin:** If you are doing a piece of public policy, you might want to employ an organisation such as ACTCOSS. To give an example, recently in the addressing



disadvantage and poverty study, there was work done by ACTCOSS to consult with the community sector about the effectiveness of the programs operating in the area of disadvantage and poverty.

That was an activity funded by the policy area of the Chief Minister's Department, to get that particular piece of work done. That's an example where we are producing a piece of public policy outcome from that sort of process. In that circumstance, ACTCOSS was the appropriate body to do the work.

**THE CHAIR:** I have one final question. The WorkCover commissioner's position was advertised some time ago. Has a decision been made—and when will it be announced?

**Ms Gallagher:** No. The interviews have been held. I didn't sit on the panel. My advice is that I'll be getting a brief about that matter fairly soon.

**THE CHAIR:** Soon. You've tripped over the committee's favourite word. For Mr Quinlan, "soon" is any time between now and tomorrow morning. Is it soon, next week; or soon, the week after?

**Mr Tonkin:** I would expect—my expectation is, being the chair of the panel—

**THE CHAIR:** You would expect your expectation is?

**Mr Tonkin:** My expectation is, within the bounds of possibility that, next week, the minister will get a report.

**THE CHAIR:** The announcement will be made when?

**Ms Gallagher:** That appointment is a matter I have to take to cabinet—that is my understanding. As soon as I've received the report, informed a view and taken a submission to cabinet—I can't give you definite dates.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

**Ms Gallagher:** Thank you.

**Sitting suspended from 3.22 pm to 3.30 pm**

Appearances:

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

Chief Minister's Department

Mr R Tonkin, chief executive officer

Mr A Thompson, Chief Executive, ACT Bushfire Recovery Taskforce

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Ms S Lambert, Chief Executive

Mr I Hubbard, Chief Financial Officer

Department of Justice and Community Safety

Mr T Keady, Chief Executive

Mr M Castle, Executive Director, Emergency Services Bureau

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

Mr D Prince, acting Fire Commissioner, ACT Fire Brigade

Department of Urban Services

Dr M Cooper, Executive Director, Environment ACT

**THE CHAIR:** I recommence the proceedings by issuing the usual warning to the minister and officers, that is, that 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. As per the usual routine, please identify yourself on the first occasion on which you speak and the capacity in which you are appearing for the purpose of Hansard. Minister, I extend to you the opportunity to make an opening statement.

**Mr Wood:** I do not have an opening statement, but Mr Tonkin would like to catch up on a question posed earlier.

**Mr Tonkin:** Mr Chairman, the committee asked a question this morning about advertising costs for the bushfire recovery. These advertisements run in the *Canberra Times* and the *Chronicle* and their costs range between \$8,350 and \$13,700 per week. The costs for the *Canberra Times* are between \$2,600 and \$3,500 for Wednesday. That depends on whether it's on page 5, 7 or 9. On Saturday it's \$4,000 to \$7,000, again the same variation for the same pages, 5, 7 and 9.

The ad for the *Chronicle*, which is in Tuesday's *Chronicle*, is from \$1,750 to \$3,200, depending on where the ad is placed. From 24 June we have not run ads in the *Valley Voice* because, as a result of focus group feedback, it was felt that that wasn't required any further. The intention is to continue to run the ads until the end of January.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, if it's acceptable to you, we will start with you in your role as Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services and then move on to Urban Services, Environment, and Police and Emergency Services.

**Mr Wood:** Yes, that's my expectation, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, I refer you to the line on page 85 of the budget documents relating to addressing the capital requirement for the Griffin Centre, \$1.093 million. Can you explain what that covers in terms of the building costs, additional space and mechanical services?

**Mr Wood:** I will ask Mr Hubbard to provide the precise details.

**Mr Hubbard:** As to the additional cost, the Griffin Centre has moved into the next stage of its design and development and in that stage we have some pretty detailed plans of the Griffin Centre itself, more detailed than when the original costing was done several years ago. In that process of getting a better design on the floor plan, we have found that there is an additional requirement for mechanical services, to house the mechanical services, the lift, airconditioning and things like that, and the cost of the additional square metres for that is about \$500,000.

**MR HARGREAVES:** When did you know about that, Mr Hubbard?

**Mr Hubbard:** In the process of the development. The entire redevelopment at section 84 goes through various planning stages and about six months ago we got the first designs for the building itself.

**MR HARGREAVES:** You only had a twinkle about six months ago that that might be the case. When was it verified that it was the case?

**Mr Hubbard:** It's still at the initial design stage, so it actually has another couple of design stages to go through. Six months ago, when we got that first design of the actual building itself in its four storeys, we could start doing some more accurate costing with quantity surveyors and that is when we could check what we had allowed in the budget for the cost of the additional community space in the building, rather than the whole building itself, and the requirements for things like circulation space and mechanical space. And then we actually got an accurate costing done by a quantity surveyor.

**MR HARGREAVES:** And that was where you got the \$500,000 from.

**Mr Hubbard:** That was where we got the \$500,000 for the mechanical space.

**MR HARGREAVES:** When did that happen? It wasn't six months ago, was it?

**Mr Hubbard:** The costing?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes.

**Mr Hubbard:** We got the initial costing from QIC probably about four months ago and then we got an independent quantity surveyor to check those costs. We got that—I don't know the exact date—about four, maybe six weeks ago.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Six weeks ago. Obviously, there wasn't any time at all to put it in the appropriation bill for the current financial year.

**Mr Hubbard:** No.

**MS DUNDAS:** You have only specified what you are doing with \$500,000 of it so far. What are you doing with the rest of the money?

**Mr Hubbard:** I was going to go through that. As I said, there was additional mechanical space required, and that was costed at about \$509,000. Do you want the exact numbers? I can give you the exact numbers: \$509,950 for mechanical space. A very small amount of additional circulation space was required and how we determined that was that, in consultation with the Griffin Centre management, we put forward floor plans for the four floors and that allowed us to do a better calculation about how people will actually move through the building. Through that process, we found that there were some additional square metres required there, and that actually added \$12,400.

Then there were some costs related to cost increases in building construction itself. The cost of a square metre had gone up over several years from when it was first budgeted for and that additional construction cost was \$471,560. That brought it to a total of \$993,910. On top of that, because we were at the initial planning stage and we have to go through two more planning stages which give us greater accuracy about the building itself, we also requested that we could put in a 10 per cent contingency for any additional costs that might arise during the following design phases. Ten per cent of that was, of course, \$99,910, and that gave us a total of \$1,093,910.

**MS DUNDAS:** In the 2001-02 budget initially extra money was put aside for community space, \$1.7 million. That wasn't then meant to be appropriated until it finished being expended, till December 2003. What was that money for in terms of the Griffin Centre?

**Mr Hubbard:** All these numbers are pertaining to that additional space.

**MS DUNDAS:** So we're needing \$1.09 million to work out what we're doing with \$1.7 million worth of extra space.

**Mr Hubbard:** Of that \$1.7 million, \$500,000 was for additional space and \$1.2 million was for fitout, so that gave you the \$1.7 million. The additional actual community space worked out to be about 454 square metres. Therefore, what we needed to add on top of that with the building design work done was, I think, about 300 additional square metres for mechanical space that wasn't allowed for in the initial brief and then, as I said, the escalation in building costs. Except for that additional community space, the rest of the building had been paid for in agreement with QIC, so any escalation of costs related to the non-additional space provided in 2001-02 is still funded completely by QIC. These costs are related to just that additional space, the 454, which was what the additional community space in that initial money was allowed for.

**MS DUNDAS:** You said that in the appropriation bill that we are looking at today there is an extra 300 square metres to be used for mechanical space. Does that include extra circulation space? In total, over the last three years we have purchased another 750 square metres of space—

**Mr Hubbard:** In addition to the original Griffin Centre, yes. The agreement was to replace the original Griffin Centre, as you know, and that agreement still stands. What we're talking about is the additional space that was funded by the \$500,000 which was incorporated in the \$1.7 million, which included \$1.2 million for fitout.

**MS DUNDAS:** Do you think that the 10 per cent contingency that you have set aside will adequately see you through the next two planning stages in terms of any extra things that might arise?

**Mr Hubbard:** We're hoping that it does. That's based on an industry standard of using 10 per cent. In a sense, we could have used 5 per cent or 15 per cent, but the typical industry standard is to use a 10 per cent contingency and we're hoping that will do.

**MR HARGREAVES:** But that only applies to this little bit of extra stuff, not the whole of it.

**Mr Hubbard:** That's right.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Presumably, whether you're going to need this or need that in respect of a contingency really depends on whether the invoices for the construction roll out at a certain time. Would I be correct in assuming that it will still be under construction on 30 June?

**Mr Hubbard:** Definitely, yes.

**MR HARGREAVES:** In which case, if you needed more than 100 grand, you might know by then and you would be looking for it in the budget of next year.

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes. The only time we will actually know what the final end product cost is going to be will be when it's finished.

**MS DUNDAS:** What's the timeframe for that?

**Mr Hubbard:** There are so many factors involved in that—planning, getting permissions, as you know, can take quite a while. We are working pretty hard with QIC and all the other parties. The Griffin Centre, as you know, is quite a small component of quite a large development.

**THE CHAIR:** But is it a year away, two years, three years, four years? Is the new planning authority proving to be so difficult that you can't give us a date by which it will be completed?

**Mr Hubbard:** I can't answer that question.

**MS DUNDAS:** But can you answer the one year, two-year timeframe?

**Mr Hubbard:** On the plan that we have from QIC, it's estimated that construction will start early next year and completion will take about 12 months. The Griffin Centre is in stage 1 of the overall development, as of the original agreement, and the estimated time

for construction, once the construction is given the green light to actually start building, is about 12 months. Prior to that, there are all the planning processes and the need to put in the roads, utilities, et cetera.

**MS DUNDAS:** We are about 18 months away, possibly two years, before, all things going to plan, tenants can move into the new Griffin Centre, which means that they're still in the old Griffin Centre, which, as we have discussed many times, is a significant hazard to the workers there. What is to be done over the next 18 months to two years to address the concerns of the workers currently in that building?

**Mr Wood:** Safety issues are examined and safety issues are dealt with, but obviously major upgrades and significant expenditure are being deferred. The place will remain habitable. It won't be prime accommodation. We're not going to put significant money into it at this stage.

**MS DUNDAS:** But there will be safety upgrades, if necessary?

**Mr Wood:** Safety measures, as necessary.

**MS DUNDAS:** Having the lifts in place and the corridors in place, I guess that means 450 square metres of habitable community office space. How many organisations are you planning on putting in there?

**Mr Hubbard:** I am not sure of that number. We're meeting with the Griffin Centre management group, who manage the building, and in a sense they determine which groups are where in the actual building itself. The numbers of people who are in the building are also determined by that management group. What we're trying to do with the design of the building itself is that there's a lot more emphasis on open space and multiuser, as opposed to what it is now with little areas which are locked—

**Mr Wood:** Walls you can never knock down.

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes. You do not want them used for three hours a month or something like that. The notion is to have a more multiuser facility. We are hoping that that will encourage greater use by a greater number of community groups, but I can't say how many that will be.

**Ms Lambert:** We are working closely with the community centre on these matters and, obviously, that will get a sharper focus as we get further into the construction phase and so on as well.

**MS DUNDAS:** As to the money that is coming out of this appropriation bill in terms of the fitout that we are looking at for the new Griffin Centre, which will be, I guess, new technology capable, was that already factored into the original thing?

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes. Part of the emphasis on design is on putting in the state-of-the-art cabling that is in office buildings these days, so when the building is actually constructed, it will be a building along the lines of an office building, with all the computer cabling put in the ducting around the walls and things like that. That is part of

the design process. In the discussions around the actual interior of the building with the centre management, they are issues that are coming up: how do we actually design the insides of the building to enable people to come in and use it in a modern sense?

**MS DUNDAS:** But it was part of the original design specs that it would be technology ready.

**Mr Hubbard:** Not as detailed as will be done as we go through the design phases.

**MS DUNDAS:** But is that covered in the original funds?

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes, definitely.

**MS DUNDAS:** So we won't see another appropriation.

**Mr Hubbard:** No. This is in making it computer ready. Funds aren't available for whatever technologies that a particular group would wish to have. That is part of the group bringing the technology that plugs into the building.

**THE CHAIR:** Has the DA been lodged?

**Mr Hubbard:** My understanding is it has been.

**THE CHAIR:** Was there a need to reassess any trees on the site? I understand that some of the trees in that area have been reassessed under the tree protection legislation. Is that so?

**Mr Hubbard:** I'm not sure.

**Ms Lambert:** I'm not aware of that, either.

**THE CHAIR:** Could you take that on notice and find out?

**Mr Hubbard:** I think it's actually a planning thing. I know around the Griffin Centre itself, our part of the project, there are no trees that are being impacted, but I think I might have heard similar to yourself that somewhere on the site there may be some issues around some of the trees in the car park. I'm not sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you check as to whether it is affecting your DA?

