



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES**

**(Reference: Appropriation Bill 2005-2006)**

**Members:**

**MS K MACDONALD (The Chair)**  
**DR D FOSKEY (The Deputy Chair)**  
**MR R MULCAHY**  
**MS M PORTER**  
**MR Z SESELJA**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**TUESDAY, 31 MAY 2005**

**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 9.32 am.**

Appearances:

Ms Katy Gallagher, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Support, Minister for Women and Minister for Industrial Relations

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Ms Sandra Lambert, Chief Executive

Dr Colin Adrian, Deputy Chief Executive

Mr Ian Hubbard, Director, Finance and Budget

Mr David Collett, Director, Strategic Asset Management

Ms Bronwen Overton-Clarke, Executive Director, Policy and Organisational Services

Ms Lou Denley, Executive Director, Office for Children, Youth and Family Support

Mr Frank Duggan, Director, Care and Protection Group

Ms Sue Ash, Director, Early Intervention and Protection

Mr Paul Wyles, Manager, Care and Protection

Ms Meredith Whitten, Director, Vardon Implementation Team (Vardon Report)

Ms Pauline Brown, Senior Manager, Child and Family Centres

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly protected by parliamentary privilege and 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. The giving of false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter.

Please clearly identify when you are taking a question on notice. It is then your responsibility to check the transcript and respond to the question. Responses to questions taken on notice are required within five full working days. The transcript will be emailed to the minister and the departmental contact officer for distribution to witnesses as soon as it is available. Proceedings are being broadcast to specified government offices and the media may be recording proceedings and taking visual footage.

I remind members and witnesses that we have limited time so please refrain from entering into argument or debate. Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. Thanks for the opportunity to appear today to discuss the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support in this year's budget. There are a number of initiatives in this year's budget supporting the government's commitment to the implementation of the Vardon report and a complete overhaul of our response to child protection matters in our community. It has been just over 12 months since the release of the Vardon report and enormous changes have occurred within the agency in those 12 months. In this year's budget I'm happy to discuss all the initiatives that support the implementation of the Vardon report, and key government commitments to making sure that our children and young people are safe and supported in our community. This also relates to capital works and, of course, the big one there is the re-build of Quamby Youth

Detention facility. I'm happy to discuss that project and how that's rolling out at the moment. There's money for the Commissioner for Children and Young People and we can talk about the legislation involved in that and where that is going.

**MS PORTER:** Minister you just mentioned it has been 12 months since the Vardon report and that you would be very happy to let us know about the implementation of the recommendations. Could you fill us in on what is happening?

**Ms Gallagher:** We have tabled updates in the Assembly in relation to the implementation and how we have responded to that, and have also kept members informed through the Gallop inquiry and the Gallop reform process. There were a number of recommendations—around 140, from memory, if you look at them and the Murray report—and we are progressing all of those recommendations.

**Ms Lambert:** As the minister said, we are progressing the recommendations of both Vardon and Murray. I chair a cross-government team that has senior representatives on it to enable us to monitor the progress of the recommendations, because looking after children is a cross-departmental responsibility, notwithstanding the fact that we have significant responsibilities in this department. One of the things we are seeking to do as we move forward is establish an interagency collaborative framework that is modelled on some best practice in other jurisdictions that delineates responsibilities and is quite clear about roles and responsibilities across departments. I'll ask Ms Denley to provide you with specific detail around the recommendations.

**Ms Denley:** Lou Denley, executive director of the office. I think a lot of the recommendations are moving along very well considering the time frame. There has been a significant increase in staffing in the office. Those staff are supported by a new policy manual. That manual has been distributed to the non-government sector. We have just been out to tender for a broader range of out-of-home care services for children. In addition to that, as people will know, we are consolidating accommodation. We are moving into a smaller number of work sites. This will give us a greater opportunity to be more consistent in our practice. We have advertised for and will be appointing an indigenous director. That director will ensure that our practice for dealing with indigenous young people, who, as Vardon pointed out, are grossly overrepresented in our system, is more culturally appropriate.

This week the minister will be launching the indigenous foster care program. I think the recommendations are progressing in very practical ways that people will see the difference on the ground. In addition to that, as the CE outlined, we are working in a more collaborative way across the sector. We have memorandums of understanding in place with health. They are being reviewed and we have increased the child protection training in that area, with 1,500 staff going through training in the health area. That has been done collaboratively and we are looking at moving that across government. So I think, in very practical ways, changes are happening on the ground as a result of Vardon and the government's commitment to Vardon.

**Ms Lambert:** I'll just add one other thing too. We have established the Institute for Child Protection Studies at the Australian Catholic University. That will enable us to do research that focuses on our local area and also tap into the national research that is happening. The national child protection institute is undertaking an audit and we will be

tapping into that so that we are keeping track of best practice in other jurisdictions, and then looking at that in relation to the ACT.

**MS PORTER:** Okay. With regard to the statutory child protection intervention that is going on, and particularly with the increased staffing numbers that you were talking about, how are you going with recruiting those large numbers of people?

**Ms Denley:** I think every jurisdiction, particularly over the last few years, has been competing for social work staff. There have been significant increases in staffing across the board, and I think we have been successful, but part of that success has been through our overseas recruitment that the Director, Care and Protection can outline more to you.

**Mr Duggan:** I think we have been extremely successful in the recruitment of staff, both national and internationally, to take up roles in care and protection. We are in a very competitive environment to try to recruit people. For example, Victoria has over a thousand care and protection direct line staff and supervisors. Queensland has recently come out looking for 500 staff and we have come out looking for a range of staff. We have been given an appropriation of 90 new staff and we are well on target to having those final numbers in by the end of July. The overseas recruitment campaign was a fantastic success, with 10 of those staff having already taken up positions in our organisation and another 25 en route to take up positions. We will have our full complement of 133 operational child protection staff by the end of July this year, and our retention rate has improved as well amongst our own people here in the jurisdiction.

**DR FOSKEY:** I want to follow up about the costs for accommodation and for consolidating the Office of Children and Young People. On page 306 of the budget, that consolidation is given the figure of \$4.23 million over five years and on page 308 there's a capital works allocation of \$6.75 million for the fit out of 11 Moore Street over two years. This looks like a total of nearly 11 million in addition to any previous budget for accommodation that might have been spent on new office arrangements. Minister, while I know that you have argued previously that consolidating the office accommodation is a legitimate response to the Vardon report, I believe that the Vardon report recommended only that family services consolidate into one or two locations and did not actually say where that locality should be. Since I think much of the cost is associated with the Civic site, I am wondering if you could have considered consolidating more efficiently in one of the other town centres?

**Ms Gallagher:** Thank you Dr Foskey. I will let Ian or Lou answer the detail of your question but my advice is that alternative sites were looked at. We are looking at a particular amount of accommodation for an expanding work force that the government had not provided accommodation for. Previously, staff were operating, and they still are, out of a number of sites, and there were fewer staff. As Mr Duggan said, we have increased the number of staff in this office so that by the end of July we will have an additional 90 front-line child protection workers. We did not have accommodation for them and we had to look at sites that could house that many people, including the old family services staff, as was recommended in the Vardon report.

**Mr Hubbard:** On page 306 in budget paper 4, there are a couple of lines talking about accommodation consolidation. With the first line in the second appropriation you have got accommodation consolidation and you need to add that line to the 2005-06 budget

policy adjustments. There is also a line called accommodation consolidation. What you need to do is add those two lines together. In the outcome for the first year, 2004-05, those two lines represent the difference between what the office currently pays for rent for the various sites. In that first year, 2004-05, because the office is going through a moving process, you will find there's a doubling up of accommodation as the staff churn through various spaces, and that is bringing it down from 12 different locations into one or two.

In that first year you have the 1.4 as the total. In the following year you have the addition of 356 plus 513 and again I emphasise that is the difference in rent that we are currently paying. That is a lower number than the next year which is 754 plus 510. That 754 plus 510 represents a full year's rental difference once we have moved to the one or two sites. In the 2005-06 budget year the owners of the accommodation we are moving into have given us, as they typically do, a rent free period. That is why that number is lower in the first year. When you add the 356 to the 513 that comes to 869. In the following year when you add those two numbers together you get about 1,264. Then in the following years we have basically indexed that rental stream. That is why the changes are in the GPO and that is the full story on our accommodation moves and rent.

Page 308 is basically your capital works side of the story. What you are looking at there are the works in progress, the 11 Moore Street fit out. That shows the total cost of the fit out at 7.50 and that is a combination. As you can see there will be some expenditure pre-2005-06, with the bulk of the money being spent during the 2005-06 year. Work is well under way with the fit out at 11 Moore, and the time really relates to when we received the invoices. I think the fit out is over four or five floors and that includes all the desks, the painting, the carpets, the security systems et cetera.

**Ms Lambert:** In response to your question about why that particular location, my advice is that at the time a scan was done of Canberra to see where there were appropriate locations. The preferred locations, that is, somewhere central, were specified by the people in the office as either Woden or the city, and this appeared to be the best available space at the time that the decision was taken. I will just talk a little about the practice issues involved in that. Ms Denley mentioned at the beginning, in responding to the question about the Vardon reforms, that we are creating a unit for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The effect of having those with the rest of our workers in one site, as an example, is absolutely undeniable. We have got to make sure that our practice people, because they are interacting, are not spread across 10 different sites, as they are at the moment, and that they have the capacity to work in the best interests of the children and the young people that they are serving. So the issues for us of being at one site are paramount and we need to move to do that as quickly as we possibly can.

**MR MULCAHY:** What are the terms of the lease? What lease duration do you have, Mr Hubbard?

**Mr Hubbard:** I am not sure of the details of the actual lease. We can get you those.

**MR MULCAHY:** Nobody knows how long you have signed up for?

**Ms Denley:** My understanding is that it commenced on 1 November last year. We have an escalation rate of 3.5 for the first six years and if a five-year option is taken up, it is

adjusted to a market rate with a 3.5 escalation rate.

**MR MULCAHY:** So 2010 is the expiration?

**Ms Denley:** Yes.

**MR MULCAHY:** With an option?

**Ms Denley:** Yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** Was there any cost-benefit analysis of locating the office in Civic compared to anywhere else or did you just feel those other reasons that you presented were sufficient to override that?

**Ms Lambert:** I'll ask Mr Hubbard to answer the detail but reasons such as that are part of a cost-benefit analysis. When you are looking at human services, you need to look at the practical impact of having services together rather than separate, and it has a cost if they are separate as well. So those things are part of the cost-benefit analysis, but Ian can answer the more technical question.

**Mr Hubbard:** When we seek accommodation, primarily from the service delivery side of things, we do a cost benefit between different locations to see what adds up. It includes the rent, all the outgoings, what the total cost of the fit out would be, if the service model will fit into the building. Quite often when you look at different buildings you have a service model and trying to match the service model with the accommodation shape you have is usually quite difficult. So there are costs involved in adjusting the building to the service delivery model you have got, and you would appreciate that. So we compare all those different costs. We have got parking involved as well, because we have a substantial fleet of cars delivering services. We basically do matrixes of all of those costs and we have our different locations. It is quite a complex analysis of how you come up with an actual site. And then, as you would appreciate, there is only a certain availability of stock and you have to go with what is available at the time.

**Ms Denley:** The other thing to keep in mind about that site is its location and proximity to the Office of the Public Advocate, health, the courts, the department for disability and the Ombudsman. In terms of the services with which many of our clients are interacting, it is very well located. I need to add that the fit out costs per square metre were below what ACT Property normally allow.