**Ms Lambert:** Yes, in relation to ours, we can.

**MS DUNDAS:** Why is this listed in terms of being part of the budget for the end of June 2005? It has been a long day and I may be looking at my budget papers wrongly, but on page 86 it's listed across two years, the same amount is recurring.

**Mr Hubbard:** I haven't actually got that sheet with me. Has it got "work in progress"?

**MS DUNDAS:** Yes.

**Mr Hubbard:** It has work in progress for a couple of years and then it goes up a line. That's when it's actually built and it becomes a capital item and then it goes onto the balance sheet. You will see that that is where depreciation starts as well. It is the difference between work in progress and when it is actually built.

**MS DUNDAS:** I understand that a work in progress is to expect all the funds to be spent by the end of the 2004 financial year.

**Mr Hubbard:** No, it won't be spent by the end.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the expected total cost of the project now?

**Mr Hubbard:** For us, it's about \$2.9 million, I think. I'll just check the number. It's the addition of the \$1.7 million plus the \$1.093 million, so that would be \$2,793,910.

**THE CHAIR:** There being no further questions, we will go to Urban Services. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement on behalf of Urban Services?

**Mr Wood:** No, thank you, we'll get straight into it.

**MS DUNDAS:** I missed a question I was going to ask regarding public housing. Will you take it on notice?

**Mr Wood:** Ask it and if I have to take it on notice, I will.

**MS DUNDAS:** We have been provided with an amended output class for ACT Housing. It mentions the number of public housing tenants managed and the number of public housing properties managed. I just wanted to ask about how the rebuilding of the public housing properties lost in the fires was progressing.

**Mr Wood:** We have started on two properties in Kambah off Colquhoun Circuit—I can't recall the street. Rebuilding is full-on.

**MR HARGREAVES:** It is going like the clappers, Minister.

**Mr Wood:** Yes, and certain people will be coming down to give out keys in due course. I believe that all our houses around Colquhoun Circuit are under way. At least two others a little further away in Kambah are under way. I went out there the other day and some of the family put their handprints into the concrete. Tanjil Loop in Duffy has been redesigned and it's well in the planning process. So the urban area is well back in control. Of course, decisions are still pending on the rural properties. Hollway has reported and we'll see what the further period of discussion will bring on that.

**MS DUNDAS:** I understand that the commitment was made soon after the fires that there would be no net loss in the number of ACT Housing properties.

**Mr Wood:** That's right.



**MS DUNDAS:** Obviously, from these outputs, within the financial years. When do you expect a decision to be made on the rural properties? If the decision is not to rebuild the settlements as they were, are you going to look at purchasing new properties within the confines of the suburbs? What is the strategy?

**Mr Wood:** That's what we're doing. Appropriation Bill (No 1) provided \$8.8 million, I think over two years, over the break there. That \$8.8 million was the land value of the rural properties. We got the insurance for the houses and the program, I think, is well under way and substantially through. We've invested that \$8.8 million plus the insurance money in buying houses in the urban area. We weren't going to wait indefinitely for the decisions about whether we go to Uriarra or whatever to emerge. We made that decision then to replace those homes in the urban area, and that's why the special funding was provided.

**MS DUNDAS:** The replacement of public housing rural properties at the settlements is not part of the quota any more. If there is public housing going out as part of any outcome from the non-urban study, it will be additional public housing.

**Mr Wood:** Yes. If we now rebuild at Uriarra or Stromlo, that will be additional and, of course, require additional funds, because the insurance funds on the building have been expended or substantially expended.

**MS DUNDAS:** Thank you. Sorry for getting to you in the wrong department.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, moving into Urban Services, the first line looks at fuel management measures and asks for an extra \$1.6 million. Is that for work that is already under way or is it to do additional work once the appropriation is passed?

**Mr Thompson:** We've got a base program of fuel management that we do every year; it is built into our base funding. In addition, in the 2003-04 budget there was another \$500,000 allocated there. Essentially, I think you could say that work under that \$500,000 is now under way, but we have a lot more that we would now like to do and that's what this is about. We have come to this significantly bigger figure for a few reasons, not least that the winter has been drier than might have been predicted and certainly the outlook for the summer is not all that bright. Taking that into account, plus some of the concerns expressed in the McLeod report, we're proposing a significantly expanded program.

**THE CHAIR:** So it's additional work that will be undertaken immediately.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** What format will the work take? What is the breakdown for controlled burns, mowing, slashing, using cattle?

**Mr Thompson:** Perhaps I could break it up. Firstly, I will break it up between the two main agencies. There is almost a 50:50 break-up between land managed by Canberra Urban Parks, their component of that is \$839,000, and the Environment ACT component is \$845,000. I can't give you the area, but there will be, I think, 10 fuel burns across the

various categories and the remainder—there are some 60 sites here; we’re talking about a myriad of locations—will be mechanical clearance, which is slashing, hand removal and the like. Actually, I’m just checking the figures again. It’s about five burns being managed by Environment ACT, of which one has been completed on the back of Black Mountain. The other burns are actually in ACT Forests land as well. Ross has just given me a reasonable break-up, but the vast majority of the sites are by mechanical clearance, some 64, and then five burns in Environment land and up to another 10 on ACT Forests land.

**THE CHAIR:** Can we have a list of the sites?

**Mr Thompson:** We could probably give that to you late next week, if that’s okay. There is a myriad of sites and we’re just in the process of resolving exactly where they all are.

**THE CHAIR:** If you don’t know where they all are, how have you worked out this cost?

**Mr Thompson:** When I say that, some of them are stage one or stage two and we’re just trying to get the break-ups between those. For some of them, like Umbagog Park, it is a very large amount and we are trying to work out between stage one and stage two.

**MR HARGREAVES:** You know where they are, but you just don’t know into which of those two categories they pop.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes. If you like, we can roll out the map now and show you where they all are. It’s a matter of what detail you want. If it’s purely the base sites, we can give that to you in the next 24 or 48 hours.

**THE CHAIR:** The base sites list would be useful. I assume that a briefing would be available to members on more detail, if required.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you have time to do these controlled burns between now and the start of the season?

**Mr Thompson:** There are two parts. There is the mechanical work, where we are and will be using a combination of our own labour force, CityScape, Environment ACT staff and contractors, and we are moving pretty quickly on that. In terms of the burns, it will depend on the weather. We’ve done one on the back of Black Mountain. We would aim to get the rest done, hopefully, this month or next month, but it will depend very much upon the weather, because these are not remote, back country burns—these are burns in and around the perimeter of Canberra—and it is a matter of getting both the right fuel condition in terms of dryness and the right weather conditions in terms of wind and so on. We are certainly very keen to accomplish all of these burns, but it will depend on the weather.

**THE CHAIR:** The use of the word “city” in the measure was accurate; you didn’t mean “territory” there. This is actually in preparation for the perimeter of the city and inside the city confines.

**Mr Thompson:** The vast majority of this work—in fact, I think it would be correct to say all of this work—is around the perimeter of urban Canberra. Ross has just reminded me that, subject to weather, there will be a burn on Black Mountain tomorrow, 8.6 hectares. Again, if the weather changes overnight, we'll have to revise our plans.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that the 30 per cent we didn't get when we did the burn two weeks ago or is it of a different site?

**Mr Thompson:** There was a section a little bit to the south.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, it didn't burn.

**MS DUNDAS:** This is about \$1.6 million for this bushfire season and the 2003-04 budget included \$500,000 for this financial year and \$250,000 for two outyears. What kind of cost are you suggesting is going to be needed for ongoing fuel management? Are we doing big catch-up burns at the moment, which is why we are putting in over \$2 million this financial, and then we will only need to do minimal fire management because we have done such a big lot at this moment? How is it being managed into the outyears?

**Mr Wood:** I think those \$200,000 amounts in the budget will be subject to review.

**MS DUNDAS:** Either to go up or down.

**Mr Wood:** It would be upwards, I would expect. It is not likely to be downwards.

**MS DUNDAS:** After spending in excess of \$2 million in the 2003-04 financial year, now that we have been able to set processes in place to have things under control, do you think that we would not be needing to spend \$2 million every financial year on fuel management?

**Mr Wood:** No. You know the story: the stuff keeps growing.

**MS DUNDAS:** But were we spending \$2 million over the last five years on bushfire fuel management? I'm trying to get a comparison of why we are expecting to spend this much and how that will impact on the outyears.

**Mr Thompson:** As I said, we've had base funding in previous years.

**MS DUNDAS:** How much was that base funding?

**Mr Thompson:** The base for Environment ACT has been about \$120,000 per year, the base for Canberra Urban Parks has been about \$350,000 and the base for ACT Forests has been about \$170,000, and for Roads ACT about another \$150,000. That level of funding was broadly adequate to undertake the work that had been designated in the bushfire fuel management plan, which was signed off by a wide range of stakeholders.

I think we'd all say that that level of fuel management was proven not to be adequate by what happened on January 18, but nevertheless it was the view of a large number of stakeholders, including the Bushfire Council, to be the appropriate level of fuel management. We are now saying, "Let's be a lot more conservative." We will go back to all the stakeholders, including the Bushfire Council and ESB, and get their views about what should happen in future years.

Essentially, all we're saying at this stage is that we think it's important, given the outlook for this coming summer, to be quite conservative. It may be that once we do this once off, if you like, thereafter the level of inner urban protection can stay at the sorts of figures that I've just been quoting, but it is fair to say, also, that the further afield fuel management, particularly on the west side of the Murrumbidgee, will have to increase if we are to comply with the recommendations of Mr McLeod.

We haven't attempted to quantify that for this year because we're not going to be doing any work on the west side of the Murrumbidgee this year because it all got burnt on January 18. But in future years, to comply with what Mr McLeod is recommending, there would have to be regular fuel management over there. On that side of the Murrumbidgee it almost certainly would all be burns, whereas on this side, close into urban areas, it will be a combination of some burns and the rest will have to carry on being mechanical work just because it just is not feasible to have burns in a lot of these areas on a reliable basis.

**MS DUNDAS:** I know this comes under Minister Corbell's area, but the government wants to take over the management of unleased territory land as part of the outcomes of the bushfires; directly for bushfire hazard management is the reason for it in these budget papers. How will the bushfire hazard reduction management of the unleased territory land fit into the strategies that you already have in place?

**Mr Thompson:** When you say the unleased territory land—

**THE CHAIR:** At page 42, the third dot point refers to the management of unleased territory land and ACTPLA receiving an extra \$150,000.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** It has just taken control. But does that land not come with the management costs that have already been apportioned to it?

**Mr Thompson:** When I was giving the answer before about the base funding, that was about the Urban Services entities. ACTPLA also has some base funding, another \$62,000, and the Land Development Agency also, we understand, has base funding for its land of another \$40,000.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the total of that base funding?

**Mr Thompson:** We haven't broken it up in that way, Mr Smyth.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you have a total?

**Mr Thompson:** No, I haven't. We can do it.

**MS DUNDAS:** Just under \$1 million.

**Mr Thompson:** The base funding is \$892,000. I'm assuming that Ms Dundas is raising the unleased land managed by ACTPLA and by the Land Development Agency, the majority of which is up and around Gungahlin. The management technique they're aiming to use as much as possible up there is fencing and grazing, rather than anything else, because a lot of it is surplus land. Its future is subdivision and an awful lot of that land is still in short-term leases on an agistment basis and by far the cheapest way of keeping the fuel down is just to put cattle in.

**MR PRATT:** In relation to the forested and bushland areas of the urban fringe, can you give a breakdown on how much of the \$1.684 million is allocated to the refurbishment, reopening or upgrading of bush trails, forest trails and bridges to allow for emergency vehicle access?

**Mr Thompson:** There is a limited amount in there for trail upgrades under that. If you went to the actual budget document, there is some \$700,000 in there for fire suppression trails and walking tracks under Environment ACT. Under this \$1.684 million there's also a limited amount for trail upgrades. We'd have to break that up for you.

**MR PRATT:** Can you give me a percentage as to the amount allocated to that type of infrastructure refurbishment?

**Mr Thompson:** It would only be indicative if I said 10 per cent of that total would be on tracks. In the next couple of days, out of the 70 or so items on the list, we can break up those ones that are associated with tracks.

**MR PRATT:** So the existing budget caters for all the needs, apart from those areas which have been totally burnt out, to look at that entire infrastructure west of the Murrumbidgee as well as the urban fringe?

**Mr Thompson:** West of the Murrumbidgee? Mr McLeod made some strong recommendations about, if you like, more tracks and better maintenance of them. Again, we haven't attempted to try to build that into this budget. It has been burnt out, it needs a lot of planning and there will need to be a lot of consultation with a lot of stakeholders before we start putting a lot more tracks through both Namadgi and Tidbinbilla.

**MR PRATT:** Is it your assessment that the track systems that will eventually need to be refurbished west of the Murrumbidgee are not essential for the coming fire season?

**Mr Thompson:** They're not nearly as important.

**MR PRATT:** Simply because everything has been burnt out.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes. The main track work that we'll be doing inside this \$1.684 million will be on tracks in and around Black Mountain, O'Connor Ridge and the Dryandra

Street area, those sorts of inner areas. It is worth saying that in those areas, in general, the track network is already quite reasonable. We're not talking about doubling the number of trails or anything on Black Mountain. It's nothing like that at all. It's more a matter of just maintaining what's there.

**MR PRATT:** So you're happy that the requirements of the infrastructure around the urban fringe will be well and truly met by this \$160,000 that you are talking about.

**Mr Thompson:** That's an indicative figure. We'll have to get it to you.

**MR PRATT:** I won't hold you to that; I'll talk in global terms. But you are happy that the urban fringe infrastructure of tracks, bridges and access will be more than sufficient to meet the emergency management requirements.

**Mr Thompson:** I don't think I would put it that way.

**Mr Wood:** As well as you can judge.

**Mr Thompson:** I'd put it the other way, that we think the primary objective around the urban fringe of Canberra is fuel management, and that's why the vast majority of this funding is about fuel.

**MRS DUNNE:** Do you think that you have enough trails into prominent areas like Black Mountain, O'Connor Ridge, Gossan Hill and perhaps Mount Taylor, the ones with the high vantage points? Do you think that you have enough access to those places?

**Mr Thompson:** Yes, certainly in comparison with the very sparse trail network that is out there in Namadgi. All of those inner hills and ridges have some trail access on them and essentially what we'll be doing is upgrading what's there rather than putting in new trails.

**MR PRATT:** This may be a moot point if the destruction has been so widespread that it's going to impact on the plan, but can you tell us how much of the 2002-04 bushfire fuel management plan has been completed to date, the compliance with that, or did events overtake and destroy much of the plan anyway?

**Mr Thompson:** In some places—I'll use Bonython as an example—there was extensive mowing and then the fire came through and created this large fire break to the west. It would be quite hard to give you total quantification of how much has been done against that plan.

**MR PRATT:** Is there any chance of me asking if that can be taken on notice as I could probably give you some more detail? I'd like to know a lot more about that.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes. It is worth understanding that we do a huge amount of fuel management across Canberra. Some of it is driven by, if you like, aesthetic considerations. There's a vast mowing program, which we do for that reason, but which also contributes to fire management. We have an overlay over that, which is the stuff built into the bushfire fuel management plan. But a much greater amount is done for

aesthetic considerations and it happens to contribute to fire management. We do that through spring, through summer and through autumn, but not much over winter because nothing much is growing.

**MRS DUNNE:** Over this winter, have you reallocated your resources to actual fuel removal in places where it has been highlighted that you should do so, either by cold burns or by physically removing fuel?

**Mr Thompson:** We are doing that, yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Hand removing fuel.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** There is an email doing the rounds at the moment—I suspect most members have received it—from people in Dryandra Street who are concerned about the extent of fuel management that's happening in the area. I haven't formed a view one way or the other about it, but they do raise some issues.

**Mr Wood:** Too much or too little?

**MRS DUNNE:** Too much. It's always a problem.

**Mr Wood:** There was some activity. There was a meeting, I've been told, on site over the last weekend, I think, and Environment ACT officers got caught in the middle, I understand, of an argument between two points of view with quite a large number of local residents.

**MRS DUNNE:** You hear that story being replicated across the town and some people have got to the stage that, if it's a tree, cut it down because it presents a fire hazard and other people like their trees. It's about building that sort of middle path. How does Environment ACT handle that sort of thing?

**Mr Wood:** It has emerged in a couple of suburbs where there are pines. You probably saw the letters three months ago or so of concern. Environment ACT and, I think, ESB people went out and explained the paths of fires and how they flow and I think that in the circumstances in which they were involved those who were concerned about the presence of pines near them were satisfied with the explanations given. So the argument that appeared there of cut them all down or don't was, I believe, fairly well settled. There was a point of view that came through very strongly, to you as much as to ministers. Some people said that every tree is fair game to cut down and there was a contrary view just as strong.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, we've got a lot to go through. We will move on to land remediation.

**MS DUNDAS:** I have a question in relation to the soil conservation part of this. You've got money to look after rural roads that are susceptible to landslips and money to prevent degradation of the water quality, but what is actually being done for the vast amount of

topsoil out where the Stromlo pines were? It is sitting there at the moment. What's happening to the non-road, non-water land that was burnt?

**Mr Thompson:** If we take the forest land, the first task is to get rid of the burnt trees and they're either being harvested to go off as sawlog or they're being knocked over and put into windrows and let dry out and in due course they'll burn. Once that's done, we can move back in with revegetation of some sort.

If you take the Stromlo area, the nature of that revegetation will be driven very much by the recommendations of Mr McLeod, which are about having an open park-like setting. He strongly recommended against replanting with dense pine. So we've got a challenge to work out exactly what that park-like setting will be.

**MS DUNDAS:** Are you waiting for the outcome of the non-urban land study and the spatial plan in relation to the Stromlo Forest land?

**Mr Thompson:** Yes, there's all of that as well, but I guess I'm just trying to give you a bit of an overview. If you take a lot of the rest of the land, early on in the process ACT Forests arranged for a flyover and a lot of it was reseeded with a pasture. We are hoping that that will, if you like, provide some basic stability while the rest of the land clearing and so on occur. It's not a perfect solution, but at least for those quite big areas we've got where the dead pine trees are still standing, in between you'll now find a pasture is regrowing there courtesy of an aerial sowing operation.

**MS DUNDAS:** Just in the way that the weather is having a big impact on the ability to do bushfire fuel management, the pros and cons of which I'm sure Vicki will get to, the ability to start burning the dried out remains, is it a priority to get that fuel out of the way before 1 October? If they can't be burnt before then due to the weather, what's going to happen to them?

**Mr Thompson:** Just to give you a feeling for the scale of this, the clearing program is going to take about four years. We are progressively doing it working away from urban Canberra. If you drive along the Cotter Road, along the north side you'll see windrows progressively being established. At this stage, we are hoping that we can burn about five of those lots before summer, but it will be controlled by the weather. Over the next 3½ to four years we will progressively work through the rest of that 100 square kilometres that has been burnt—it's a huge area—and progressively push the burnt trees into windrows, let them dry out and burn them off. But it's a major task and at the moment we think it's a four-year task. But it will move progressively away from urban Canberra across the Murrumbidgee.

**MS DUNDAS:** In the meantime, there are seeds taking hold there to protect the integrity of that soil.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes, we hope. The bits I saw about a week ago, the pasture was actually growing quite well on the backside of Mount Stromlo and across the other side of the Murrumbidgee. It's just a holding pattern, if you like.



**THE CHAIR:** On the issue of putting these trees into windrows, is there not an ability to woodchip them and somehow return the biomass to the environment, whatever it turns into when it degrades?

**Mr Thompson:** A limited amount of the round wood is going off as woodchip, being taken by Visy and being used as a boiler fuel at Tumut. Ideally, we'd be able to get rid of all the rest into various woodchip markets for particle board, medium-density fibreboard and even the pulp and paper game.

**MRS DUNNE:** Not to mention biomass.

**Mr Thompson:** But it's got this huge disadvantage for things like particle board that it has got charcoal in amongst it and they simply won't take it. At this stage, the only viable market, if you like, is for boiler fuel and even that tends to end up being a net cost to us. It's a large cartage distance across to Tumut, so the end of that is generally a net cost to the ACT rather than a positive revenue.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there an ability just to chip it and leave it in situ, use it to stabilise unstable areas, for soil conservation, and have that timber eventually break down and put nutrient back into the soil, rather than burning it and releasing it as a greenhouse gas?

**Mr Thompson:** In the immediate perimeter of Weston Creek, say between Warragamba Avenue, Cotter Road and Narrabundah Hill, we have used the woodchipping technique. We have not left it on site for a reason I'll come back to. But the big thing to understand about that approach is that it costs about \$5,000 a hectare to do it via woodchipping and the insurance does not come near to that. The insurance policy that we have seems to be able to cover us for the cost of pushing the trees over and heaping and burning them. That's about \$1,000 a hectare. So there's a huge step up in cost when you go to the woodchipping approach just because you're using big, expensive plant.

The other worry we have about the woodchipping approach and leaving it on the ground is that, at least in the short run until it fully decomposes, the information we're getting more and more from the experts, mainly CSIRO, is that it could actually act as a conveyor of fire rather than a suppressor of fire. That's why, if you take the perimeter of Weston Creek, we've actually removed it from that area and got it stockpiled over off Uriarra Road. We're actually still working out exactly where we will dispose of that. Some of it is going off to Tumut, but for the rest we have to work out a location for disposal.

**MRS DUNNE:** Do you know, Mr Thompson or minister, how many tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> will be released every year as a result of windrowing all this timber and then just burning it?

**Mr Wood:** It will be considerable, but I've not seen it worked out.

**MRS DUNNE:** So we're all agreed that it will be considerable.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes, I would think so.

**MRS DUNNE:** How does it impact on the greenhouse strategy?

**Mr Wood:** It's a negative.

**MRS DUNNE:** You said, Mr Thompson, that cartage is expensive, as is the chipping process, considering all and the insurance, so that there's a per hectare cost built into the insurance policy for clearance.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes. The Forests insurance policy had a total cap. My recollection is that it was a total payout of \$64 million. I stand to be corrected, but I think that the component that goes against the clearing up is a cap of \$10 million and we have, in rough terms, 10,000 hectares—we actually have a bit over that—to clear up. If you like, the quota that can go against the clean-up is about \$10 million. Divide by that 10,000 hectares, you come back very quickly to \$1,000 per hectare.

**MRS DUNNE:** Have you investigated selling it for the biomass generators?

**Mr Thompson:** ACT Forests have been actively looking for markets for this material.

**MRS DUNNE:** I understand why you can't use it for particle board and things like that, because it's very low-quality timber.

**Mr Thompson:** To their great credit, they've been very successful in maintaining the marketing of sawlog, but the only people we've found within a reasonable cartage distance who have used this for fuel are at the Visy mill at Tumut.

**MRS DUNNE:** But you've still got the same problem; you're just burning it and all the CO<sub>2</sub> is going up into the air. I'm actually talking about processing it into biodiesel or whatever so that all the carbons are going into another form of fuel rather than just being emitted into the air. Has this been investigated?

**Mr Wood:** Where does that happen?

**MRS DUNNE:** There are about 100 biomass generators in the country, admittedly probably most of them are inconveniently situated in Queensland, but there are some in New South Wales.

**Mr Wood:** They use the gas from sugar, I think.

**MRS DUNNE:** The trash from sugar is used in Queensland, but elsewhere there are other forms of fuel. I just want to know whether it has been investigated as a source for the chip.

**Mr Thompson:** We've actively tried to market this material. We've had various feelers out to export it to Korea and to China. We have been actively trying, but at this stage, as I say, the only firm one is the Visy mill.

**MRS DUNNE:** What sort of pasture was sown?

**Mr Thompson:** A blend of native seeds. Perhaps Gordon can tell us. It's a sterile seed that doesn't reseed.

**MRS DUNNE:** Somebody can tell me what it is.

**Mr Thompson:** My memory is that it is a native pasture. We can take that on notice.

**MS DUNDAS:** Is it helping in the suppression of weeds?

**Mr Thompson:** It's there primarily to stabilise the ground. I think it would be overly optimistic to say it will come up in preference to blackberries. Blackberry is very robust. The idea that it would be superior and suppress blackberries, I don't think we could say that.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving along, as we are going to run out of time, to the relocation of the Canberra Connect call centre. It has gone from Eclipse House to where?

**Mr Thompson:** It would move from that building to either the Callam Building, which already has a generator on site, or Macarthur House, where we're giving some consideration to putting a generator on site.

**THE CHAIR:** Is \$200,000 enough to cover that?

**Mr Thompson:** We believe so, yes.

**MS DUNDAS:** Is there space in both of those buildings?

**Mr Thompson:** Yes.

**MS DUNDAS:** Or are we going to have more people moving into Eclipse House?

**Mr Thompson:** We would have to restack buildings, but the point is that Callam and Macarthur House are our two main IT sites at any rate, so it makes sense to have back-up power supplies for both of those. If it was to move to Macarthur House, we'd almost certainly have to move some people out—at Callam we wouldn't—but at this stage we're just saying that it will be one of those two and we're just trying to work out which is the better of those two sites.