**Ms Lambert:** Another factor for any cost-benefit analysis is that we have worked very closely with staff on what they want to enable them to perform in a best practice sense. The staff in the office are professionals and we need to talk with them too, and we have gone through an extensive process of consulting the staff. We started quite a large program at the end of last year just as the office became part of my responsibility. Staff have had considerable input into the way they are to be organised and they do wish to be, as much as possible, in the one site. That will include the client intake service currently located in Belconnen.

**MRS BURKE:** I just want some clarification. Minister, can you confirm or deny that the \$6.75 million funding was drawn from the \$20 million funding that you allocated in

2004-05 to Quamby?

**Ms Gallagher:** I can confirm it; it's been in a media release. It has been made public. There is no secret about that. The \$20 million was appropriated for the redevelopment of Quamby. It was agreed that the \$6.7 million would go to the fit out for the office and the rest would be returned to Treasury.

**MRS BURKE:** So it went back to consolidated revenue?

**Ms Gallagher:** There is no secret about that, though.

**MRS BURKE:** I must have been under a misunderstanding. I believed that the \$20 million was specifically for Quamby and not for—

**Ms Gallagher:** Well, it was when it was appropriated. But when the decision was taken not to redevelop that money needed to be returned. At the same time, we needed money for the fit out and so agreement was reached that \$6.7 million of that could be used for the fit out and the rest should be returned. We have gone and appropriated another \$40 million for the Quamby rebuild—a separate pocket of money.

**MRS BURKE:** But wasn't that a pre-election promise that you were committing \$20 million to Quamby and Quamby alone?

**Ms Gallagher:** It was not a pre-election promise; it was the money appropriated for the rebuild of Quamby in a previous budget. When that money was not needed, because we are not rebuilding Quamby, it was returned.

**MRS BURKE:** So there is a freeze on the money regarding the Quamby upgrade?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, it was in the budget—40 million bucks.

**DR FOSKEY:** Could that cost-benefit analysis or a business plan be made available? Secondly, could you tell me how this amount of money will improve child protection services?

**Ms Gallagher:** I have always taken the view of trying to be as helpful as we can with information for the interests of the committee so I'll take some advice on any of the information that we can give to you. I imagine some of it is commercial-in-confidence in relation to negotiations between the government and private property owners who might not want that made available so we will take some advice on that. When the child protection crisis emerged, I went out to a number of the sites where our child protection workers were housed. One in particular was at Homeworld—I go on about it all the time so officials will not be surprised. In that situation, we had a number of staff pocketed away upstairs in a two-storey building where parents who had just had their child removed or were going through interventions with the care and protection system were sitting in one area where staff had to walk in and out of. There was no security. Staff had to walk past insecure, frightening environments to get to their cars just to go to lunch. You would not want anyone working in this area, I can tell you that. Staff were demoralised and they had no idea what was happening on the other side of town.

**DR FOSKEY:** Sorry, where is Homeworld?

**Ms Gallagher:** In Tuggeranong.

**DR FOSKEY:** Okay.

**Ms Gallagher:** There was no connection within the agency of what was happening on the other side of town. If a child protection report was called in through the government phone line, there was no consistency in the way that call was dealt with, because it depended on who answered the phone and whether you got answered in Belconnen or Tuggeranong.

In a way, a lot of what happened was because of how the office itself was made up and how it was fractured. There was low staff morale from being pocketed away in various places across Canberra, never to be seen or heard of and left to deal with a situation at work that I do not think they were equipped to deal with. The training was not there and the corporate support was not there. We had two youth justice workers working in a basement area in Melrose high school, without a phone in an old classroom. This is the way the old office was dealt with. I have no doubt at all of the improvements that will be made with the collocation and the consolidation of the office into one or two locations.

We have already seen the impact it has had with the centralised intake service in Belconnen. Instead of it being the luck of the draw where your call ended up or if you were in Tuggeranong and you had a concern about ringing this number, we have now seen that the response from those specifically trained to deal with calls has improved out of sight. In many ways, the way the office was fractured, the lack of support, the different locations, the lack of security for staff and the lack of professional development or any support from the hierarchy led directly to the failures in child protection. Of course I include in that the lack of IT support, the lack of understanding about how to input data into the computer and the lack of understanding about the law. I mean I have no doubt that the main drivers of that failure were the way the office was structured.

**Ms Lambert:** If I can add to what the minister said, as the responsible chief executive, I have absolutely no doubt that having staff in one location, in a human service sense, is the best possible way that we can improve practice amongst the staff and the service that we provide in a quality sense to children and young people. When they are all in one site, and they will be over the road from the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, as Ms Denley pointed out, there will be a direct connection between the interfaces, which is really important. They will be in the same building as the health department so that enables a sharing of information as well. When you have people together like that you force and you generate ways for them to interact in terms of a best practice and integrated model. It is absolutely essential that we do that.

**Mr Hubbard:** With the overall business planning process, there is an area within ACT government called ACT Property and when we are negotiating changes of accommodation it's basically negotiated against a whole-of-government property portfolio. If we are moving out of certain properties we have some undertaking through the lease on that property itself and we have to negotiate with ACT Property about carrying the lease forward or ensuring that they can find a tenant to backfill locations that we have moved out of. So the cost benefit is done right across the portfolio. It is



a moving feast, as you would appreciate, with different departments moving out at different times. It is actually quite a fluid process. When we make decisions about what we want to do as far as accommodation goes, it has to fit in with what is happening in the whole of the government. So it is an ongoing process rather than a point in time business plan if you like.

**DR FOSKEY:** So you have a five-year lease?

**Mr Hubbard:** It varies. But at Moore Street, I think we are going for six with an option for a further five.

**MR MULCAHY:** On BP 4, page 272, the paragraph contains the phrase that universal targeted parenting information support services will be provided at the child and family centres. Can you tell us what these are?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** This is for the Gungahlin child and family centre that opened in January this year. That reflects the cost across the program. The services range, as it says, from universal to targeted. The universal services range from community development activities and specific activities with children, such as paint and play and over the trolley sessions to develop the relationship of the centre within Gungahlin itself, and to attract children and their families to the centre.

The targeted programs range from a number of specialist programs, such as the maternal and child health nurses at the centre, to speech therapists. There is also specialised clinical support for more complex cases of families who need support in parenting, development or case management for a whole range of issues. So the centre is really about developing a place in the Gungahlin community where children specifically from nought to three, but up to 12, are able to come into the centre with their families and receive a whole range of supports that the government offers.

It is really the start of a very integrated approach to child development across the whole of the ACT government, where we are bringing together a range of services from a number of different departments to provide, if you like, a one-stop shop service for children and their families. We have maternal and child health nurses from the department of health, a speech therapist from our department—disability, housing and community services—and specialist child support workers, as well as caseworkers.

The range of activities, from universal through to targeted, reflects that we want to make it an attractive place for people to feel that they can come and receive a range of information and support, varying from general information right through to very specific case management work for more complex cases. The theory around that continuance of support is that people who may need a greater range or depth of support are more likely to walk into a service that offers a whole range of universal services. As you start to work on the relationships with people and you find out that there may be more of a complex problem, they are more likely to walk through the door in the first place because the centre presents as a place that offers a range of fun, developmental activities.

**MR MULCAHY:** When my own children were young we had child health centres in Melbourne. The way it would work, in a practical sense, is that the parent would bring the child in and there may be issues identified by one of the nursing staff. Do you have

specialists on location?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** Yes.

**MR MULCAHY:** Or do you bring them in?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** They are there; yes.

**MR MULCAHY:** You have people in situ there to deal with hearing issues, speech issues or whatever?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** That's right. Health is one of the areas. One of the more specific areas the centre is moving into is behavioural issues. There is a lot of demand for behaviour management programs and general parenting skills in Gungahlin. As you said, there are a lot of health centres around. Traditionally, they offer immunisation and are able to refer people on for speech therapy and so forth. By locating a range of professionals there we are able to give that one on one support for parenting in particular and also a whole range of skills. It's often not just the child; it's the child and its relationship with the parents.

**MR MULCAHY:** Did you say this particular model would be the first in Canberra?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** Yes, it is. We are establishing a second centre in Tuggeranong. Part of the funding for that came from this year's budget. The centre in Gungahlin has been up since January.

**Ms Lambert:** We have also built relationships with non-government organisations such as Relationships Australia. Sometimes parents require additional assistance, and they are there for that. We will seek to have housing officers there as well. Quite often people present with a range of issues. As Ms Overton-Clarke said, we want it to be as much of a one-stop shop as we possibly can for the people there.

**MR SESELJA:** Is the child and family centre at Gungahlin in a permanent location yet, or is it just temporarily operating out of an office? Is there going to be another one built? Are you able to confirm that for us?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** Yes. At the moment it's operating out of a shopfront on the ground floor in the marketplace. There is some office accommodation on the first floor as well. We are building a permanent site for it. It will be located right next to the Gungahlin regional service and across the road from where the temporary site is now. We expect that to open by March next year.

**MS PORTER:** On page 307 of budget paper 4 there is a capital injection of \$900,000 a year over the next four years. What, specifically, is this capital upgrade program for?

**Ms Lambert:** Those dollars are for the capital upgrade programs for our community facilities. When I was here for the rest of the department a couple of weeks ago we talked about the need to look at all our community facilities in a strategic sense, to look at their OH&S requirements, et cetera. This is part of that program of community facilities. It's a good amount of money. It's a significant amount of money compared to

what we have received previously. It is an amount of money we will approach very carefully in making sure that the facilities we have under this part of the portfolio are at an appropriate standard.

**Ms Gallagher:** It covers things like childcare centres, for example.

**MS PORTER:** It is not for the new centre at Gungahlin?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, that was in the previous budget.

**MS PORTER:** That is a different set of money?

**Ms Lambert:** No. That's capital works.

**DR FOSKEY:** I was going to ask about capital works rolled-over funding. On page 212 of budget paper 3, the capital works budget for the office was \$11.43 million for 2004-05, but only \$5,980,000 was spent, with the remainder rolled over. What was the work that wasn't completed and has now been rolled over?

**Mr Hubbard:** In the main, the difference between the \$11,430,000 and the \$5,980,000 is the handing back of the Quamby dollars.

**DR FOSKEY:** Okay.

**Mr Hubbard:** That is the difference there. The majority of that is the Quamby money. There is a bit of money rolled forward for the youth centre. I can give you some exact numbers on it, if you like.

**DR FOSKEY:** That would be handy.

**Mr Hubbard:** That is a combination of \$1.175 million for the youth in the city program, which is the one on the other side of section 84. You have some rolled-forward money for the fit out of 11 Moore Street; you have Quamby upgrade money of about \$2.3 million; and you have some minor new works money that was rolled forward. Most of those are around the timing of when payments need to be made.

**MR MULCAHY:** What does the outlay of \$1.1 million for the Weston Creek childcare centre involve? That is in BP4, 307.

**Mr Hubbard:** I will give you the flows of the money with the details of what is happening at Weston Creek childcare centre. We might need to go to the person who is actually doing the project. For that project we got some money through the second appropriation, which was to cover off the difference in the insurance payout we got for Weston Creek; and we also got some additional space.

I think the Weston Creek childcare centre originally had 60 childcare places. There was some work done in the area and it was thought that a better sized building—while you are building a new building—is one for 90 childcare places. The difference in cost between the original project and the finally designed project amounted to \$1.1 million. We requested those funds and were lucky enough to receive them.

**MR MULCAHY:** Is the completion date this year?

**Mr Hubbard:** Yes.

**MR MULCAHY:** Do we know when?

**Ms Lambert:** The end of the financial year.

**Ms Gallagher:** It is the end of this financial year, or next financial year—June. It's slightly delayed. I think in the Assembly I have said December. It was planned for completion in December this year, but some of the negotiations around the insurance and the final design work for a bigger centre have delayed the rebuild somewhat. We're really pushing ahead to get that centre up and running. It does present us with an issue, in the sense that we now have a very successful and thriving centre operating out of Rivett primary school. We will have to look at that issue.

**MR MULCAHY:** Will that close down then, or not?

**Ms Gallagher:** The idea is that, because all the children in that centre are from the Weston Creek centre, we will keep an eye on demand for childcare in Weston Creek. It seems to be a very fluctuating beast. It has brought new life to that school too.

**MR MULCAHY:** So there is a possibility that you might keep both?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. The people running the one at Rivett also run the Weston Creek one, so we'd have to have discussions with them and see whether there was demand for two centres that close together. We have invested a fair bit of money in making Rivett a nice place for children. It was a part of the school that was not used. It has been made very nice, and there has been some investment made in that area. It would be good to see what we can use it for—maybe not a childcare centre. Perhaps it could be used for playgroups or something.

**DR FOSKEY:** I notice that the office has committed to make savings of \$0.763 million in the next financial year and a further \$1.197 million in each of the following three financial years. That is budget paper 3 on page 206. Can you please give me a breakdown of where these savings will be made, which program areas will be making savings and how you hope to achieve these savings?

**Ms Lambert:** The answer to this question is the same as I gave for the rest of the department on Friday a week ago, which is that neither direct service delivery nor the services that support it will be affected. The training services, for instance, which are essential to maintain the work of front-line staff and also the work across government in terms of mandatory reporting, will not be touched either.

As I said last time, we will be looking at management of what I call the back-end or back-of-house functions of the office for the rest of the department as we move forward. There won't be any changes to programs, to direct service delivery or to our grants to non-government organisations. All of that remains constant. It will be in the way we look at back-of-house functions across the department.

**MS PORTER:** In budget paper 4 at page 207, in the highlights—officers did mention some of this before, when we were talking about the Gungahlin Centre—it talks about additional resources being devoted to assist families with children with intensive support needs; and, in particular, those children with challenging behaviours. I was wondering—obviously this is not just in the Gungahlin area but would be in other areas as well—if there are some specific projects in relation to that.

**Ms Lambert:** I think that is essentially a disability initiative but, clearly, there will be connections between the two areas of the department. We will work together on that. That's one of the great advantages of being together. The interface between disability and the former family services area is an area where there have been issues in the past. We are working very hard. Ms Denley is working with Ms Ford to make sure we use those dollars appropriately across the various areas of my responsibility.

**MS PORTER:** That would also go for the individual intensive support packages?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, that is a separate issue.

**Ms Denley:** As the budget indicated, we have additional funding this year. An extra \$3 million was allocated for individual support packages. These are packages that have been put together by workers for young people who have very difficult behaviour and have been unable to be supported in foster care.

Those young people have tended to be placed in services outside the ACT. These have been very expensive packages and, because there has not been a large recurrent budget base for those young people, the packages have often been done on a three-month by three-month contract. This came about when we looked at these because, as Vardon said, we needed a greater suite of accommodation services within the ACT. They are the services that we have now tendered for. It really is a continuum of services going from an emergency service to what we are calling stabilisation services, where young people with intense behaviour difficulties can spend up to six months while they stabilise their behaviour and then, hopefully, we can move them into specialist foster care or into a general accommodation unit.

Some of those accommodation services are also being tailored for the specific needs of the young people involved. We will be offering an accommodation facility for young teenage mothers whose capacity to parent we are very concerned about. Those young people are already under care and protection, but we also want to have a chance to look very closely at how their parenting skills are going and provide a level of support to them. Another of the units will be for young sex offenders.

The services have the capacity to be tailored in the same way as ISPs but, because we are funding a service system, it is much more stable; we are getting much more value for our money and we are building the suite of services that Vardon was very clear we need within the ACT. This also provides us with an opportunity to bring back some of those young people who may have been located outside the ACT in these particular services.

**DR FOSKEY:** How did you determine that the \$3.1 million was the right amount?

**Ms Denley:** That was the amount that added to the previous funding base that we had for these services that went out to 40 young people. When they were first established I think 12 young people were using the services and that allowed us to look at the service arrangements and also to look at how much more—if we were funding a roster and a service house—we could get in terms of value for money. We looked at how many young people were falling out of the foster care system, the ages of our young people in care. Most of them are on long-term orders and that means we need to plan for how many young people are ordinarily coming into care, how many young people are exiting care and the usual age at which they are falling into this specialised service. So we are really trying to look at the demographics of the problem and trying to get it very clear as to the nature of the different services we will need over the next two-year period. I hope that we have got it pretty right, because we have increased the capacity, but it is difficult to predict. It really is.

**DR FOSKEY:** How can you ensure that these services are well coordinated with other government and non-government services?

**Ms Denley:** We have tendered these services. We have looked at what was here previously and what the nature of the service is and we have had an in-depth look at the needs of those young people who cannot be accommodated at the moment. We have used an external psychologist to get a very clear picture of the needs of those young people and what it means in terms of an accommodation service. In going to tender for these services we are getting a very clear idea about the capacity of the non-government sector to provide these services to the standard that we are expecting.

**Ms Lambert:** In terms of ensuring that we work within the service continuum of both government and non-government, we are working closely with other government agencies in a collaborative way, and I drive that process. We have also made sure that we have a process for implementing the Vardon and Murray reports, which is a partnership with the community. We have working groups that are co-chaired by community members and government members and of course we meet regularly with the peak non-government organisation to drive all of this. That sort of insurance comes with a lot of work at the ground level and at executive level and driving those changes and being very clear about what our responsibilities are and what our roles are across government.

**Ms Denley:** I think it is also fair to say that the non-government sector has been very supportive of this. I do not think many people liked the way the service arrangements were being developed on a child by child basis with children needing to be placed out of the ACT. I think we have got a very good response from the non-government sector and also the other government services. I think we have a very good working relationship on a case management level with the adolescent mental health services that are working with the non-government sector and us and helping us to deal with some of the more difficult behaviours of the young people in our care.

**THE CHAIR:** Pages 307 and 308 of budget paper 4 suggest that the office has received \$900,000 for its capital upgrade program. How is this funding going to be utilised?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think that is the one that Mary just asked.

**THE CHAIR:** I'm sorry.

**Ms Gallagher:** Again, it's primarily for upgrades for youth centres and childcare centres.

**DR FOSKEY:** I have got another more general clarification question. When the Minister for Disability, Housing and Community Services was here last week, I asked which area of the department was responsible for the child and family centres and he said it was the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support.

**Ms Lambert:** He said it was Minister Gallagher, I think.

**DR FOSKEY:** Right. So is the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support actually administering the child and family centres?

**Ms Lambert:** No.

**Ms Gallagher:** It is within the department but it is under my responsibility.

**DR FOSKEY:** Why isn't this program under the auspices of the Office for Children and Youth and Family Support?

**Ms Lambert:** Those are administrative decisions. The child and family centres were transferred from Chief Minister's Department. They are a cross-government model and we are still looking at the best fit for those within the department. But at the moment we are keeping them separate while we actually establish the model, generate it and drive it and then we will work across government to determine the best fit for those centres.

**MRS BURKE:** The minister for housing alluded to the fact that \$10 million wasn't allocated to the housing portfolio giving such reasons as the implementation of the Vardon and Murray reports. Can the minister advise at this stage what proportion of that \$10 million would have been allocated to such matters as the implementation of the recommendations of the Vardon report?

**Ms Gallagher:** That's just a ridiculous question, Mrs Burke. I try to be helpful at these committee hearings but each appropriation, each case that gets through budget is negotiated one by one through cabinet. I think perhaps what Mr Hargreaves was alluding to, and I can't speak for him and I haven't even seen the transcript, was the pressures on the budget. This area has placed enormous pressure on the budget. We have put, and I'll get the exact figure for you, millions and millions and millions of dollars from about four different appropriations into this area. We have increased the budget in this area from a base level of around \$40 million to over \$70 million a year.

**MRS BURKE:** I appreciate that; it's just that the minister went to lengths to say that that was his reason for not allocating money to the housing portfolio.

**Ms Gallagher:** I think it's probably a good reason in the sense that this has taken \$139 million off discretionary spending—if we can call it that—within government, and then there are the priorities we've placed on implementing the Vardon report.

**MRS BURKE:** So there's no specific amount of that \$10 million that didn't go to

housing?

**Ms Gallagher:** You haven't been in cabinet, Mrs Burke.

**MRS BURKE:** This is true—not yet.

**Ms Gallagher:** So you don't understand the way a budget is put together. But each initiative goes through a rigorous process for a certain amount of money available. If we didn't need \$139 million for child protection, there would have been a whole range of money for other initiatives—

**MRS BURKE:** I don't doubt that, minister.

**THE CHAIR:** Order.

**Ms Gallagher:** Housing may have been one of those lucky ones but I can't sit here and give you a figure like that.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Burke, could you allow the minister to answer the questions and not interrupt please.

**MRS BURKE:** I am.

**THE CHAIR:** No, you keep interrupting.

**Ms Gallagher:** I think I've answered the question to the fullest extent that I can.

**MRS BURKE:** Thank you, minister.

**Ms Gallagher:** No worries.

**DR FOSKEY:** I have one more question in the overview section. It is just a bit of an expansion about the ATSI unit. According to page 313 of budget paper 4 around \$700,000 per annum has been allocated to establishing this Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Unit to service child protection and new service clients. I expect this unit will cut across all the outputs, 1.1 and 1.2. Could you expand on how it will work and how it would be integrated with the child protection and youth justice sections? What do you see as the core elements of the new unit?

**Ms Denley:** I think the indigenous community has had a difficult history in dealing with welfare services. I think that's the first thing that needs to be said. The importance and success of the ATSI unit is that it walks alongside the child protection system but it isn't involved—well, it doesn't undertake the statutory role. For instance, if there is a notification involving an indigenous family, basically their worker will work with the caseworker to go and talk with the family. They will develop the relationship with the family and they will explain what the child protection system is about. They will help the caseworker in working with that family. There is also a family support worker in that unit.

If it is an issue of neglect, that family support worker, knowing the family and having



developed a relationship with the family, will provide an intensity of service that is necessary. They will be working with the statutory caseworker, but they are not a statutory caseworker, and I think that distinction is really important. They support both the family and the child protection system. When it comes to a matter going to court, they will explain the process to the family, why it's necessary. They will help us in our planning about the future and they have been instrumental in that. That is where the development of the indigenous foster care system sits as part of that unit as well. When it comes to placement, we will have successfully recruited and trained and proved an indigenous foster care person. It is very much hand-in-glove with the child protection system but it is that one step removed, which allows it to be effective.

**DR FOSKEY:** How many people do imagine will be in this unit?

**Ms Denley:** I think it's going to be 10 and we will be interviewing for an indigenous executive person shortly. We've had a very good field, I'm happy to report. That person will have line management responsibility for the unit but they will also provide the policy support for both the office and the department on indigenous matters. I think the success of the ATSI unit is also dependent on developing the relationships with the other areas of the office and the department and doing that planning.