**THE CHAIR:** Is the signage, at \$180,000, not covered in the insurance policy?

**Mr Thompson:** Not entirely, no.

**Dr Cooper:** No, it's not covered with the insurance. Below certain levels, some things weren't covered, and they were some of the things that weren't.

**THE CHAIR:** Corresponding with that, the \$1.1 million for fences. Aren't fences covered by the insurance?

**Dr Cooper:** What happened is immediately after the fires, as you would appreciate, we got some advice, and the insurance advice at that stage was that the fences were covered. So we took an analysis of where the highest risks were and we went to the roadside fencing, which, as you'd appreciate, would be high priority. Subsequent to that time we have had information counter to that, saying that it isn't covered by insurance. The only part that is covered by insurance is the Tidbinbilla special fencing around the animal enclosures, and that's covered for \$1.2 million for the 15 kilometres. We can't not use that money for that type of fencing; it is quite specific in the insurance policy.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it standard for an insurance policy that your fencing is not covered?

**Mr Thompson:** No. It goes back to some decisions that were taken in 1998-99 about which things would be included in our policies and which things would be excluded. As I understand it, in the case of this vast number of kilometres of rural fencing, the view taken at the time was that it would be unlikely all would be destroyed at once. This was one of those things which, with the benefit of hindsight, was a bad call. Nevertheless, that was the view that was taken. Certainly, if you take normal bushfire events, a bushfire might knock off a few kilometres of fencing, but nobody envisaged that we would have this level of disaster.

**THE CHAIR:** Was the insurance policy not renewed after the December 2001 fires?

**Mr Thompson:** The premium was paid again but the actual decisions about what things were in and out were taken—

**THE CHAIR:** I just recall Mr Quinlan saying at the budget estimates that they had renegotiated and put things in and out.

**Mr Thompson:** I think that, as far as our components are concerned, the last time that decisions were taken about what was in and out and so on was back in 1998-99.

**MS DUNDAS:** I go back to the removal of damaged trees that didn't regenerate after the first six months of the bushfires. It is mentioned that these are located in public areas. Are those sites currently closed off, will there be a closing off of those sites or will they just be shut down till the day of the trees being removed?

**Dr Cooper:** We do a combination of all of that, so it's not simple. We have tree inspectors go out and look at the safety aspects. It may be that we can contain visitors to a particular area within the site without closing the entire site. We look at it case by case.

**MS DUNDAS:** Do you know the number of trees you are talking about at this point, or is the \$1.25 million a best guesstimate?

**Dr Cooper:** It's a very good estimate, but it's not down to every single tree. We do go out and we've got broad areas where we can go out and look and say that there are 100 there. We do it that way to do this calculation and then we go back and do it tree by tree.

**MS DUNDAS:** But the assessment of general sites where this work is needing to be done has been completed.

**Dr Cooper:** Yes. They're very clear.

**Mr Thompson:** The other thing to point out is that the \$1.25 million splits up into Environment \$900,000 and Roads ACT \$350,000. Of course, those trees are up and down our various roads. In those cases we've already done a huge amount of clearing, but we're now doing further passes to try to work out which trees are actually genuinely coming back and which ones are simply not. Regularly, up and down various rural roads, we will be having to shut the roads temporarily, fell a couple of trees, move on and so on.

**THE CHAIR:** Going to page 15 and the DUS fire management unit, what is the rationale for establishing that and what will you get for \$120,000?

**Mr Thompson:** The thinking behind it is that within DUS there has been a series of different managers responsible for different parts of the fire issue. We've got a series of different land managers, and they're operating as different land managers for very good reasons. We've got Parks and Conservation people, Canberra Urban Parks people and ACT Forests people. In general, they have reported through to ESB in terms of fire combat relatively separately.

As we went through the January events it became pretty clear to me and the other executive directors that there was a fair bit of merit in us having a team who were bringing together all of our effort in terms of our fuel management, training and coordination with ESB in one small unit. At this stage, we're envisaging that there will be tentatively three people located in Macarthur House. They will coordinate all of our effort. It will cost more than \$120,000—I'll come back to that—but it's not about taking over ESB roles. It's simply about making sure that we have all of our people effectively trained, we have the right equipment, and our fuel management side is well coordinated and well programmed so that we can play our part very effectively with ESB in the fire combat side. Is that—

**THE CHAIR:** It's your answer. If you're happy with your answer, fine.

**Mr Thompson:** I was wondering whether you needed more information.

**MS DUNDAS:** Do you want to revisit why it's going to cost more than \$120,000?

**Mr Thompson:** Three people at reasonable grades will cost more than that. That's, if you like, the government contribution. We will then need to fund the rest of it internally. We will do that by sharing the load across the land management agencies. We haven't finalised exactly what formula we'll use for that. There's a myriad of formulae you could use.

In sum total it will cost over \$300,000 to run that unit. But we think it's well worth it because we are managing not only a huge proportion of the ACT's land but also have responsibility for the vast majority of the interface between the bush and urban Canberra. We're very proud of what we achieved in the January bushfire period. But, like all big events, we've done our own internal debriefing and this was one of the areas where we

felt we could improve if we had better coordination between the land managers and their staff in terms of both fuel management and fire combat.

**MS DUNDAS:** You have given us complete breakdowns of the six different organisations that get bushfire fuel management resources. Will this unit coordinate that?

**Mr Thompson:** Our definite intention is to have it coordinate the four within Urban Services. We've opened the discussion with the Planning and Land Authority and they've indicated some interest in joining us. I have yet to have the discussion with the Land Development Agency. We have all been very busy and a majority of the land that they're looking after, immediately under their control, is very much grazing land and they seem to have an active grazing program on most of it. I haven't regarded that as being as high a priority.

**THE CHAIR:** I guess that raises whether we are still sitting at a tactical level and should move to a strategic level. The question is really for the minister. Should those responsibilities remain with DUS or should those decisions be made by the new Emergency Services Authority? You will always have a dilemma as to heritage sites, nature-based sites, grazing sites or land development sites versus the fuel management of the sites. Some of the problems in the past over the conflict between the different functions that the organisations carry may have led to less fuel management than we should have done. Therefore, should we not have an overall strategic view and run it out of the new ESB?

**Mr Wood:** This arose out of the debriefing within DUS. DUS saw it as a need for further coordination and training expertise internally. That seems to me an appropriate way to go. I don't see it as crossing over into ESB territory. If you look across the whole of the government sector, thinking about emergency, there's a variety of plans for training. The hospital has a number of emergency plans and processes in place. I wouldn't see this as any different from that.

**THE CHAIR:** If we are to believe what is written in the document—"to coordinate fire management activities and systems development—how can you have the DUS part of the government doing that for DUS in isolation of what ESB might choose to do or might need to do, given that the expertise is inside the son of ESB? Shouldn't we have a single line approach because of the conflict that you actually have inside DUS? It's not a criticism of anybody, but the conflict inside DUS is that some want to grow it for profit, some want to grow it to conserve species and some want to grow it to sell off as residential, but the organisation that would have primary responsibility for managing the fuel, surely, is the son of ESB.

**Mr Wood:** The fuel management plan that was launched late last year spreads responsibility widely.

**THE CHAIR:** Is that a problem? Should one unit be in charge of fuel management, asking all the other departments to play their part?

**Mr Wood:** As I understand the fuel management plan, and I can get more detail, it spells out who is responsible for what in fuel management. As this estimates shows, DUS, with

its various agencies, whether it's Forests, Environment or CUP, is much the largest single government agency involved in this, so I think that that level of internal interest in that circumstance is fair enough.

**MRS DUNNE:** Sorry, I really don't understand what this über land manager is going to do that the others don't do already.

**Mr Thompson:** In what sense?

**MRS DUNNE:** You have \$120,000 here, but you have said that it will cost \$300,000 to have a grand highland manager to oversee the other land managers.

**Mr Thompson:** No.

**MRS DUNNE:** What is it doing, if that's not the case?

**Mr Thompson:** No, this is not a land manager. This is about organising our fire response. We have 120 fire combat staff who go out on the fire line. We have people in Canberra Connect who have to be ready to handle the calls. At the moment, the only place where they come together is in my head. They are totally separate operations. We had our debrief after the January fires and we concluded that there was a need to try to bring all these things together in terms of our fire combat effort—not about day-by-day land management, but about making sure that we could play our part in dealing with fire prevention, in dealing with the next major conflict. It's a pretty important part of what we do and it's not something that you can manage by having it just come together at one point with no other assistance. I just think it's too important to have it left in these individual silos.

**MRS DUNNE:** What will happen, Mr Thompson, if you create this DUS fire management unit and they're not activated for 10 years?

**Mr Thompson:** But they'll be active every year.

**MRS DUNNE:** What will they be doing every year? They're not just responding to large emergencies, in that case, so what will they be doing every year?

**Mr Thompson:** Let's say every two years they'll be preparing the updated bushfire fuel management plan, which involves a huge amount of consultation with stakeholders, within DUS and so on. Within every year, they'll be making sure that we actually deliver against that fuel management plan. Within every year, they'll be making sure that our responsible staff have gone through all the right training.

One of the key positions, one we've just filled, is to do with training of people for various levels of fire combat. Every year, I would expect them to check out our inventory of equipment: is it too old, is it outdated, and so on. There's actually a lot of work to do. We do that at the moment in our separate brigade groups and so on, but we just think we can do better by having it coordinated at the centre, and they will be busy. It's certainly not just a one in 10-year thing; this is every year. It's seasonal, that's certainly the case, and that's a fact of life for most fire operations. They're incredibly busy from about now,

through spring, summer, to autumn, and then the winter period tends to be their planning time, then they go back into the operational cycle again.

**MR PRATT:** Clearly, this is your first response capability, amongst DUS subagencies. I understand that the incident controller may even be formed from these teams if there is an incident. To that end, have you organised for the training of these teams to conform with the benchmarks and standards that ESB will be exercising? Will there be compatibility in operation procedures and training between the DUS fire units and those of the other emergency agencies?

**Mr Thompson:** Can we deal with that in two parts? Firstly, you mentioned incident command and control. We understand that we'll now be moving to the Australian standard for incident control and, on that basis, the incident controller will, in general, be Mr Lucas-Smith, because that's the way the ICS works. The ICS head person, the incident controller, has control of planning, operations and logistics. In the ACT environment, when you look at who does that, that's Mr Lucas-Smith or his position.

If Mr Lucas-Smith is not there, it may well be one of the DUS deputy people who already slot into various command positions in the ESB structure during major events. They already do that. People out on the fire ground from here on, as I understand it, will be called sector commanders, or words like that. People on the fire ground do not control planning, operations, logistics. DUS people may well be slotted into the Curtin operations structure as incident controller or head of planning or logistics, but that will be at Curtin. On the ground, they'll be set to controllers. That, I suppose, is part of the answer.

The second part is about the training. Yes, of course, we will take our cue about training from what ESB or it's successor wants and needs. We would see it as being our job to make sure our staff meet their requirements. But they are Urban Services staff and we have a duty of care to them. If, as part of their duties, they're doing this other thing about bushfire combat, then we need to make sure that they've got the right skills. That's our duty as their employer.

**MS DUNDAS:** In the non-summer period, will the rapid response team be carrying out the bushfire fuel management and following the plan?

**Mr Thompson:** The model which Mr McLeod discussed with us and was built into his report and which underpins this is the idea that over summer we recruit another 24 staff and, in rough terms, we see them being allocated as 12 to the parks brigade and 12 to the forest brigade, and probably then broken up into two teams of six. Mr McLeod suggested that it would be very similar to the model that operates in Victoria, where DSE do this every summer. To give you a feeling for what they do down there, they actually recruit 700. They're typically university students, people who work over winter in the ski fields and so on, and then they come and work on fire over summer. The model that we envisage is that they will go through their training and then, when called upon for fire duties, they'd be out there on the fire line and, when not required for fire combat duties, they'd be there doing track maintenance and other maintenance work around Parks and Conservation and around the Forests operations.



**MS DUNDAS:** They would only be seasonal employees.

**Mr Thompson:** Seasonal employees, yes.

**MS DUNDAS:** With this appropriation are we going to start recruitment to have these 24 on deck by 1 October?

**Mr Thompson:** We weren't envisaging them being on line by 1 October, but November was our target for these. It is probably worth saying that we've still got details to work out about how these people integrate with our normal staff, but the model is well and truly tested elsewhere. There is a pretty high expectation that these people will be very fit. But it is a model that has worked well elsewhere.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving on to the essential plant and equipment test for the provision and maintenance of adequate levels of plant, is that maintenance in terms of numbers or maintenance in terms of availability?

**Mr Thompson:** It is primarily about equipment that Environment ACT needs, of which by far the biggest item is a replacement tanker for Googong at about \$260,000.