**Ms Gallagher:** Part of the importance of that slight separation is that we've had problems in attracting indigenous workers to this area of government because, as you can imagine, it's very difficult to be involved in removing a child from a family and it has caused enormous problems. We have to turn the whole response around in a way. Our indigenous children are still much too overrepresented in the figures that we've got so success will be dependent on some real bedding down of this unit and some staff stability in the area as well.

**Ms Denley:** It has also been a challenging staff development exercise for our caseworkers to work alongside the ATSI unit in terms of learning the important issues. That's been of immense benefit, as has looking at the procedures that are necessary in that area.

**DR FOSKEY:** How long have they been working side by side?

**Ms Denley:** We've had people on contracts in that area for 12 months. They have been helping us with our procedures but they're now at this moment looking at the whole issue of appropriate cultural planning for the office.

**MRS BURKE:** Just a point of clarification, in the past there have been issues under sections 14 and 15 of the Children and Young People Act 1999 in regard to the placement of indigenous children and Aboriginal elders and/or family members not being consulted. Could the minister advise that those things—and I really welcome the news you've given us today, that's fantastic—are fully in hand and that this is not likely to happen again and how you've addressed that?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. My understanding is that the office and its predecessor always sought to be sensitive about placements, seeking placements in the best interests of the child, either with family or with indigenous people. There have not always been suitable placements for those children. And I would say there would be situations in the future

when that will be the case as well where, due to the situation or the needs of the child, a placement outside of kin is required. Of course, we would like to have options as much as we can.

**Ms Denley:** The unit has also become a place for workers to discuss the issue of placement, and having the Aboriginal foster care agency means there's a specific focus on that issue in the ACT and it is very much a specialist service arm in the ACT. That has been established by the office in response to that need and it has an indigenous advisory committee.

**MRS BURKE:** It's very important because that was the missing link before it was acknowledged. I can see heads nodding.

**Ms Denley:** Yes.

**MRS BURKE:** So I'm just ensuring that this is not still the case?

**Ms Denley:** No. I think we're doing more work around it by having the discussion about all the elements of cultural planning.

**MRS BURKE:** Okay. Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIR:** In relation to Quamby and its proposed upgrade, there was some discussion about it but we didn't go into it in great detail. Under Quamby replacement in the budget policy adjustments, where is the office with its planning for the future detention centre and the status of the improvements on the current site?

**Mr Wyles:** On Monday next week, we will pull together a user group who will meet with the consultants doing a review of sites. That user group is made up of people from health, education, the current management of Quamby and a range of other services that currently go into Quamby. They will be meeting with the consultants to discuss the specifications for the new Quamby to give the consultants some idea about the size of the new facility and what services will be required in that new facility.

**Ms Lambert:** And they will report to the minister by the end of June.

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

**Meeting adjourned from 10.48 to 11.05 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back. We will move on to the output classes. The first one listed is output class 2.2, pages 272 and 278 of budget paper 4, which relates to early intervention and the child and family centre program. After that, we will move to the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support.

**MR SESELJA:** I have a question on 2.2 as it relates to the child and family centre program under the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. I alluded to it before in seeking some clarification on the Gungahlin centre. One of the concerns raised with me in my visits to the youth centre there has been about the parking spaces that will be available when the new centre is built, especially accessible parking

spaces. A lot of the young mothers who come to the youth centre now probably will use both centres and it will be difficult for them if they have to walk from the other side of the shopping centre with a pram and a young child. What will be put in place to ensure that those accessing these centres will have adequate car parking facilities?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** I might answer with a general comment first and then let Ms Brown and Mr Collett answer as to the detail. One of the really exciting things about the Gungahlin centre is the involvement that children have had in the design of the centre itself. The minister will be handing out certificates in the next couple of days to children who participated in it. With the help of the local schools, we have engaged a number of children to work with the architects on the design of the centre. That has meant that they have become a lot more aware of issues such as the navigation of prams and wheelchairs through the centre. The feedback from the teachers has been that they have gone back to the schools and to their families and are now assisting mum with the pram and so forth. So, in a general sense, the whole accessibility of the centre itself is something that we're very much aware of. As to how people will access it, specifically in relation to parking, I will get Mr Collett to answer that question.

**Mr Collett:** We have been having discussions with both the community centre and the youth centre at Gungahlin and will be responding to the need to make it work as an integrated whole in a number of ways. Firstly, the car parking area that is being provided for the child and family centre includes provision for a minibus, which will continue to serve the community centre and the youth centre. We are providing that as additional car parking to support them.

Secondly, car parking that is not used for the centre will be able to be used both in operational hours and outside of hours to support the community centre and the youth centre. In order to make that happen, we have provided a pedestrian walkway across that site to link it conveniently to the area. We have also in discussions with the ACT Planning Authority and the Land Development Agency agreed to provide a set-down area at the front of our building, which would serve the child and family services centre and also the community centre and the youth centre.

Lastly, we are working with the two authorities in order to ensure that the plaza between the two buildings is convenient and well designed for mothers. It will exclude cars and therefore will be available for car parking and for seating and will in that sense service all three centres. So they have very much been designed as a group of three around access.

**MR SESELJA:** But the number of car spaces in the car park immediate to the centre will go down, I assume, when the child and family centre is built. I think it will be going down to around 30, but I could be wrong.

**Mr Collett:** The site on which the child and family centre is to be located has been used until now as overflow car parking. The child and family centre will not occupy the whole block and we are again in discussions with the Land Development Agency about the use of the rear portion of the site for temporary car parking until the long-term parking potential comes up to strength.

**MR SESELJA:** Okay. Are you able to tell us whether there will be more or fewer spaces

for the disabled than there are currently?

**Mr Collett:** That's going to depend on the final layout of the temporary car park.

**THE CHAIR:** If there are no supplementary questions on that one, I will ask one on the parenting sessions mentioned on page 278 of budget paper 4. I think it is a great idea to have parenting sessions, especially in a place like Canberra where a lot of the people do not necessarily have extended families on which to rely, which is something that I have noticed from having a number of friends with young families. I am curious as to whom the parenting sessions will be available to.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** They will be available to all the clients at the centre, so it is to the families that come in and ask for additional skills in parenting. It is one of those universal services that we are offering and, as it says, it will be a group session. What goes with that is the networking with other parents as well. I can give you some details of the recent programs that we have had that lead into next year's targets. In July, there were 10 sessions providing health and parenting education and there were 1,500 participants in that. They were the over the trolley sessions that happened in the Gungahlin Marketplace.

**THE CHAIR:** Sorry, you mentioned the over the trolley sessions before, but I have no idea what you are talking about.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** They are sessions that people from the child and family centre go to where parents are most using services in Gungahlin—literally, over the trolley in the supermarket—and engage with parents in that way. As well as getting people to come to the centre, it is part of the outreach work that the workers do at the centre. Best foot forward—if you want any detailed explanations of these, I will pass you on to Ms Brown, who manages both Gungahlin and the soon to be Tuggeranong centre—had three sessions with 15 families. Future parents, which is the babysitting session that was held at one of the Gungahlin high schools, had five sessions and 12 families. Welcome to Gungahlin had four sessions and eight families. Paint and play, which I also talked about earlier, had 63 families attending. It is a really fantastic initiative that is located in one of the parks in Gungahlin. The new parents group had six sessions with eight families.

**THE CHAIR:** It has occurred to me in talking about this that the QEII centre, which does a lot of stuff around sleep programs, built in a lot of stuff on nutrition for children and parenting generally and dovetails into that area. Hopefully, one of the outcomes will be that, because there is a long waiting list for QEII, this will alleviate some of the pressure. There will still be a demand for sleeping programs and that sort of thing, but in terms of parenting programs generally.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** Yes. I will let Ms Brown give an additional bit of information around that, but one of the exciting things for this year's budget was the early intervention chapter in the budget papers, certainly around the indicator of collecting information on parenting sessions. That will be one of the pieces of information across the whole of ACT government that we will start to collect. As you say, QEII is a really good example. Whilst it's about assisting with sleep for newborns in particular, it's actually about parenting information generally. I will get Ms Brown to talk about the specifics of QEII.

**Ms Brown:** In relation to your specific question, chair, we started this week a series of sessions with a nutritionist from the health area, working with the match nurses, a social worker and some of our family workers, talking about nutrition, sleep and various other aspects of early childhood care for new parents. That's a really exciting development. We're working very hard with the children in this health program on putting together a range of programs that will be more in the primary and secondary end of care, whereas QEII is more at the tertiary end of care. We are hoping that, because of the early intervention and prevention focus that we have, we will get to some of these families when they leave hospital and have those links where we can get them into services straightaway and try to deal with them at a local level before they actually need to access the QEII level of service.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you doing up some brochures on these things? I'd like to have some in my office to give out to people.

**Ms Brown:** We do have brochures about the service, but just very general ones. We are working currently on putting some together about the specific program and I will be happy to send some to your office.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you for that, Ms Brown.

**MR MULCAHY:** I am curious about the 50 parenting sessions. How has that target been derived?

**Ms Brown:** Arbitrarily, I think, because this is the very first year of this program and we only commenced mid-year with service delivery. It is very difficult to project what you can achieve in a year when you don't have a historical dataset to draw from. With the number of staff that we have, the number of hours and the types of programs that we need to commit to in terms of individual client service delivery, parenting sessions and community development through the community education commitments that we have under our program, we felt that that was an achievable target for the coming year. It also relates to the fact that the Tuggeranong program won't come on board with full service delivery until early next year. Even though we will start services at some early, low level in July this year, it will not be in full flight until early 2006. So, given that for the year we will have the full service provision out at Gungahlin but only part service provision from the Tuggeranong site, we felt that that was an achievable goal for this year.

**MR MULCAHY:** How many people do you expect to have accessing those sessions?

**Ms Brown:** It varies. They are targeted at families and it varies, depending on who enters the service and where the referrals are coming from, from other agencies, to access our services. But, primarily, they'll be people who come through our intake and shopfronts who, when they are working with our family workers, are deemed to require some assistance and we would ask them if they would like to attend those sessions.

**MR MULCAHY:** But you do not have a rough idea of the numbers that you expect to put through the program.

**Ms Brown:** We said around 400 families next year would access the formal services

through our intakes.

**MR MULCAHY:** Are there particular criteria for accessing the services?

**Ms Brown:** No, there are not. We're a universal access service. Anybody can walk in through the front door. Anybody can come and have a chat to people. They can ask for information, we can give them brochures and we can give them on-the-spot assistance with minor problems because we have trained child and family workers managing the intake process. They can call by telephone. Once they start to discuss their needs, if needs arise that we can address, we'll certainly go ahead and do that. Anybody can come through the door.

**DR FOSKEY:** I would like some detail about what is covered by the \$1.58 million over four years for Tuggeranong.

**Ms Lambert:** Are you referring to budget paper 3?

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, budget paper 3 at page 185. I am not sure whether you have a permanent physical location there and what you have in mind for that or what your plans are for more centres for other areas.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** As to BP3, page 185, the \$338,000 allocated in 2005-06 is for expansion of functions into the Tuggeranong centre. That is added to the funding that is already there to start off, which primarily to date has been allocated and worked through in the Gungahlin centre. So, establishing the Tuggeranong centre, we are adding the \$338,000 to the funding that has already been made available. We will be looking at a period for establishing the Tuggeranong centre and then bedding it down before we work through whether and if a third centre will be operational.

Clearly the areas of greatest need for families are Gungahlin and Tuggeranong. We have just completed a community development report on the need for services in Tuggeranong and we are working through that to establish what services exactly the Tuggeranong community is looking for. It has a quite different profile for families and we expect that the sorts of services that operate out of Tuggeranong will be quite different from those in Gungahlin. Of course, there are a lot more established services in the Tuggeranong Valley. So we're looking, very clearly, to identify what are the best services to plug the gaps in Tuggeranong. We have had very strong feedback from our community partners that the child and family centres must be established to enhance service delivery for clients, not be just a referral service, and so the clinical support component of the child and family centres dealing with the more complex cases is a very important part of what the child and family centres do.

**Ms Gallagher:** If I can just add to that: there isn't a permanent location for Tuggeranong at the moment. The capital works money was provided in last year's budget. We provided money for both the Tuggeranong and the Gungahlin buildings. Certainly, a lot of work has been done on finalising the site with the LDA. In relation to whether or not there will be another centre, the government has made an election commitment that, based on the success—we imagine it will be a success—of the Tuggeranong and Gungahlin child and family centres, our next location for a centre such as this would be in the west Belconnen area. Again, that's based on the government's belief that there is

a level of need in that area to provide quick and easy access to family support or a government-run family support service.

**DR FOSKEY:** Do young parents in the inner north, for instance, where there might be a concentration of public housing and perhaps a number of single mums, have access to similar sorts of services?

**Ms Gallagher:** Not in relation to the child and family centres, because this is a new model, this is a new way of doing things. As a person who was involved with the original idea of the child and family centres, the idea was that we needed to pull together existing government services in a location that is easy for people to access. The logical places to place those centres were in areas where there were large numbers of families and, particularly in Gungahlin, large numbers of young families. The existing services for young parents in the inner north—I'll take some advice on this from the people here—remain, but are not delivered through a child and family centre as yet. If they're successful, this may be the way that we provide front-line services.

**DR FOSKEY:** Because you know exactly where to go, whereas if the services are dispersed a person may not know where to start.

**Ms Gallagher:** We are already seeing in Gungahlin enormous interest or demand and the relative ease for people to access the service. It's not going to welfare and it's not going to the authorities; it's going where everybody goes, not just people who need extra help. It has been a really important thing to promote these centres as somewhere for everybody.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** I might just state that the Northside Community Service was very helpful to us in setting up the child and family centre in Gungahlin and it recently received \$2 million over three years to implement a FACS project.

**Ms Gallagher:** It is commonwealth money, isn't it?

**THE CHAIR:** What is FACS?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** Family and community services. It is a commonwealth-funded communities for children project in the inner north area. It is specifically for families in the inner north and, of course, it is a commonwealth/state partnership. It is ACT money for a national program and we'll be working closely with them. They're very much, as I said, involved with us in setting up the Gungahlin centre and we want to help them use that money wisely for the inner north facility that they're setting up.

**DR FOSKEY:** Is it going to be a physical facility?

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** It's services. They've only just received the funding and they're working through exactly what the model will be.

**Ms Lambert:** It would be primarily through the Northside Community Service's area, I imagine, but there would be outreach as well as the role of the child and family centres.

**DR FOSKEY:** Even though it is in the inner north, it is actually a bit difficult to get to it

if you don't have a car. I want to ask a question about playgroups. You got a submission from the ACT playgroups about unmet need. They specifically identified Gungahlin, Belconnen, the inner north and Tuggeranong as places where there was an unmet need for playgroups and asked for a modest increase of \$31,500 for operating funds to increase their development support staff. Did the government consider that request? What matters led to whatever decision you made about it?

**Ms Gallagher:** The playgroups association, like a number of community organisations, made a request for additional funding. We have provided additional funding to the playgroups association in recent years to assist them with their capacity. From memory, about a year or so ago they were having some difficulties with meeting their expenses and we gave them some additional funding for that. The idea behind the child and family centres, again, is to provide some extra community space and to promote partnerships between non-government organisations and government to deliver services.

I'm sure that, once the purpose-built building is up and we have some extra space, we will be able to provide that space to organisations such as the playgroups association to help them deliver the playgroups that they deliver across Canberra. The whole idea is to create these partnerships, to work together and to provide these services in an easy location. I'm happy to work with the playgroups—I've met them a number of times—to make sure that they can have the capacity to do that. But we provided additional money to the playgroups association just recently.

**MR GENTLEMEN:** My question probably has been answered in a way. It is about the status of the Tuggeranong child and family centre. I think you mentioned that it would be kicking off in June.

**Ms Overton-Clark:** We will be starting services from July of this year. We are working through exactly where the site for the permanent centre will be and we expect it to be up by the middle of next year.

**MR GENTLEMEN:** As you mentioned, the funding is already there.

**Ms Overton-Clarke:** Yes, that's right.

**MRS BURKE:** I refer to the output description on page 272 of budget paper 4. The minister may have answered my question in part in her last comment but one. It says that services are delivered in partnerships with other agencies, local community organisations and service providers. Given that it is a new model, I want to ask about a couple of things. How does it impact upon or complement the schools as communities model? Does it override it or does it work with it? What sorts of partnerships do you have going, what shape do the partnerships take, and how were the partners engaged? How did that process happen under the new model?

**Ms Gallagher:** It complements schools as communities. I have said a number of times that schools as communities, which was a Liberal government initiative, is, and it doesn't hurt to say it, a good idea.

**MRS BURKE:** Good. You're smiling so it looks all right.



**Ms Gallagher:** It is, and credit where credit is due. It is a very successful and good program and this will merely complement it. The Gungahlin child and family centre has been working extensively with schools in the area, both government and non-government, to raise awareness of the services offered by the child and family centre, to much interest. As to relationships with non-government agencies—I am sure that Ms Brown can expand on this—some of those are already working and operating in the temporary facilities in Gungahlin. Once we have a purpose-built building where there is more capacity—I don't know if you've been out to the child and family centre in Gungahlin, but space is quite limited—those relationships will be able to be further enhanced.

I have to say that the level of cooperation that the child and family centre has managed to achieve with community providers in Gungahlin is to their credit, particularly the regional service there, which they have a very close relationship with. To be frank, when this original concept went out, I can't say it was entirely welcomed by the community sector, which felt that the government might be moving into areas in which traditionally they had provided services. Naturally, there were some questions to be asked about the intention of the government, whether the government was coming in to do what they had traditionally done. That relationship building has been extremely important in making the Gungahlin centre a success, emphasising relationships in working together rather than taking over or dictating the way services will be provided.

**MRS BURKE:** Do you think that you have allayed those?

**Ms Gallagher:** To my knowledge, yes. I think in discussions I've had with Jenny at the Gungahlin Regional Community Service, yes. I think there were some concerns early on. That was natural because we didn't necessarily have all the answers that we needed to address their concerns. But I think there is now an understanding of what is our role; that it is not to take over the provision of community service in the area but rather to enhance and to provide greater access to government services, and some extra facilities for the community sector. Gungahlin is an area where we are building infrastructure. There isn't a great deal of community space there at the moment. There is some space in the regional centre and there is some space in the Gungahlin early childhood centre, the childcare centre on the other side of the town centre, in relation to community facilities, but this will provide some extra facilities there.

**Ms Lambert:** I wish to add a bit more detail to that. One of the things I did as chief executive before the department was expanded was to meet with the regional community service organisations on a quarterly basis. When the model was first floated there were issues, definitely, and they came to that forum. We've used that forum really to work them through and I think I can say with confidence that those issues have now been worked through. Particularly as we work on the Tuggeranong model, we are engaged pretty significantly with Maureen Cane in relation to her organisation, Communities at Work. So we have worked hard through the forums that we already had established to deal with these issues.

A very significant partnership across government that we have not mentioned today has been with the Land Development Authority, which might seem like an odd partner for the child and family centres, but they were significant in providing support for the Christmas party last year and an ongoing community activity. In relation to other

organisations, a number of organisations, including the regional community services organisations, approached us about being involved because of the services that they provide. Ms Brown may have some more detail on that as well.

**Ms Brown:** Probably just on some specific projects that we have done, just to demonstrate a little bit the partnerships that we do have. Ms Lambert just mentioned the Christmas in Gungahlin party as a community development function that tries to build community connectedness. It has always been done in strong partnership with the child and family centre, the Gungahlin Regional Community Service, the Land Development Authority, local businesses such as Magnet Mart and the shopping centre itself, the marketplace, and community organisations such as Lions and Rotary; they have all been involved.

The first year they had it, 500 people attended the Christmas party. Last year, well over 3,500 people attended that day. I think that that demonstrates the success a huge partnership for a particular function can have in pulling together a community in a community activity that helps with networks and building friendships across that population. I think they've done very well. That type of approach has been used in how we work on every different thing that we're doing.

Some partnerships have lots of people in them and some only have small groups. The Relationships Australia partnership, in dealing with families with relationship issues, has been very significant for us. We fund them to come in and provide services one day every fortnight and they work with our families where there are significant relationship problems, with an approach that we're trying to work with them to prevent family breakdown, which we all know is hard on the children. That's just at a smaller level, with just two or three people involved in that partnership. I think we've done very well with that and it's working very successfully in the Gungahlin area.

**THE CHAIR:** There being no further questions on this area, we will move on to the next area. Thanks for that, Ms Brown and Ms Overton-Clarke. That takes us to the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support, commencing with output class 1.1, client and adolescent services.

**DR FOSKEY:** I want to ask about the ATSI youth supported accommodation mentioned in budget paper 3 at page 200. You have indicated that there will be additional funding for at risk ATSI males between 12 and 18 years. Could you please describe this initiative to me and tell me how it will be implemented?

**Ms Gallagher:** I can start. This initiative is to create an accommodation option for young ATSI males in need of accommodation support. It's one of the areas where being under the umbrella of disability and housing has been already of great benefit in relation to working with housing to provide a house suitable for this accommodation service. It is for up to eight youths at any time and the money provides the staffing for that facility.

**DR FOSKEY:** Is that house already going?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**Mr Wyles:** We call it Narrabundah House. Just by way of history, initially in 2002 we

partnered with Aboriginal hostels to create Isabella House. We found that that model didn't work particularly well because the client group that Aboriginal hostels were dealing with was not the high-risk indigenous population that we were dealing with. Subsequently, we adopted a model out of Sydney that works with young men at risk and links them back to their cultural heritage. It is a community outreach model, and that's been much more successful. Narrabundah House has provided services to eight young people in that 12 to 18 years group. We've got eight staff working on rotating shifts and they link closely with our other programs around young people at risk. Some of these young people may have come out of Quamby; others may be referred to a range of programs including Turn Around or other programs.

**DR FOSKEY:** So you run those programs at this house?

**Mr Wyles:** No, this is just accommodation but they are linked to those programs.

**DR FOSKEY:** Does the house form the role of being a sort of community focus for other young adolescent men who are not living in the place?

**Mr Wyles:** I'd say that the staff at the house link very strongly with other indigenous organisations so they often get informal referrals. They get services delivered to the house—for instance, Aboriginal Health Services—but there's not a lot of capacity. It's a suburban house so they'll often spend their time taking young people to services at specific venues.

**MR SESELJA:** How many inmates are there currently in Quamby Juvenile Detention Centre?

**Ms Gallagher:** Well, it fluctuates, but I am sure Paul can give you the exact detail.

**Mr Wyles:** I can give you the figures from yesterday.

**MR MULCAHY:** Nothing more recent?

**Mr Wyles:** There are 13—12 males and one female.

**Ms Gallagher:** So it is quite low at the moment.

**Mr Wyles:** Two indigenous clients at the moment.

**MR SESELJA:** And of those people in Quamby, how many are accused people awaiting trial who have contact with inmates serving a sentence as a result of a criminal conviction?