**Dr Cooper:** Yes, it's around that base. We've got backhoes, a tanker light unit, bobcats, outdoor motors and mowers and some spray units. We can give you the breakdown, but they're generally what we're aiming for and it's really to replace the incredibly antiquated equipment that we've had at Googong. In terms of our water issues, it is critical that we focus on Googong, and hence we've done a risk analysis and this is why we've put in for this.

**MR PRATT:** So this is about replacement rather than adding to the fleet.

**Dr Cooper:** It's replacement.

**MR PRATT:** The DUS fleet used for conventional roles is simply insufficient at this point to provide that summer back-up.

**Dr Cooper:** That's correct, given the risk for that particular catchment in particular.

**MS DUNDAS:** This was not foreseen doing in the 2003-04 budget.

**Dr Cooper:** No, it wasn't. As I said, we have done a risk analysis and, given our water situation, we've looked across there and we're saying, in terms of the conditions at the moment, that we want to make sure it is absolutely 110 per cent okay.

**Mr Thompson:** Googong is an oddity, because we've got management responsibility for that immediate land, but the rest of the fire command and control is with New South Wales, rather than ESB, and we're just very conscious of the need to have a very good system in place over there, particularly to protect the treatment plant. The dam wall is not a problem and the lake is not a problem; it's the treatment plant that's the worry.

**THE CHAIR:** Who has responsibility for the catchment?

**Mr Thompson:** The local shire and RFS. It's worth noting that it is much less of an issue in terms of water quality because the nature of the Googong treatment plant is that it is a full settlement type of treatment plant, so if we had a catastrophic fire in the catchment and there was some run-off into the reservoir, that treatment plant would handle it a lot better than we have been able to handle the Cotter water.

**MR PRATT:** In terms of the DUS plant equipment normally used inside the suburban area, is there sufficient of that to provide a back-up in time of fire, or will these acquisitions solve that problem?

**Mr Thompson:** Our fire responsibilities are very much about the bush. We don't do urban fire, if you like.

**MR PRATT:** No, but is your urban kit sufficient to be deployed forth to supplement the ESB operations?

**Mr Thompson:** I apologise; if we went back 10 minutes, a part of that \$1.56 million is a recommendation about having two extra light dozers and a grader. That's a recommendation in McLeod and the intention would be to have those bits of gear deployed for a fair bit of the year on track maintenance and the like, and then on critical days in summer we would actually have them on a float ready to move to wherever the fire might be. I think we're saying that that's a deficiency we've recognised, McLeod recognised it, and that's within that \$1.56 million.

**THE CHAIR:** The \$1.56 million includes plant as well.

**Mr Thompson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** With \$800,000 in the first year for the dozers and the grader.

**Mr Thompson:** That's right.

**THE CHAIR:** We will have a question from Mrs Dunne and then all other questions for Urban Services will have to go on the notice paper.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, I foreshadowed this question this morning. When will the \$5 million over five years under the Murray-Darling Basin agreement need to be appropriated and what will the money be for? It's not here, it wasn't in the budget and it's committed from last Friday. When will it need to be appropriated and what will it be used for?

**Mr Wood:** I'm not briefed on that at this stage. That's a very recent agreement. There was some preliminary discussion about that, of course, ahead of the premiers conference, but the detail of what and how is yet to emerge in the public domain.

**MRS DUNNE:** Is anyone here briefed on what the \$5 million will be for?

**Mr Wood:** No, I think that's yet to develop strongly.

**Mr Thompson:** At the COAG meeting, as I understand it, there was some fairly robust discussion between the Prime Minister, chief ministers and premiers and in the end there was an agreement about putting various amounts of money into this fund, but the actual administrative arrangements and fully what it is to be used for are still being finalised.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is just that the Chief Minister put out a press release saying that it would support the implementation of the water resources strategy, which I would have thought would be something happening inside the ACT, whereas at a conference yesterday Roger Beale, head of Environment Australia, seemed to be of the view that the \$500 million was to address the overallocation within the catchment. I would just like to know what the ACT's understanding is of that.

**Mr Wood:** We will have to wait for the detail of that. Jon Stanhope left on his vacation the next day, so we haven't had a debriefing on that.

**THE CHAIR:** Should we expect an amendment to the appropriation bill to include that \$5 million?

**Mr Wood:** I can't answer that question.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could someone take it on notice to provide the committee with an update on what the \$5 million will be expected to be spent on? Is it for overallocation in the catchment or is it for something else?

**Mr Wood:** I'll take it on notice. As to timing, Mrs Dunne, I would have to take advice on what's available there. I will talk to the Acting Chief Minister and see what we can come up with.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay. At least, could you get back to the committee secretariat on it?

**Mr Wood:** Did Mr Quinlan make any comments this morning?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, he said you would answer all these questions. You are the Acting Minister for Environment.

**Mr Wood:** I am indeed.

**THE CHAIR:** He said you'd have all the answers.

**Mr Wood:** All right. I might have to talk to Jon Stanhope before I can come up with a detailed answer.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you keep the committee secretariat advised about the timetable?

**Mr Wood:** Yes. I can't promise a definitive answer in the period of this committee.

**Mr Thompson:** With the committee's agreement, I want to come back briefly on one issue that Mr Smyth raised. If I was understanding it correctly, Mr Smyth, it was about

the land management functions being part of the new Emergency Services Commission. Am I understanding you right?

**THE CHAIR:** No, only the fire functions. The problem may well be that you've got the keeper and the poacher doing the same job. If your responsibility is to run a national park for nature-based tourism, that might leave you in conflict with the fuel management people if they want to remove some fuel. For instance, it was reported to me that a bulldozer trail was to be put through the corroboree frog grounds, but it was either stopped or diverted on environmental grounds. Can you have people who have one responsibility equally fulfilling another responsibility in the nature of an emergency? The question is: do we take a strategic view which removes all that fire management to the Chief Fire Control Officer and it is his say rather than that of the land manager?

**Mr Thompson:** Would all those staff move across as well? It would make life a lot easier for me, fine.

**THE CHAIR:** You need the staff to do those jobs; but, in terms of fuel management and emergency management, if you have a primary job which is to do something else other than emergency management, should not the emergency management functions go to something like the son of ESB?

**Mr Thompson:** I just can't understand the accountabilities in that.

**MR PRATT:** When there is an urgent operational decision to be made, you would think that you would need a final arbiter to cut across these things.

**Mr Thompson:** I do not want to prolong this discussion, but as soon as we have an emergency, responsibility does transfer from me, from Maxine Cooper, to ESB. That's the way we work now. So I'm just not understanding the—

**MR PRATT:** But what about during the lead-up months of bushfire fuel management planning when there are those sorts of critical decisions that need to be made which are going to affect the preparedness of the territory for the next summer season, where you have these different departmental mixes about what might happen and conflicts and interests?

**Mr Thompson:** But, as soon as we start saying that, then, fine, the staff can move and they can go and do the work for the new Emergency Services Commission. We only have a limited number of staff doing these things and I don't think it's fair to expect them to have two different masters.

**THE CHAIR:** I wasn't talking about having two different masters.

**Mr Thompson:** I must say, as a land manager for some 15 years, I don't understand the model.

**THE CHAIR:** It was a question. I'm not proposing a model. I'm just asking about where final responsibility lies. I thank the officers of the Department of Urban Services. We will move on to JACS and the Emergency Services Bureau.

**MS DUNDAS:** The Chair has given me the honour of asking the first question to kick off this section. In an overarching sense, I'm trying to compare the supplementary appropriation bill to the government's response to the McLeod report. Can you run through the dot points and say which ones are the result of a McLeod recommendation?

**Mr Wood:** I think we can do that. McLeod is significant in what's in the second appropriation bill, but not everything in it. I think we can do that.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Page 56 of the supplementary budget papers for 2003-04 indicates all of the initiatives. Perhaps we can tick them off one at a time.

**Mr Wood:** Is the all-terrain water tanker the first one?

**MR HARGREAVES:** Yes.

**Mr Wood:** That would relate significantly to recommendation 23. A compressed air foam system has emerged in any event. Mr Keady will do it; he has a bit of paper there.

**Mr Keady:** I will take these in the order in which they appear on the appropriation bill. The all-terrain water tankers—that acquits recommendation 23. Emergency operation centre equipment upgrade acquits recommendation 19 of McLeod. Item number 12 in the bill, which is risk management and community education, acquits recommendation 39. Expansion of the community fire unit is item No 13 in the bill. That acquits recommendation 40.

Improved training capacity—item 14 of the bill—acquits recommendations 25 and 26; item 15, commander control capability, acquits recommendation 21; item 16, computer-aided fire data management, is McLeod recommendation 9. I am not sure whether item 17, implementation team, acquits a McLeod recommendation.

**Mr Wood:** That's fairly general throughout. There are a couple more.

**Mr Keady:** Yes, item 20 in the bill, national aerial firefighting—recommendations 13 to 18.

**Mr Wood:** That's not always in total—there are lots of crossovers.

**MS DUNDAS:** This is a general question—we'll get to more detail on each of these initiatives. The remote area communications relay vehicle; the compressed-air-foam system and the broadband data system, et cetera, are obviously not McLeod recommendations.

**Mr Keady:** Not specifically—no.

**MS DUNDAS:** What process has led to these outcomes being appropriated?

**Mr Keady:** ESB's review of its own experience, and identification of gaps in equipment or capability.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Is that subsequent to the fires?

**Mr Keady:** Yes. I think some of these things were recognised as desirable beforehand. But, in reviewing the experience of January, they were identified as more than desirable.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Was the decision to put them forward made in recent weeks and months?

**Mr Keady:** It was in the process of being considered, up to and including the period covered by McLeod. When McLeod came forward, the government obviously had to take a position on the recommendations, and also on the expenditure flowing from those. The other items you see there were prepared and submitted at the same time. It went forward and is presented to you now as a package.

**Mr Wood:** The ESB, in this process, hasn't been sitting down waiting for McLeod. There's been a heavy examination, over a long period, of what it needs to get to the best possible position you could imagine.

**MS DUNDAS:** The question is: why weren't a number of these included in the original appropriation bill for the financial year?

**Mr Wood:** I think it goes back to the point I just made. The debrief from the fire continues—the experience from the fire continues. It's like a lot of the stuff from DUS. As we examine what's needed, it emerges post the first appropriation bill discussion and examination.

**MR PRATT:** Do any of these appropriation decisions come out of the Auditor-General's report of May 2003—the one done into emergency services?

**Mr Keady:** No. I don't think so, specifically.

**Mr Wood:** That's part of the general background—I can't pick something specific.

**Mr Keady:** Lagging of the fire vehicle was mentioned, but that was a direct outcome of our January experience.

**MR HARGREAVES:** You're looking at \$10.5 million. There's a great deal of purchasing involved in this—a lot of big-ticket items in respect of contracts and purchasing. How confident are you that they'll all be paid for within the confines of the first financial year, which seems to be the case?

**Mr Keady:** In respect of the tankers, for example, we can only attempt to do it. If we encounter delays in the acquisition of specialist vehicles, it may or may not be possible to do that. It's quite likely that, even if they're not delivered in the financial year, we'd be having to make a financial contribution to them anyway.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Your assumption is that, predominantly, they will come on stream before 30 June—and hopefully there will be only a small amount of carryover?

**Mr Keady:** That would certainly be the aspiration. We don't know yet, because we haven't got fully into the acquisition process for the tankers, as I just mentioned. It may take longer to have them delivered. We believe the compressed-air-foam system will be delivered and fully installed within the financial year. We'll be doing our best to spend fully and acquire all the capacity that the funds will provide this financial year.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Looking at some of the items you have, I see that some items come on stream about halfway, and the full-year effect applies to the ensuing years. One, for example, is improved training capacity. It kicks off at \$352,000 and then goes to \$477,000 and onwards. I've seen a fair amount of that.

I don't know the answer—I haven't a clue where this could possibly apply. I'd like you to explain to me about the two enterprise bargaining arrangements in the ambulance EBA. In the first year, you've asked for nearly \$1.5 million; in the second year, it's only \$900,000; and, for the second appropriation for the firefighters' EBA, it's \$2,381,000 right through. There's no full-year effect in there. I'm a bit confused about how those numbers can be constructed. Can someone help me out?

**Mr Castle:** In the case of the ambulance, it was backdated to a period and therefore it has the payment for 2002-03. For the fire brigade, the payment was actually made in 2002-03.

**MS DUNDAS:** Going back two steps about the expenditure, you mentioned the water tankers and that you are hoping to progress that. But, according to this budget paper, the money isn't meant to begin to be expended until 2004-05. I'm looking at page 59. I am sorry—they'd be maintenance costs. Don't worry, we've worked it out. Thank you.