**Mr Wyles:** There were 10 committals, so three would be on remand.

**MR SESELJA:** Can you just explain that to the committee?

**Mr Wyles:** Three would be awaiting sentencing.

**MR SESELJA:** So would those three have contact with the other 10?

**Mr Wyles:** There's separation within the units at Quamby.

**MR SESELJA:** So at no stage do they have contact?

**Mr Wyles:** They do have some.

**MR SESELJA:** I'm wondering how that fits with subsection 19(2) of the Human Rights Act which, as you'd be aware, provides that "an accused person must be segregated from convicted people except in exceptional circumstances."

**Ms Denley:** This is of concern to us. As you would all be aware, Quamby's history goes back way before the Human Rights Act. At this point in time, we are trying to look at how we can operate and still be consistent with the requirements of the Human Rights Act.

**MR SESELJA:** But currently you're not conforming with 19(2) of the Human Rights Act.

**Ms Denley:** Not in as much as those young people would still be going to school with the other clients.

**MR SESELJA:** So they're not segregated?

**Ms Denley:** They're not segregated. Operationally, we're trying to look at how we can do that. We're getting support in looking at the Human Rights legislation. I think when we have another facility on that site we'll have greater capacity to do that but at this point we're still working through that. I think we are endeavouring to comply as best we can at the moment.

**MR SESELJA:** Is that a concern to you, minister, that Quamby is not complying with the Human Rights Act?

**Ms Gallagher:** Quamby is a concern to me at all times, as it would be to anyone who had responsibility for a juvenile detention facility that was inadequate. I've made no secret of that. We are working very closely with the human rights commissioner and the staff to make the best of what is a completely inadequate facility. I have to say that the staff are doing an amazing job out there in ensuring that the needs of young people are being met. What we have is a facility that doesn't allow everything that we would like or should be providing, and there's a long history to that.

**MR SESELJA:** The Human Rights Act is a new act and it is one that you would expect the government to comply with, especially given that it is this government that pushed it. So you're saying that you are doing your best but that there are some laws that you don't need to comply with, at least for a period of time?

**Ms Gallagher:** No. I'm not saying that there are laws that we don't need to comply with. I'm saying there are some inadequacies within the building, which presents us with some significant challenges.

**MR SESELJA:** Which is not meeting the requirements of the legislation?

**Ms Denley:** At this very moment, we are working with the human rights commissioner in undertaking an audit of Quamby, and that audit will be tabled. The commissioner's staff are looking at how we are operating Quamby, how our policies and procedures comply and whether there are areas where we can better comply.

**MR SESELJA:** Are there any persons over the age of 18 currently incarcerated in Quamby?

**Mr Wyles:** I'd have to check that.

**Ms Denley:** I don't think so.

**Ms Gallagher:** I can think of one case that we had a year ago, and that person had been sentenced or committed before their 18th birthday, but their sentence overlapped. In those situations, it is my understanding that those young people have remained there for the duration of their sentence rather than be transferred to an adult facility. But, as to whether there is someone there today, we can get back to you.

**MR SESELJA:** Okay, so that does happen. Are you concerned that over 18s or adult prisoners are mixing with child prisoners?

**Ms Gallagher:** I will take some advice on this but the situation I was made aware of was that it was a long sentence and the person had been sentenced as a juvenile. There are situations where there is capacity to allow the transfer to an adult facility if that's appropriate. But we are dealing with the very sensitive needs of young people here and, to the greatest extent possible, the response to the needs of those young people is made in their best interests. It may not be in the best interests of a just turned 18-year-old to be sent to an adult facility. But those matters are looked at case by case.

**DR FOSKEY:** What is the age of the youngest person in Quamby at the moment or over the last year or so?

**Mr Wyles:** We can check that.

**DR FOSKEY:** Okay, thanks.

**MR SESELJA:** So the policy is generally not to have over 18s but, where they are there, they are not segregated. Is it right that in the limited circumstances, when you have over 18s there, they're not segregated from the rest?

**Mr Wyles:** We do attempt to segregate through programming but as has been stated the physical environment has some constraints.

**MR SESELJA:** What about male and female prisoners, are they segregated at Quamby? You said there was one currently.

**Ms Gallagher:** Where it allows for segregation, they are segregated.

**MR SESELJA:** Okay, so they are not always segregated?

**Ms Lambert:** No.

**Ms Gallagher:** No. You could have six young girls arrested and sent to Quamby today and that would affect the whole make up of segregation. Where there is capacity, those decisions are made in the best interests—and of course that is about separating, in an accommodation sense, young women from young men. But where that doesn't allow, because of the physical nature of the facility, those situations will occur.

**MR SESELJA:** Is that a concern that young women—

**Ms Gallagher:** As I said, Quamby is a concern. It is an inadequate building and it has our most vulnerable young people housed in it. That presents me as minister with a number of concerns and the agency responding to that with a number of concerns. This is a very difficult area of service delivery made more difficult, I have to say, by a completely inadequate facility. The facility is 13 years old. You wouldn't know it. If you walked around it, you would think it was about 100 years old. But I don't have the reasons why it was built in such an inadequate way. It preceded me as a member of this Assembly and it preceded the previous government. I believe the Follett government built it, and it seems to have been built in isolation of what should have been a good facility. You would think a facility would last more than 13 years before it became totally defunct in terms of the standards that are meant to apply to a juvenile detention facility.

**MR SESELJA:** The ACT Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Community Services and Social Equity report No 7 made a number of recommendations in relation to Quamby. In particular:

The Committee recommends that the Government establish a working group to examine the adequacy and appropriateness of the programs currently available in Quamby, having specific regard for the need to have:

- social competence training for all detainees;
- pre release life skills programs and;
- increased opportunities for therapeutic interventions.

Has this group been established yet?

**Ms Gallagher:** I know that all that work you have just read out is being done. As to the name of the body—was it a working party?

**MR SESELJA:** It says “working group”.

**Ms Gallagher:** Certainly that transition supports, life skills, and better training are all being delivered through Quamby. We have significantly increased the resources in the Hindmarsh Education Centre. That education centre has a school board and is treated as a school for the purpose of my other role as education minister. It provides a greater emphasis on the training and skill development required for the young people, particularly keeping an eye on their transition to life outside.

**Mr Wyles:** We also have a case management unit within Quamby that looks specifically at transition planning from the time young people enter the facility and, more recently, we have been working with family group conferencing which has traditionally serviced care and protection to see what role it can have in providing conferences for young people and their families as a process of transition.

**MR SESELJA:** Has or has not the working group been established?

**Ms Gallagher:** I do not have the government's response to that report in front of me—

**MR SESELJA:** Well, the government agreed to the recommendations. I am just wondering whether it is doing it?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, we are doing all of that work. I will see what sort of group is overseeing that. There must be a group overseeing it and we can give you those details on notice.

**MR SESELJA:** So “there must be”, but you just do not know.

**Ms Lambert:** I think we should take that on notice. It predates me and so I am interested in finding it. But, as the minister has said, and I am aware of this too, those things it referred to are occurring and, generally, when a report such as this is handed down, the practice is to establish a group of people across relevant agencies to work on it. But I am perfectly happy to take that on notice in terms of the specific group.

**MR SESELJA:** Sorry, I am just amazed that we do not know whether it has been established. If a working group has been established, can you on take on notice who is on the working group, how many times the working group has met and what the working group has achieved thus far?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**MR SESELJA:** Thank you. Recommendation 10 of that report recommends that Quamby cease to use the time-out room until it has been refurbished and it is considered—

**Ms Gallagher:** It has been refurbished.

**MR SESELJA:** What is the status of those recommendations, because I think there were two parts to it?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, it has been refurbished and the room is in use now.

**DR FOSKEY:** On page 299 of budget paper 4, under strategic operational issues, the last dot point mentions that the government will provide a secure environment for young people in detention by enhancing observation, surveillance, et cetera. On page 306, there is an extra \$330,000 and \$400,000 allocated to Quamby security each year for the next four years. There are interesting questions around what security means here because—

**Ms Gallagher:** It has two meanings.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes.

**Ms Gallagher:** There is physical security, so changes have been made to the observation area where the staff sit and observe the facility. There have been improvements for the camera surveillance of the site. This money also allows for an increase in staff numbers. Some of the security issues around the fence just cannot be dealt with in any other way other than completely replacing the fence.

**DR FOSKEY:** This is one of the highlights and yet there does not appear to be a highlight in relation to the rehabilitation of the young people. I am interested in expanding on how expenditure on security compares with expenditure on services for rehabilitation.

**Ms Denley:** Part of that general upgrade included upgrading the education facilities, the nurses' facility and counselling service and briefing rooms. I think the additional security staff allowed for the equivalent of about three FTE positions. That gives greater capacity for security through interaction so it's not just a surveillance function, it's also a support function in terms of those youth workers out there. I think it is a highlight in that way, Dr Foskey.

**Mr Wyles:** With regard to rehabilitation, demountables are on-site to provide space for two psychologists, who have been seconded from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, and some counselling rooms.

**Ms Denley:** Just to add to that, one of those psychologists is also working with the staff on the exit planning that the other member was talking about and was concerned about. Having two psychologists working with young people in the centre and outside the centre is a great resource that some other jurisdictions would dearly love, to be honest. It is giving a level and intensity of support that these young people require.

**DR FOSKEY:** Are you seeing the benefits of that?

**Ms Denley:** By comparison with some other jurisdictions, I think this jurisdiction has an enviable recidivist rate among young people. I think that is an indication of the type of work they're getting and the intensity of work in this jurisdiction.

**Ms Gallagher:** This year we had an expo during Youth Week where a number of youth organisations came into Quamby for the day. The young people were required to go to each of the information stalls and then do a sort of question and answer sheet after to show what they had learnt so that they would understand—as much as we could force them to understand—the services that are outside. I can point to a number of individual success stories for people who have exited Quamby recently. There has been an enormous effort, really commendable stuff, from the staff in there to go the extra yards—in many instances, in their own time—to make sure that these young people are supported and don't end up back in Quamby. Just watching Quamby over the past year, and I've had the privilege of looking at it over the past 2 years, I've seen incredible changes inside that facility with a much greater focus on education, training, skill development and transition support.



**Ms Lambert:** On Friday, I went to the opening of the yerradhang cultural area at Quamby and I have to say—

**DR FOSKEY:** The what?

**Ms Lambert:** The yerradhang cultural area. It means gum tree and it's a cultural area that the young people have developed for their own use. It is also a way for them to have some space for reflection and activity. There's a sand area there for dancing and so on. It is a cultural area that is compatible with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. I have to say—and I've seen many young people over the years through my direct involvement in education speaking—I was extraordinarily impressed with the poise and the skill with which those young people conducted themselves both informally and formally as part of those proceedings. There is a real emphasis on the people there, from my brief experience with it this time around, and I've only been responsible for this for a number of months. I'm very impressed with the way in which the young people are building their self-assurance and their capacity to work and to live in other environments.

**DR FOSKEY:** Thanks for all that, I really appreciate learning more about the services you offer. Could you give me some figures for how much you have spent on assistive services compared to security. Now I understand that the two things are not entirely discrete.

**Ms Gallagher:** No, they're not. In many cases, the allocation to Quamby is for staff and staff are youth workers within the facility but they are also there to provide security. It might be difficult to break that down.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, it might be.