**MR HARGREAVES:** There's no doubt about you, Ros!

**THE CHAIR:** With regard to the extra cladding on the fire appliances, is there some liability for Scania there? Have they provided us with a product which hasn't delivered? I understand there were also air filters that weren't delivered.

**Mr Castle:** It dates back to the earlier examination, in which we indicated they had made changes to the air filters. This was on a newer series—they had relocated the air filters. This time we did a thorough investigation. The manager, regional support services, is a technical person. He is heading the national thing, looking at the Scania pumpers.

Tests were done to analyse the performance. In doing that, there were various lines and so forth that were clearly affected by this particular fire from under the vehicle. These are vehicles that are not normally off-road—they are not normally in that situation—so a complete examination of exposed lines was done. We've looked at lagging material to cover it. The extent of liability from Scania—

**THE CHAIR:** But the damage to the vehicles was done on-road—they were in Duffy.

**Mr Castle:** Yes, on-road. They probably never envisaged the ember storm we experienced in this instance. That's why the work is going to be done. Scania are well

and truly working on the filters. Tests are being done to determine how they can change that, both the position and the material used. But the lagging is of the lines as well. They're going to use a fire-resistant material to lag it.

**MR HARGREAVES:** We're lagging behind a bit, here!

**Mr Keady:** The answer is that, in terms of legal liability, I think it's very unclear. There was an earlier modification which was thought to have fixed an exposure.

**THE CHAIR:** A modification by Scania?

**Mr Keady:** Yes. It was a relocation of the air intake, which was thought to make it less vulnerable to the ingestion of embers.

**THE CHAIR:** In the interim, we're going to pay for the protective lagging—to protect our officers in the field.

**Mr Keady:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** And sort out the arrangements with Scania later, with a view to recovering the cost?

**Mr Keady:** Yes—there are two separate issues. There's the air filter problem—the air intake—and then there's the lagging of exposed lines. We are doing that directly.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you holding Scania accountable for the lagging on the lines?

**Mr Keady:** I'm not sure we can do that.

**THE CHAIR:** Surely the original specifications for the vehicles would have seen them fairly fire resistant?

**Mr Keady:** As I understand it, the vehicles delivered to us are the same as those delivered to everyone else around the country. We're all in the same situation. That is one of the reasons why these national discussions are now occurring.

**Mr Castle:** They are standard vehicles, as the Fire Commissioner indicated. In other words, they're commercial vehicles that are then built to turn them into fire vehicles.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps I can ask a strategic question, or more of an overview question, over the whole of the response here to McLeod. Before the report was received, the government announced that they would accept and implement the recommendations. I put this question to the Treasurer and the Treasury officials: what rigour has been put over these recommendations to verify that they're the best recommendations to accept; and, when we accept all of these and go ahead—purchase equipment and restructure, particularly through the equipment and some of the set-up things which are included—will give us the best outcome?



Can you tell me where we are at with the government's model? Perhaps you can answer this, Minister: where is the model; and does this equipment purchase match the model—given that we haven't appointed the new CEO for what we can call the son of ESB? What say would that person have? That person may have a totally different view, as to what we should be doing.

You've got to balance that with the fact that we want to be as ready as we can for the next fire season. But is this equipment we purchase anyway? Is this equipment that we've run a scanner over? Have we said, "This works in Victoria"; or, "This works in New South Wales—this makes us more compatible with New South Wales"? Or does this sort of purchasing regime—and what we're setting up—take us further away from the other jurisdictions? And may it all be undone when the new CEO arrives?

**Mr Wood:** I will give the broad answer—in that the government has expressed its general confidence in the McLeod report. It had two options at the time, I suppose. It could have thrown it open to further discussion, comment and refinement—that is what often happens with reports. Nevertheless, over the period, it developed a confidence in Mr McLeod, and therefore of the outcomes of the report—that it could quite rapidly accept the thrust of the report. You'll see that most of the recommendations are accepted. Some are accepted in principle, which denotes that we will look at them a little more deeply.

In view of the need to move rapidly—ahead of this coming fire season—and in view of the need to maintain the confidence of the Canberra community that we were proceeding—we adopted a particular approach. We were simply not prepared to put the report out for another two months and then consider it for another month or two. I think the government's judgment has been vindicated by the strength of the report.

As we move through the recommendations, obviously if something seems to be unworkable or difficulty is expressed, we'll deal with it as it emerges. I'm not, at this stage, aware of anything jumping out which says we're moving into something that is a real problem. That's the general policy adopted by the government. As to the specifics of any problems, I'll pass over to the officers, who might want to comment.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, you say you're not aware of any disquiet on this. Regarding the structure for the emergency services authority, controllers from ESB have said that they're not happy with the proposed model.

I was at a meeting where Peter briefed a meeting of the ACT Volunteer Brigades Association, and no-one voted in favour of that model. Hence, to say there's no disquiet at the government's acceptance of this I think is incorrect. I don't believe your fundamental problem—the confidence of the volunteers who will be at the heart of all this in the coming season—is being addressed.

Peter graciously addressed the meeting without any knowledge. He had no idea of what the government intended and, I think it's fair to say, was unable to answer the questions. He's reported back, and I'm sure he listened to what was said. But if you're moving forward with your acceptance of the McLeod report, and the fundamental tenet that we reform and structure the ACT Emergency Service Authority isn't accepted by the

volunteers, haven't we taken a very short-term view, when we should have taken a much longer-term view?

It is always balanced by the fact that the fire season starts on 1 October. How do we address that—if we're moving forward with all these changes—if we haven't sorted out the model, and that model doesn't have the confidence of those who will be involved with it? Need I say—the United Firefighters Union has also expressed disquiet at the model.

**Mr Wood:** Perhaps I misunderstood your first question. I certainly didn't say—I'll check the *Hansard*. I don't believe I said that I was unaware of disquiet in the community. I think I said that I'm not aware of any particular difficulties with what's emerging. I was specifically—I don't know whether I said it, but I was having it in terms of more of what's in this list here, Mr Smyth.

I was focused on the numbers 1 to 21, when I said I wasn't aware that there were any difficulties around that. If you ask me if I am aware of disquiet about the proposed statutory authority—yes, I've heard quite a deal. So we can clear that up.

**THE CHAIR:** But isn't that fundamental to what we set up? If we're purchasing equipment and signing up to the aerial firefighting strategy when we haven't even worked out what the model is, let alone appoint the new head of whatever the son of ESB will become, aren't we in some ways jumping the gun? Are you happy for us to expend this money now, but that it may change later, when the new head of the authority arrives?

**Mr Wood:** We have signed up, for example, to the helicopter one—the national model. I don't think anybody would suggest—I don't think you would—that we should have waited until new arrangements were in place before we did that. We just can't afford to wait. I think that, in many of these areas, there is a lag in the timeframe before some of them are up and running, but we want to be moving ahead. Someone may point it out to me, but I'm not sure I see anything very much here—this is material stuff—that is going to be in conflict with whatever a new structure might bring.

**THE CHAIR:** That was the question: are you happy that it won't conflict?

**Mr Wood:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** You're quite happy that these urgent steps, which we can understand must be taken fairly quickly, can be flexed, if necessary, once the son of ESB emerges? These initiatives can be adapted, or flexed, without significant waste of resources?

**Mr Wood:** I would think so, to the best of my knowledge. I've heard what the opposition has said—and I've heard what's in the community—but I'm absolutely confident that, if we hadn't acted and carried on the thrust of our response, we would be under much more severe criticism than I hear at the moment. There's no doubt about that in my mind.

**MS DUNDAS:** As far as the rapid response is concerned—this is getting to questions Mr Hargreaves was asking before—how much of what’s before us in the supplementary appropriation bill will be operational by this bushfire season?

**Mr Wood:** We can go through, item by item, if you like. Of course, with significant purchases, it takes time.

**Mr Keady:** Can I make a point to amplify the minister’s answer to Mr Smyth’s question? I think there’s quite a distinction to be drawn between the model of the ministry, or running our emergency services, and what they need to do their job. We have professional people who are able to take account of the experience we’ve just been through and are able to identify gaps or needs, which I believe we have a responsibility to move on quickly.

If we were to wait until the new authority is formed—it may not commence operations until 1 July next year, given things such as budget cycles and delays in procurement—it could well be towards the end of 2004, or beyond, before some of these much-needed things are available. In the meantime, we will have been through two fire seasons.

The list you have before you—and we’ve already identified the things which relate directly to McLeod—deals with, I guess in a shorthand way, perhaps four categories. Firstly, there are the things which might be described as gaps in our current capacity; secondly, training and community preparation; thirdly, things that might be described broadly as physical infrastructure to support the delivery of our services; and, finally, the rectification of problems.

To answer Mr Pratt’s earlier question, I don’t see that any of these things would in any way compromise whatever emerges as the model or administrative arrangement which manages the emergency services. These matters are identified as things we need now. Given the lag in procurement, we need to move on them now.

**MS DUNDAS:** You have identified them as things we need now. Again I’ll ask the question: we know we need them now, but when will they be operational?

**Mr Keady:** That will vary according to the item, because each of them will require a procurement path. In some cases, that will be fairly simple, but in other cases it will be quite complex. With the water tankers, we’ll have to specify them—they’ll have to be designed, manufactured and delivered. It will be next year before we can take delivery of them. We can’t expect to have them before the commencement of the fire season.

On the other hand, we will have some of the other things—hopefully—before the fire season. We will, for example, have improved the capacity of the headquarters at Curtin, in a temporary way, until we get a new building, to cope with that. That is a little longer in our ambitions.

**THE CHAIR:** What page is the new building on?

**Mr Keady:** The new building is an existing project. That’s why it’s not in here.

**MS DUNDAS:** Perhaps we can do this a little more specifically.

**Mr Wood:** Do you want to go through 1 to 21? Can we take the time? I'm quite prepared to do that.

**MS DUNDAS:** No. I don't necessarily want to go through 1 to 21. But I would like to know what increased capacity we will have for this bushfire season, based on this appropriation bill. It is the third appropriation bill that we've done as an outcome of the bushfires. Over the last two appropriation bills, there has been increased capacity each time we have gone through. We've had this discussion with the Treasurer. What are we adding to the 2003-04 bushfire season by this appropriation bill?

**Mr Wood:** Do you want us to come back with a statement about it?

**MS DUNDAS:** Yes. Please take it on notice—that's fine.

**Mr Wood:** We can do it now, if you like. It will take perhaps half an hour to do it.

**Mr Castle:** It varies across all of the items.

**MS DUNDAS:** If you could take that on notice and give us that detail in the next couple of days, that would be appreciated.

**Mr Castle:** They're not exact.

**MS DUNDAS:** Yes, I understand procurement issues, but we need to expand on what we know before the next bushfire season hits.

**MR PRATT:** I have a supplementary question, following on from Ms Dundas's interesting opening of that subject area. I'm fully aware of the material acquisition cycle—what it means and the processes of trialling, identifying, and introduction of the service—and I know it will take a long time.

In the context of the urgency to get a capability up and running, a la the McLeod recommendations and this coming fire season, which doesn't look too much prettier than what we've seen for a couple of years, might you be prepared to prioritise some of the stuff—this list, in fact—towards fast-tracking or expediting issues on an urgency basis? That may mean the minister coming back to the Assembly and seeking powers to do that. Otherwise, are we going to be stuck until July next year before a lot of this stuff is up and running?

**Mr Wood:** Everything's a priority here. Some priorities can be more quickly put in place than others.

**Mr Keady:** For example, the field command units are fairly stock standard. We'll have those quickly, but the water tankers will take longer.

**Mr Wood:** The fire equipment—you know, the protective seats.

**Mr Keady:** We'll have the compressed-air-foam systems in operation by the end of the fire season, not by the beginning. Each one will be progressed as quickly as our suppliers can deliver, bearing in mind that some of these things are going to be simpler to specify and acquire than others. We will be moving as quickly as we can on all fronts, Mr Pratt.

**Mr Castle:** The classic one is what we call the additional minor firefighting equipment. It's basically spares and all that sort of stuff. It's as fast as we can purchase those—and they are generally stock items. We envisage they will be available prior to the fire season, but others will take longer. The tankers will probably take longer.

**MR PRATT:** We would like that list with those qualifications added. Is that possible, Minister?

**Mr Wood:** We're responding to Ms Dundas. You want the priorities, but everything is a priority.

**MR PRATT:** No—in respect of what you think you might be able to introduce to the service by 1 October—or at least by December.

**MS DUNDAS:** That's the question I asked.

**Mr Wood:** That's Ms Dundas's question. We'll give you the best that we can.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving onto specific items, is the compressed-air-foam system the same system as the tankers at the airport have?

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** It's not exactly the same sort of system. The system the airport tankers have is a bit more complex, in that it's an engine compressor combination arrangement.