**Ms Gallagher:** It might be easier to list all the services that are offered and the organisations that are brought in from outside to support that

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, I would appreciate that.

**Mr Wyles:** Broadly, in terms of a rehab team, we have two psychologists, three case coordinators and an indigenous liaison worker. They would be the people coordinating some of those services and delivering some of those services.

**Ms Denley:** Also, the young people have a key worker who is the youth worker. What is impressive to me in this jurisdiction, which I didn't experience in South Australia, is that the young people could name their worker. They also understand about the Official Visitor and they also know about the complaints mechanism. The single biggest complaint is about the food!

**Ms Gallagher:** We're working on the food.

**Ms Denley:** Yes, they like the barbecues on Fridays. But that was significant to me because it said a lot about how the young people saw their time in that centre and their attitudes.

**MR MULCAHY:** Following on from Mr Seselja's questioning, can you advise on the status of the audit and when it will be completed? You said it would be tabled, are you talking about in the Assembly or in some other vehicle?

**Ms Denley:** The report will go, as per the act, to the Attorney-General through our minister and I would expect it in early July.

**MR MULCAHY:** Minister, have you taken any legal advice on the admitted breach of the Human Rights Act as a consequence of the difficulties at Quamby?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, not that I'm aware of. I haven't personally taken any legal advice.

**MR SESELJA:** Will you be taking any legal advice?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**MR SESELJA:** Why not?

**Ms Gallagher:** Because I know that at the moment we are doing the best we can, within an inadequate facility. We can't do anything to Quamby outside of what we're already doing to ensure that people who are on remand and people who are committed to a sentence can be segregated at all times.

**MR MULCAHY:** It does make a bit of a mockery, doesn't it?

**Ms Gallagher:** It's physically impossible.

**MR SESELJA:** Is that the government's attitude to other law-breakers, that if they're doing the best they can, that's okay?

**Ms Lambert:** There are issues here it seems to me of conflicting legislations as well. Children and young people are placed at Quamby under court orders. That gives them the authority to have the young people there so it intersects with other legislation.

**MR MULCAHY:** Yes. But, at the end of the day, your government has passed a law that specifically deals with this issue that is specifically addressed in Quamby. You are saying that you're doing your best and that you cannot comply with the laws that your government has introduced and had passed in this Assembly. There's no other group that this applies to in this particular instance, this provision.

**Ms Gallagher:** I don't know how many times you need it explained: you can keep repeating my answer to me, but we have a situation at Quamby where there are limitations on what we can do within that facility and we are working on ensuring that we have got that the capacity within that as soon as we can to address all of those areas of concern. For example, we are in the process of negotiating a new accommodation block, a transportable, to be brought down from Queensland. It is a purpose-built facility and it will enable us to have those segregated accommodation opportunities.

**MR MULCAHY:** When is that going to come into train?

**Ms Gallagher:** We're in the final stages of negotiations with the Queensland government on that.

**MR MULCAHY:** Okay.

**Ms Gallagher:** We are doing absolutely everything we can to ensure that we are meeting our responsibilities. But there are some issues, which I have never made a secret about. There was a national inquiry into Aboriginal deaths in custody and Quamby doesn't meet the recommendations of that inquiry. There's been a coronial inquiry; a young person died in Quamby. There are significant problems with that facility that have existed for 13 years, and we are doing everything we can. There has never been more movement on Quamby than there has been in the last two years to bring that facility up to speed. Since becoming minister, the first budget I went into I got \$13 million for the upgrade of Quamby. We then got told that it was going to be a \$20 million project. I got the extra \$7 million and then two kids hightailed it over the fence and I was told "you cannot rebuild Quamby on that hill; you need to have a new facility."

I have gone in and got \$40 million for the facility, in addition to the \$4 million to upgrade the facility, to make sure that, whilst we have young people having to live in that environment, we meet our responsibilities under all applicable laws. It is not a situation I like. This is something that preys on my mind all the time, as it would anyone involved with Quamby, that any minute of any day something terrible could happen in Quamby. I have to make sure that I am doing everything I can to make sure that we are meeting our responsibilities and I have a clear conscience on that. I cannot do more and I cannot be pushing this redevelopment or the rebuild or the services that are provided within Quamby harder than I have been.

**MR MULCAHY:** I understand that. It is all well good and they are all good intentions but the thing that I find inconsistent—

**THE CHAIR:** Is there a question, Mr Mulcahy?

**MR MULCAHY:** Yes. The thing I find inconsistent, minister, is why the government introduced and supported legislation that it knew full well you could not comply with. Is this simply a case of putting up ideals rather than laws that you are going to adhere to?

**Ms Gallagher:** Well, no, it is not and I have given you my answer on that. You do not like it, but I have given it to you.

**MRS BURKE:** Minister, referring back to what I was asking earlier on, you mentioned the purchase of demountables.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**MRS BURKE:** Is it not a fact that some \$600,000 has been frozen—or money has been frozen—at Quamby? I am still unsure about the funding issues surrounding what is happening at Quamby. Do you know if that is true or not?

**Ms Gallagher:** I'm not aware of any money being frozen. We have money put aside to pay for the demountables, once those costs are finalised.

**MRS BURKE:** Would that be \$600,000?

**Ms Gallagher:** No; it will be considerably more than that; it is around \$1.6 million. In relation to your confusion about the money for Quamby, it is fairly simple. We had \$20 million appropriated for a redevelopment. That redevelopment is not going ahead, so around \$13 million was returned to Treasury. Just over \$6 million has been kept for the fit out of Moore Street and we have appropriated—or we will once this bill passes—an additional \$40 million for the complete rebuilding of Quamby on a new site.

**MRS BURKE:** In the meantime, moneys have gone back into consolidated revenue?

**Ms Gallagher:** That's right. In fact, Mr Stefaniak is a bit ahead of you. He put out a media release on this about two months ago saying that fat cat public servants are getting \$6 million of Quamby money. So this issue has been public for a number of months.

**MRS BURKE:** It was originally allocated to Quamby, but that is a discussion for another day.

**MR MULCAHY:** There are some numbers here that I am trying to make sense of. On page 302 of BP4 at output 1.1, it shows the number of custody days used annually. The targets and estimated outcomes for 2004-05 and 2005-06 are 5,500 days used annually. Then appendix 4 on page 69, under youth justice, shows an estimated outcome for 2004-05 of 6,000 custody days for the year. I am wondering which of the figures is correct, or is there a reason for the inconsistency?

**Ms Gallagher:** I will get you an answer on that.

**Ms Denley:** The estimated outcome was 6,000. We undertook revised targets because there was a second appropriation. A number of targets last year changed as a result of the additional budget papers. The estimated outcome for 2004-05 was 6,000, and there was then a revised target of 5,500.

**MR MULCAHY:** So appendix 4A in this book is inaccurate but BP4 is accurate. Is that what I interpret from that?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. This target does fluctuate a bit by the time the year is out. It is one of those things that are out of our control. It is a result of a court decision, so you guesstimate it as best you can. If there has been a lull in youth crime, that will bring the number down.

**MR MULCAHY:** I understand estimates adjust that, but I don't understand why you are producing one set of budget papers that don't reconcile. How many days have been used for the year so far? Do we know what the current count is up to?

**Ms Lambert:** No, we don't know the current count.

**MR MULCAHY:** Could you take that on notice?

**Ms Lambert:** Yes, we will.

**MR MULCAHY:** Therefore I guess we're not sure where the accuracy in all of this lies at the moment. I have a question also about the turnaround program, which is item c on page 302 of BP4. It shows a target of 30 participants for the 2004-05 year with 15 recognised as an estimated outcome. Appendix 4A at page 69 says:

The number of clients supported by Turnaround is expected to be below target as a result of difficulties in recruiting suitably skilled and experienced staff to undertake the complex case management required. Without the appropriate staff to client ratio, the program was unable to accept new clients...

Has the recruitment of staff for the program been advanced? If so, how has that been accomplished?

**Ms Lambert:** Yes, it has been. I will ask Mr Wyles to answer that in more detail.

**Mr Wyles:** That footnote is quite useful and accurate. It might be useful for me to explain turnaround briefly for those members who don't know what it is. Turnaround is a program that works with high and complex needs young people. Often those young people will present with a cluster of issues—possibly around drug and alcohol use, contact with care and protection services, contact with youth justice services, possibly intellectual disability or brain injury—so, clearly, we need staff who are highly skilled. There has been some movement of staff into and out of the program. A third staff member will begin next week, on 6 June.

**MR MULCAHY:** So you have three staff.

**Mr Wyles:** We have three. The fourth position has been signed off and will be advertised shortly.

**MR MULCAHY:** What is the optimal number of staff for the program?

**Mr Wyles:** The initial review report into intensive needs young people in the ACT indicated that there is a group of about 30 to 35 young people who fit the criteria. This program, although it sits in the office, is a cross-government/non-government program. We continue to talk and work with other agencies about how we can meet that capacity.

**MR MULCAHY:** Do you have a figure of what, ideally, you would need to meet the demand?

**Mr Wyles:** I suppose the review would indicate that there are about 30 young people. We would need to move staffing up to meet that demand at some point.

**MR MULCAHY:** At what level would the staffing need to be?

**Ms Lambert:** Doesn't it really depend on the support provided from the community service organisations that are part of this?

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

**Ms Lambert:** The term used in this program is an interesting one; it is about wrapping services around the young person. In doing this work it is not only government workers who work with them but also non-government workers.

**MR MULCAHY:** I got that message.

**Ms Lambert:** We purchase services. Clearly it depends on the involvement of the non-government service in terms of the young person's need.

**MR MULCAHY:** We have seen in the footnotes that you have had a problem with staffing numbers. I understand that and recognise that that happens in a lot of areas, but you must have an idea of the ideal figure to achieve the desired delivery outcomes for the audience or group t subject to this program.

**Mr Wyles:** I'm not trying to be evasive. It depends on how we work with other government departments and the non-government sector. The role of the case coordinators, as we call them, is twofold. One is to work with the young person and the other is to effect some change in the service system, whether that's helping those young people access mental health services, disability services or accommodation services. The initial evaluation has indicated that there have been some good successes there; but, to a degree, it's about how those service systems change to accommodate this group.

**MR MULCAHY:** So you can't really give me a figure. You are going to four staff, by the sound of it.

**Mr Wyles:** We are going to four staff; yes.

**MR MULCAHY:** And that will be it, for the time being?

**Mr Wyles:** For the time being.

**MR MULCAHY:** Are there any impacts of the cost savings in this area being applied?

**Mr Wyles:** No.

**MR MULCAHY:** How many people sought to use the services in 2004-05 who couldn't be included in the program because of your staff shortages?

**Mr Wyles:** There is a referral assessment panel, made up of a number of agencies, which meets to consider referrals into the program. Non-government accommodation services, SAAP-funded services; non-government foster care services; police; disability housing; mental health and a range of government services are all represented. Referrals were effectively suspended from about November to March because of the low staff capacity. I'd have to check this but I think only two or three referrals that have come to the panel haven't been accepted.

**MR MULCAHY:** In the period since November?

**Mr Wyles:** No, in the period since May, when the program restarted.

**MR MULCAHY:** What happened to the people from last November who may desirably have been part of the program?

**Mr Wyles:** Those agencies make the referrals. We notified all our agencies to say that the program was closed to referrals, so no referrals were made during that period. We don't have a waiting list.