What we're talking about, in the context of the bushfire units, is the continued use of the pump arrangement we have now, and adding a compressor to that, which will feed into the delivery components of the pump side of things. All we're adding is plumbing, a compressor, and then the injection system for the foam processors to allow it to occur. It is a far simpler system than the airport fire service arrangement. It delivers the same sort of thing.

**THE CHAIR:** It's a big blanket of foam?

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** Yes. It will allow the mixing of foam and water to occur within the pump cycle. Then all the delivery will be a combination of air, foam and water. That will significantly reduce the amount of water needed, and significantly reduce the weight of the hose line that you've got laid out.

**THE CHAIR:** The \$18,000 is to buy the foam—or is that for maintenance on the system?

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** It's a bit of both. The compressors will need maintenance. Compressors run with a number of diaphragms, rings, and so forth, which will need to be replaced, particularly if they're left unused for a six-month period—say in winter.

**THE CHAIR:** This raises a question. We asked you, Minister, at the last estimates about the use of the two airport tankers. I don't know it was resolved in McLeod or not. Have we ever come up with an answer as to why that offer was turned down?

**Mr Wood:** No. I heard there's been no response.

**Mr Prince:** Regarding the situation with the airport tankers not being used on the day, there was an offer late in the evening. The individual who was asked of that decided that, because of no radio capability or communication, nor any liaison officers available, they would not utilise those airport tankers at 9.30 at night when they were offered—when the airport would be closed.

**THE CHAIR:** They weren't offered earlier in the day? I understand they were offered much earlier in the day.

**Mr Prince:** They may have been offered earlier in the day—but information back, to date, has advised that they weren't going to be available until 9.30 that evening.

**THE CHAIR:** The all-terrain water tankers then will be under the purview of the fire brigade, rather than the Rural Fire Service?

**Mr Prince:** That's correct.

**THE CHAIR:** The logic of that is?

**Mr Castle:** Part of the logic is that the fire brigade already cross-crews some tankers, and this provides the integral capacity at the interface.

**Mr Keady:** It's interface capacity—or additional interface that we require.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there not some advantage in having them available, either to cross-crew with the fire brigade or have them serviced by volunteers, if there are volunteers available?

**Mr Prince:** I think you'd find that there would be an industrial issue with the UFU that we'd have to work through on that matter.

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** From my point of view I would hope that, if we had a major fire event going, we wouldn't be short of resources to have a fire truck left in any station, regardless of what service it belonged to.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, sure—that's my point. Are they a strategic reserve, or are they fire service-dedicated pieces of equipment?

**Mr Prince:** I think they're a strategic piece of equipment. I agree wholeheartedly with Peter Lucas-Smith. I believe the process to put it on deck would take us through negotiations with the UFU, as I have already suggested.

**Mr Keady:** What we're requiring is vehicles which will be flexible in their use, both for urban and bush service, which acquit the interface capacity that Mr McLeod talked about. How they'll be used operationally—which services might use them, for example, which is the question you're asking: this is part of the consultation process that lies ahead of us, as the future shape of the two fire services is reviewed.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a need for more than four? How did we determine the magic number four?

**Mr Keady:** This will provide two for the north side and two for the south side.

**THE CHAIR:** How was it determined that you needed only two north side and two south side?

**Mr Keady:** I guess it was a necessity.

**Mr Castle:** The stations on the western flank.

**THE CHAIR:** There's an additional unit each for the stations on the western flank?

**Mr Castle:** That's the rationale.

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** The rationale was to look at it from the point of view of the existing bushfire units, and where they exist in a cross-crewing arrangement within the fire brigade. There are four stations located down our western flank. The fire brigade already has three bushfire units of their own resources, which will also be included and will give them a capacity of seven bushfire fighting resources over their nine stations.

The four stations for the interface units would be in Gungahlin, Charnwood, Kambah and Greenway. So there is provision across the north, the west, and down the western flank—the north-west, and down the western side of the ACT. That is where our high levels of exposures are for direct impact on our interface areas. The specifications for these units: they will be primarily designed for a crossover between the urban structure environment to the bush structure environment, to allow the operators of that—who will be fire brigade people—to be able to move between those environments without having to change resources.

The current bushfire service units that are with the fire brigade—that is, a couple of tankers, light units and so forth—would be returned to the bushfire service, with these units being introduced into the fire brigade. That would increase, once again, the capacity of the bushfire service—by putting those units back into operation within the bushfire service.

**THE CHAIR:** But again, the first question—why four? If we're saying we're buying only one for each station because there are only four stations on the western flank, is that

enough logic? Do we need eight? Should it be 12? Should it be only two? What assessment goes beyond one for each station that says four pumpers would be required?

**Mr Prince:** May I say to that: the capability of the fire service to deliver its services to the community is such that bushfire fighting, in a sense, is probably one-tenth of our normal business. We have to also consider—in the initial stages, whilst we go through this process—that, if we continue the cross-crewing arrangements, there is a misbalance in delivering service to the community. So we have to balance it up. That's where your question earlier is relevant in relation to the use of volunteers and career firefighters.

**Mr Castle:** Bear in mind that, during the emergency, the fire brigade staffed all its appliances. There was not a shortage of people to staff them.

**THE CHAIR:** Absolutely—and there wasn't a shortage of volunteers who could have staffed more equipment. I get back to the first question: what's the analysis that leads you to four? We've just matched one urban interface pumper with each of the four stations. There's some sort of logic there—but is there any analysis of what we actually need, in terms of capacity?

**Mr Keady:** No. The logic of the placement and the capacity they'll provide has been explained by Mr Lucas-Smith. It's basically that professional assessment that we're relying on in acquiring it.

**THE CHAIR:** How many bushfire units does the fire brigade currently have—how many tankers?

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** They've got three of their own. There are two tankers and four light units which belong to the bushfire service.

**THE CHAIR:** There are nine appliances?

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** Yes, but only five or six of those stations are cross-crewed. I can't remember which it is now. The other resources are left virtually in the spare environment, in real terms, at the present time. This will overcome that. What we'll end up with, with the existing three fire brigade tankers and the four additional, is seven fire stations out of nine which will be in a cross-crew environment.

**THE CHAIR:** That's fine, but I still ask the first question.

**Mr Prince:** May I also add, and I'll have an attempt, I think the analysis is such that let's have a look at the four in an initial process to meet previous needs across the bushfire component. Obviously, if we believe we need to increase that we will. Further, tankers—all-terrain or other purposes—for the fire service are required for airport crashes, off airport, hazmat and road accident rescue—anything where we need bulk water, where reticulated water isn't available. So we also have to have that capability.

You're correct—the analysis of four probably could be expanded, but I think that, in an initial process, we're better off working through that. There will be industrial issues that I'm going to have to work through to maintain that level of seven tankers, anyway.



**THE CHAIR:** McLeod recommends four rural pumpers, which may be a contradiction in terms. There aren't that many hydrants out in the rural scene!

**Mr Keady:** They are better described in the budget papers as all-terrain tankers.

**THE CHAIR:** I see you've described them as all-terrain water tankers. What would they carry? What sort of litreage are we looking at?

**Mr Prince:** At this stage, we're looking at the usual requirement, but no less than the 3,300 as carried by the bushfire service, if not more, if we can.

**THE CHAIR:** If it's four by 3,300, that's 13,200 litres that the four all-terrain tankers will have. What's the capacity of the nine units you currently have available?

**Mr Prince:** The three Mercedes have 3,600 each—and then they will vary, based on the appliances.

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** The bushfire ones have 3,600 as well.

**THE CHAIR:** How many of those are there?

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** There are two of those, and three Mercedes.

**THE CHAIR:** That is two by 3,600, and the light units are all by 500?

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** No, they're 510 litres.

**THE CHAIR:** Say 2,000.

**MR HARGREAVES:** It is 13,000, so far. I am just working out how much water you can chuck on the red stuff!

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** I think you also need to consider that the four all-terrain ones will come with CAFS—compressed-air-foam systems. So water delivery, or firefighter delivery, will far exceed the full capacity of the tank.

**THE CHAIR:** You've just gone from 20,000 water to 13,200 litres. Admittedly, you'll have the compressed-air-foam system on board as well, but you've just lost capacity.

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** This is additional capacity.

**MR SMYTH:** No—I am sorry. I appreciate that the other units are going to the bushfire side of it, but the fire brigade's ability to bring litres to a firefront has just dropped from 20,000 litres to 13,200 litres.

**Mr Keady:** That will depend on the ultimate capacity of the vehicles we are able to acquire, so we're only giving you an estimate at this stage. The vehicles haven't been specified or purchased yet.

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** Also, I don't think you should consider the interface being the fire brigade's purview. The interface is the responsibility of the fire agencies of the ACT. We'll work together, collaboratively, to deliver that.

**THE CHAIR:** I'm sure you will. I don't have any difficulty with that. But again I will get back to it and perhaps David's answered it by perhaps this is the first step and we need to look at it a bit more closely. But it just strikes as odd that we've dropped to four units for the fire brigade to do the interface activity carrying less litres of water.

And just because McLeod said so, that you should have four more units, I would have hoped there was more rigour behind how we accept these recommendations and if it is a first step then perhaps that's good. But that's the first time I've heard that this would be a first step.

**Mr Wood:** No, it's the preliminary. I don't know whether you say first step. By saying first step it denotes that there will be some more. That may be the case, it may not be the case.

**THE CHAIR:** What are you saying now—that it's not the first step?

**Mr Wood:** No, but you are locking us into absolutely doing some more.

**THE CHAIR:** No. I did not say that, Minister.

**Mr Wood:** All right. I misunderstood you—my apologies. I'm not predicting the future. We will see how this goes.

**MS DUNDAS:** Going to the community fire unit trial, how far has that pilot program progressed over the last six or eight weeks—and how will this supplementary funding support it?

**Mr Prince:** At the moment, we have 177 people interested, and there will be more who will make themselves available. A progression through a risk assessment from the Emergency Services Bureau and the urban edge group is that we have identified the suburbs in question. They are Hawker, Cook, Aranda and O'Connor on the north side—and Duffy, Chapman, Kambah and Fadden on the south.

The trailers have been ordered and so has the equipment. It is under four weeks away now, I believe, that all the gear will arrive. We will commence training in the suburbs during September and October. I have a time period for each of those areas so that we can work through that.

We envisage that it will take a minimum of eight volunteers to work a particular unit, but we are seeking about 20 for each of them, so there is redundancy. Obviously, it is limited to those people protecting their homes around the specific area that's been identified.

**MS DUNDAS:** Protecting their homes in the suburb or on particular streets of the suburb in the interface?

**Mr Prince:** Within the suburb. If it's a cul-de-sac—if I pick Wybalena Grove, for instance, in Cook, they will be looking after the area up to their back doors. They won't be going into the bush. They will be hooked up to a hydrant with a length of hose and staying there. The first job, in the circumstance, is to ring 000 and have units dispatched.

**THE CHAIR:** What's the nature of the training the volunteers will receive?

**Mr Prince:** The volunteers will receive two five-hour sessions, as far as theory is concerned, and then they will receive 10 hours of practical training.

**THE CHAIR:** To what standard of training does that bring them? Are we covered, then, from our occupational health and safety aspect? All volunteers who want to go out in the field this year have to pass to a fitness test and do a revision of all the modules by 30 September. Some of us are still doing our assignments. Will those same requirements be applicable for all volunteers?

**Mr Prince:** They're a different type of volunteer. They're not going out to suppress fire, they're there to protect their homes. As far as OH&S concern goes, we've looked at it through the fire brigade act, and I'm speaking with the Government Solicitor, at the moment, to ensure that all indemnities and liabilities are covered. I suppose they are a different type of volunteer in relation to bushfire fighting, because they are not doing bushfire fighting—they're protecting their homes from their street fire.

**THE CHAIR:** I'm not sure who wants to answer this, but it's been a point of contention for some time that the Rural Fire Service volunteers have not been taught the structure defence module. Is that now changing—given that you are going to have a group of volunteers who will be defending structures?

**Mr Keady:** They will be defending their own homes. The training provided is very much based on the New South Wales model from which we are basically copying. Peter Lucas-Smith can answer the question about structure firefighting. I had a meeting recently with representatives of the Volunteer Brigades Association. They were adamant that they didn't want to get involved in structure firefighting—and they didn't want to train for it. So there are views.

**THE CHAIR:** That's just what other volunteers are saying. Within the brigade, it's not unanimous.

**Mr Keady:** They were adamant, I might say. That surprised me, too.

**Mr Lucas-Smith:** We are reintroducing the basic structure firefighting training modules into the bushfire service. I'm hoping that we'll have the preliminary parts of that running before we get too far into this fire season, but it will certainly be running by the next fire season.

**MR HARGREAVES:** In relation to the suburbs which have these trailers, I wanted to know how you picked them. I recall having stories told to me—everybody's had stories told to them—of people sitting out on roofs looking at the flames coming over the hill

until the whites of their eyes turned red. That happened to many of the good burghers of Gordon, for example.

The Chisholm fire station is a fair hike from Gordon. I've sat up and watched them trying to take a little scrub fire out. It takes a fair while, because of the structure of the streets. I saw a little bushfire start near Templestowe Avenue. I rang 000 and sat there and timed them. It took them 13 minutes to get there because of the road. They need to fix that, Mr Chairman.

I wonder why it was that you stopped where you did when you were coming south. The Lanyon Valley is quite a discrete community—and there's nothing in it. There's no fire station or ambulance station. There's nothing in there except for garden hoses.

**Mr Prince:** The difficulty was, I suppose, as a pilot program with only eight units—which was an increase in initial thoughts—that we made a risk assessment in particular areas. In conjunction with both the planning unit in ESB and the urban edge people, we identified specific areas that had higher risk. That is why those suburbs were selected.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Kambah was one of them.

**Mr Prince:** Kambah was one of them.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Can I suggest to you that, right now, Kambah is surrounded by the biggest bunch of black space that God ever blew breath into? It's already burnt, whereas Gordon isn't. There's still stuff there that could come over the hill in the next fire season.

**Mr Keady:** There is a rather sensitive issue there with the people who were affected by the fires. They are keen to participate in a program of this kind. I suppose a place for them has to be found in the trials. That was, I think, part of it.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Can I pass onto you then, Mr Keady, the sensitivity of the people who live in Gordon at having been left out, when they had the crap scared out of them over the fire? They readily and quickly understand the sensitivities of the people who live in Allchin Circuit and Colquhoun Crescent in Kambah.

They understand that they want to be prepared again. All power to their arm and all that. The only problem is that they're feeling somewhat neglected down there, at the moment. Perhaps somebody can explain to me the results of the risk analysis which said that we don't have to have nine. Why stop at eight? Why not nine?

**Mr Wood:** That's like the question of the all-terrain vehicles.

**Mr Keady:** It's intended to be a trial, the purpose of which is to evaluate the effectiveness of it and the support for it. We're not attempting, through this initial program, to provide complete coverage of all the areas of the interface at risk.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Is the trial going to conclude after the next bushfire season?

**Mr Keady:** I would imagine it will be evaluated at the end of this fire season, with a view to making recommendations to the government as to its future. If it were deemed successful and the government was prepared to fund it, we would be looking for an expansion. That expansion, one would imagine, would grow over time.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Or be back in March!

**Mr Keady:** We have a difficulty in anything like this. If a choice is to be made, there are going to be more candidates available than places for them. I'm sure the people of Gordon and others have an excellent case—I can't argue with that—but the choice had to be made.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Some in Aranda come quickly to mind also, not only because of the way in which it abuts the nature park. That is a really good candidate, if fire comes up the wrong side of it.

**Mr Keady:** I think Aranda is a part of it.

**MR HARGREAVES:** Is it part of it?

**Mr Prince:** Yes, Aranda is a part of it.

**MR HARGREAVES:** You can see why it's a good candidate. It's got a stack of gum trees growing in the middle of it. Maybe I'm wrong, but I was assuming that the hospital at Calvary is another good candidate—and Bruce Stadium. The proximity to the Belconnen fire station would take care of that, I would hope.

**Mr Wood:** In the bush capital, there are a lot of candidates!

**MR PRATT:** I think it's a very good program. I understand that the trialling will probably take place through the summer—with trials, you need time. Do I assume that the trial units will be able to be operational, as well as while they're on trial through the summer?

**Mr Wood:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** I assume the training and the equipment will be completed in time—so that, while you're trialling them, there will still be on-the-job training, et cetera? Is that correct?

**Mr Keady:** That's correct.

**MR PRATT:** I'll make a statement before I ask a question, Chair. My view is that I would have thought that the need for the CFUs is absolutely clear-cut. I therefore wondered why, Minister, you probably didn't seek to obtain further appropriations to equip all the vulnerable suburbs—somewhere in the region of 16—with trial units, keeping in mind that the trials would continue through summer to see how best to organise them later.

**Mr Wood:** We wanted to test it—it is as simple as that. I thought eight was a pretty reasonable sample. It's that question. I think that's a fair start—to see how it's going to go. Yes, I reckon it's a goer, but we're going to try it. I hope we don't have a fire season where we can try it extensively. Yet, if we don't have any fires, it might make the evaluation a little more difficult.

**MR PRATT:** Risk management doesn't allow us to do that, does it?

**THE CHAIR:** I know the people of Fadden hills would like one as well.

**MS DUNDAS:** I don't think I got an answer to my initial question. There was \$100,000 put aside in the initial budget. Is this extra supplementary appropriation because of the number of responses you got? What caused you to double—and almost triple—the amount you were spending on this, through this second appropriation?

**Mr Keady:** There was an amount of money appropriated originally to establish a trial. Once the parameters of the trial were developed and the project was more fully understood, it was clear that, with that appropriation, we couldn't provide the number of units we would like. I think we were capable of doing only four or five. The view was that we should do at least eight. The additional money in this second appropriation will expand the trial capacity to eight units.

**THE CHAIR:** So each unit is about \$20,000?

**Mr Keady:** Roughly, yes. We're talking about training. To go back to Mr Pratt's question, this involves training of about 160 citizens. You can calculate the number of hours from what has been said. That takes a fair bit of our capacity.

**MR PRATT:** It is training capacity. I suppose that is what you're saying—is it?

**Mr Keady:** Indeed.

**MR PRATT:** A limitation, perhaps?

**Mr Keady:** I believe we need to be a bit careful about it and learn from experience. We've got to ensure that, first of all, we can properly support it. Secondly, we need to have an understanding about the degree of longer-term participation. In the wake of the fires, we may have a lot of enthusiasm initially, but what we don't know is whether we can look forward to that enthusiasm being sustained over a period.

I'm anticipating an outcome, I know, but I think that, as we expand this, that's probably going to be the case. I think we ought to be doing it on the basis of real experience of a trial in the Canberra environment, as opposed to just extrapolating what we might see happening in Sydney or the Blue Mountains. That's the rationale behind a trial, initially.

**MR PRATT:** The neighbourhood watch syndrome!

**Mr Keady:** Potentially, yes.

**MR PRATT:** If you're going to argue the training capacity issue, then I hope you've identified the eight most vulnerable, in respect of what is left on the urban fringe to burn this year. Is that right?

**Mr Keady:** Yes. We have just discussed that.

**MS DUNDAS:** Regarding the implementation team for the McLeod recommendations—there is almost half a million dollars there—where will these five divisions be placed, and what timeframe are they working on?

**Mr Keady:** I'm not sure what you mean by "timeframe". It's our intention to recruit and place them fairly quickly.

**MS DUNDAS:** Once they're in place, are they going to be ongoing for a year, two years, or until we're done?

**Mr Keady:** No, it will be short term—12 to 18 months. It will be part of the implementation process. They'll be located primarily at ESB. They'll be responsible for all the acquisitions, and for the implementation of the other recommendations as well.

**MS DUNDAS:** Will they also be running consultations in respect of new structures?

**Mr Keady:** Probably not from that area. One of these positions is going to be someone who's an expert in procurement. They will assist with all the procurement activity that will now occur—contract management and all those kinds of things. The amount of activity being generated from these appropriations, the broader McLeod recommendations and other work that's ongoing in ESB, is formidable indeed. This group will help to manage all of that. That's quite separate from the development of the new authority.

**MS DUNDAS:** McLeod recommended ongoing negotiations with New South Wales regarding communication structures.

**Mr Keady:** That is already occurring.

**MS DUNDAS:** Then this implementation team is basically focusing on procurement—the implementation of this supplementary appropriation bill, in a sense?

**Mr Keady:** Among other things, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** What are the other things it will do?

**Mr Keady:** Well, there's the day job!

**THE CHAIR:** What are the people in the day job currently doing—if you've got five more people doing the day job?

**Mr Keady:** That's a good question. A good part of the senior echelon of ESB are having their time and attention diverted to a range of activities. McLeod, which has just

completed, is one of them. The inquest currently underway, which will continue next year, is another.

There's a whole range of high-level negotiations underway. For example, in New South Wales there are two days set aside at Rose Hill next week for negotiations on the proposed memorandum of understanding. Those kinds of activities require people who've got the appropriate background and knowledge. It's that knowledge and background which we simply cannot quickly replace or supplement.

We're looking for people who are able to work under the direction of the more senior people, to add capacity—knowing that the kinds of expert skills we need to manage many of these things are possessed by only a few people. We are facing quite a formidable task in delivering all of this. Those extra resources will be intended, as far as possible, to provide that extra to get it through.

**Mr Castle:** The MOU is likely to generate more activity, which will come into this play.

**MS DUNDAS:** Do you expect this team to be in place for only about 18 months?

**Mr Keady:** It's basically an implementation task—yes. This group is not intended to be a permanent feature of the landscape. It may well be that, as time goes on, we identify the need for additional staff. That will have to be dealt with on the basis of that assessment. This is intended to provide us with a temporary capacity to undertake the unusual volume of work we're facing at the moment.

**MS DUNDAS:** Are you expecting that McLeod will be fully implemented within 18 months?

**Mr Keady:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** Will they be working directly to the CFCO?

**Mr Keady:** Among others. They'll be working within the Emergency Services Bureau under the direction of the executive director, Mike Castle. The CFCO, Peter Lucas-Smith, is part of the management team there, as is the head of ambulance, the fire commissioner and so forth.

**THE CHAIR:** The other command and control capability for bushfire in emergency services has a number of positions in it as well. Will the new head—or the new commissioner as you called him or her—be selecting those officers, or will that be done before that person arrives?

**Mr Keady:** It will be done before he or she arrives.

**THE CHAIR:** Shouldn't the new commissioner have a say in the commissioner's staff?

**Mr Keady:** This is where we face a dilemma. A choice had to be made about essential capabilities. As you are aware, I'm sure the resources available to Mr Lucas-Smith and



his bushfire emergency services area are meagre. The range of tasks facing him are urgent. He needs capacity and assistance now.

Whilst there is something to be said for waiting until whoever's going to head this organisation is available to participate in that, against that there is a need to deal with what are quite urgent gaps in capacity. My view—our collective view—is that we must proceed now—that we can't wait until we're able to have the new commissioner participate. I don't know when that person might be available but, conceivably, it may not be until after Christmas.

**THE CHAIR:** The point is that, given that you can't tell us what the new structure will look like, are you not dictating, from the ground up, what the structure will look like simply by saying, "We've got an implementation team. We're getting command and control capability. We've got a new DCFCO and a new ops officer"? In many ways, are we modelling this without a holistic view? Or are we just putting pieces in place, and somebody will get to fill in the blanks?

**Mr Wood:** There's a significant structure there right now. It's all there and, in the total structure, these are variations.

**THE CHAIR:** But, again, what you're doing is plugging holes and filling gaps. That was the point of some of the things McLeod said—that it is time for a new structure. If all we're doing is hanging bits off the existing structure, are we wasting the opportunity to totally restructure and deliver the sorts of services everybody wants?

**Mr Wood:** These are resources within the new structure. These are additional resources like all the resources that are currently there. We're not going to toss away all the resources we have, thank you!

**Mr Keady:** The point I make is that, in the main, these resources are going into the middle of the organisation. When the new structure takes place, I think it will be relatively easy to rearrange duties and responsibilities to conform to whatever new command control arrangements are made. In the meantime, we need these people to populate positions which have jobs to do immediately—that's why we can't wait. I don't think we are creating any limit or inhibition on a future structure. I think it would be quite easy, at this level, to accommodate any people we add now.

**THE CHAIR:** When will we know what the new structure will look like? You said it will be operational by 1 July next year. You obviously have to draw up a structure before you can draw up the legislation.

**Mr Wood:** It will emerge over that period. There's a considerable amount of discussion to be done. We've indicated that we'll be talking extensively with all interested parties. That will start as soon as the new position is in place. We're not moving ahead of that. We've indicated strongly that we want to listen to every comment that's out there, as to how that structure will finish up.

**MR PRATT:** Do you have a timeline and objective on the legislation? What's your goal?

**Mr Wood:** It would have to be the autumn session of next year.

**THE CHAIR:** We will ask members to put the rest of the questions on notice. Minister, we've told the other ministers that we would expect the usual three-day turnaround so the committee can do its deliberations, complete its report and have it in the Assembly in September for the passing of the bill.

**Mr Wood:** We appreciate that. Sometimes, as with last estimates, there's an enormous amount of detail. Officers have worked assiduously in this agency, and in other agencies, to meet it. They have done their best.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, thank you and your departmental representatives for their attendance today.

**The committee adjourned at 6.09 pm**