**MR MULCAHY:** What happens to those people? Do they get cast onto the waters?

**Mr Wyles:** There are current service providers that are effectively providing some service.

**MR MULCAHY:** But not to the level of the turnaround program?

**Mr Wyles:** No.

**Ms Lambert:** Not everyone who is referred is eligible for the turnaround program. Sometimes we can divert them to other services that are more appropriate.

**MR MULCAHY:** I understand that.

**Mr Wyles:** These are typically young people who have long histories in the service system, whether it's care and protection or justice.

**MR MULCAHY:** Problems.

**Mr Wyles:** So they are well known to the services.

**Ms Gallagher:** Certainly almost 100 per cent would be in receipt of other service responses, just not under the turnaround program.

**Mr Wyles:** The idea is not that they come into turnaround and all the other services step back; it's about coordinating that service response.

**DR FOSKEY:** With regard to recidivism rates for young people, as per strategic indicator 1 on page 301 of budget paper 4, can you give us an idea of what the rates were for 2004-05? They are just not there. That would give us a sense of trends.

**Mr Wyles:** I would like to give you the definition—and I am happy to read it into *Hansard*—because recidivism is typically a very difficult thing to measure, depending on timeframes and what you're actually measuring. With regard to recidivism rates for young people sentenced in custody, we are measuring young people who've been sentenced and are in detention more than once in a 12-month period. The second measure is about community-based orders. There we are measuring young people who are less than 18 years old who are sentenced, under the legislation, to a subsequent supervised community based order within a two-year period following the completion of a period of supervision. We measure the return in the second year.

**DR FOSKEY:** The two categories we're measuring there are apples and oranges?

**Mr Wyles:** Yes. There are two different measures of recidivism.

**DR FOSKEY:** Even so, the recidivism rate for young people on community-based orders is 45 per cent. Would you regard that as a high percentage? I see that you don't expect it to come down very much.

**Mr Wyles:** Yes. The department undertook some research in 2004 which looked at recidivism rates but defined it differently again from those two definitions. It was around court orders. It used a methodology out of the Department of Human Services in Victoria. The ACT was about 20 per cent below the Victorian rate. It looked at 1999 to 2003. The ACT was 29.4 per cent and Victoria was 48.6 per cent. It is recognised nationally that the ACT has a reasonably low recidivism rate.

**DR FOSKEY:** Do you feel that using community-based orders is a good way of working with young people?

**Mr Wyles:** It provides the court with a range of options. In youth justice the term they use is "net widen". You want to keep young people out of the system by using lower order orders and, clearly, community-based orders allow you to do that.

**DR FOSKEY:** We've been talking a bit about the turnaround program. How does it fit in with the restorative justice principles of the ACT justice system?

**Mr Wyles:** Restorative justice is the responsibility of justice and community safety. As I understand it, that model looks, in a way, at making amends with the victims. Turnaround doesn't necessarily have a focus on young people involved in crime, although some members of the client group have that background. Turnaround is really about delivering service to that high and complex needs group. Restorative justice is really an alternative, I think, out of the court and the criminal justice system.

**DR FOSKEY:** Are you considering involving youth offenders in the reducing property crime program at all? Again I know we're talking JACS, but I'm wondering if there was any potential to involve young offenders who have been involved in property crime in this program, which appears to have been quite successful.

**Mr Wyles:** I'm not sure specifically about that program. JACS have funded the evaluation out of turnaround; they've been very generous in that. One of the things we're keen to measure in the turnaround program is reduction in crime. The interim evaluation has been reasonably positive, although we're in the early stages. This program has been going for a year. We're looking to where we can make some impact on crime, as in other areas.

**DR FOSKEY:** Will the JACS evaluation be publicly available, or available to members of the Assembly?

**Mr Wyles:** It's about to be launched.

**Ms Lambert:** No. That is a different one. Are you talking about—

**Ms Gallagher:** —the turnaround evaluation?



**DR FOSKEY:** Yes.

**Ms Denley:** It's only an interim evaluation at this point. It's been based on interviews with the young people, their families and other agencies.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes; I see. But will there be some sort of general surmise arising from those?

**Ms Denley:** Yes, later.

**DR FOSKEY:** That will be interesting to see. Page 306 of budget paper 4 shows that \$375,000 was allocated to interstate transfers of juvenile justice in the 2004-05 second appropriation. How many young offenders were transferred in or out of Canberra? Where are they most likely to go, or come from?

**Ms Denley:** In 2004-05 there were six young people transferred. I think they all went into New South Wales. Am I right on that, Paul?

**Mr Wyles:** I'd have to check, but that's the most likely outcome.

**DR FOSKEY:** You can't be more specific than that?

**Ms Denley:** No, I'm sorry. I can't give the exact location they went to.

**DR FOSKEY:** They were all from Canberra?

**Ms Denley:** Yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** It wasn't the other way?

**Ms Denley:** No.

**DR FOSKEY:** Are there any programs to develop better relationships between police and young people? This is an area that can be problematic at times.

**Ms Denley:** Police are very involved in the turnaround program. They're on the management committee and the assessment panel. While they do not contribute a staff position to that program, they do offer staff programs. So a young person from turnaround may receive recreation support through their contact with police programs. They offer in-kind staff time, as well as administrative support on the management committee.

**Mr Wyles:** Linking back to your previous question, Dr Foskey, we have started making referrals to restorative justice. The police are heavily involved in that program, too.

**Ms Denley:** Police also have contributed voluntarily in their own time in Quamby with recreation. I think those things show young people a different side in relationship development.

**Ms Lambert:** We fund services and police and citizens youth clubs as well. That is another point of interaction.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms Gallagher:** Before we finish this output class there are a couple of points Dr Adrian may want to clarify arising out of it.

**Dr Adrian:** I turn to page 69 of BP4 appendix. Mr Mulcahy asked the question about the discrepancy between the estimated outcome of 6,000 in terms of the number of custody days used annually, compared with the figure on page 302 of BP4. The correct figure is the 6,000. There has been an error in not updating that figure in BP4 for the estimated outcome for 2004-05. It should be 6,000. That is based on the material we have on progress during the year. I have been told that the numbers at the end of the third quarter were 4,650. As you are aware, it depends on decisions by the court. The last figure was 4,650 at the end of the third quarter. That is the progress figure. That is why the estimate was redone from the 5,500 to the 6,000. Six thousand is the correct figure.

**Ms Gallagher:** Mr Seselja asked me about people over the age of 18. Currently there are two people who are 18 years old at Quamby. Both are to be released this year and both will be 18 when they are released.

**THE CHAIR:** Output class 1.2 “Care and protection services” questions?

**DR FOSKEY:** Page 306 in budget paper 4 talks about “business support costs” for the office and \$10.5 million over five years. In this current year—the one we are in—it is \$699,000, but you will notice that it escalates rather quickly. Could you please explain what constitutes business support costs, the rise and the reason it will stay at that level?

**Ms Lambert:** These are the costs that we estimated we would need to pick up. Some of these functions had previously been incorporated into the department of education when the office was part of that. A concrete example would be having people to service the payments to foster carers. That is a business support cost that must occur. It is those sorts of things—things around data and research—that are the core business of agencies that have been meshed with other functions in the department of education. They are now separated from there and they are the funds that we need going forward. We have only just again turned over the financials, have we not? They have only just come to our department. That explains the smaller amount in this financial year.

**Mr Hubbard:** Just to help you understand how the numbers work, I will show you a couple of items on that page and explain them. There is a heading of “Budget technical adjustments” at the bottom of the page. When the office came from education, there was quite a lot of negotiation around what type of services would be needed by a stand-alone office in comparison with an office that was associated with an established department such as disability, housing and community services.

You will notice that line “Adjustment to correct original transfer from DET on the creation of OCYFS”. That is that -4,093,000. Basically, we sent that money back to education. That explains what that -4,093,000 is. In the transfer from education in that budget line 2004-05, approximately \$2 million came over with support dollars, basically

for the organisational services that Sandra outlined. We did the analysis and review with Treasury and with the office to determine exactly what support costs would be needed to support the office. The additional business support cost, on top of that approximate \$2 million that came over in the base, was that business support cost line that showed the \$699,000, the \$2,532,000, et cetera.

The small amount to start off with is just to demonstrate that, as Sandra said, we set up our financial system in May, when we set up the Oracle accounting site. We needed to transfer all the accounts so that we could process them. We needed to get staff on board to be able to do the processing. The 2005-06 budget showing \$2.5 million is essentially the full year cost on top of the \$2 million that is already in the base budget to enable us to give appropriate business support to the office.

**THE DEPUTY CHAIR:** Have you got a supplementary question, Mr Mulcahy?

**MR MULCAHY:** No; I have another set of questions on this output. The statistics on page 303 for 2004-05—the targets, the estimated outcome and the targets for 2005-06—are identical in three of those categories. Have they been looked at carefully? Because of the way the same figures have been put across the page they seem a bit rubbery.

**Ms Denley:** Again, we had revised targets. In 2004-05, before the revision, the target was 4,500. When we got the additional resources in the appropriation, we revised those up to 7,000. In terms of still holding those, this was a figure that was also set when we got the additional staffing on. That staff should be fully operational for our next year estimate. The goal really is to hold this level of reports and concern at that level.

If we are doing our job well we are getting in at the preventative end. We are using the child and family centres; we are using the family support services; we are making sure that we are doing the education department education. That means that, when we are getting reports, they are robust reports. We are also providing community education. If we can hold our number of reports, that is an indication that we are being successful. In 2002-03, we had an increase of about 143 per cent in reports. We want to stop that escalation. We want to be getting in at that front end.

**MR MULCAHY:** My question is simply this: are these identical figures accurate? I am not sure I have heard an answer to that yet.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes. Certainly, the 2004-05 and the outcome figures are the best guess that we can do. It is on a peak. We are hoping that the peak now eases. I love the word “peak”; I used this a lot in education on Friday in relation to training commencements. Interestingly, it is about the same figure—7,000. When I became minister, the number of estimated reports of concern about children was 2,800 a year. It then grew dramatically and we upped it to around 4,500. I think we received more than 5,000. Our best guess when putting these figures together is around 7,000. It is my understanding that, at the moment, we are getting around 180 reports of concern of children a week. Hopefully, as Ms Denley says, that level of reporting can be maintained. There could be a whole range of reasons why these reports have gone up to this extent, but we are hoping that this is the peak. But the outcome for 2004-05 may exceed 7,000.

**MR MULCAHY:** Minister, I have another question about your agency under “Care and

protection services". I want to explore a little further the matter of legal proceedings in the ACT Supreme Court on 24 December 2004. Can you confirm for the committee that the Supreme Court found that the office had acted inappropriately or contrary to the law?

**Ms Gallagher:** Can you give me the date of that?

**MR MULCAHY:** The date was 24 December 2004. I believe you pursued an action there.

**Ms Gallagher:** I did not personally. I do not have any powers under the act to do that; the chief executive does.

**Ms Lambert:** It was I.

**MR MULCAHY:** Or you in the broad.

**Ms Gallagher:** No, not me in the broad. I do not have any say about any matters going to court. Mr Duggan can expand on that particular case, in the broad.

**Mr Duggan:** In the broad, we had taken action in relation to the protection of a child in the Children's Court. The parent of the child appealed the matter to the Supreme Court and the Supreme Court found on behalf of the parent. The department I felt was fully vindicated in its action. It was around the technicality of the order that was drafted in the Children's Court by the magistrate.

**MR MULCAHY:** Are you saying it was a technical matter?

**Ms Lambert:** I am very concerned about individual matters being dealt with. I am very happy to provide individual briefings. But there are quite significant privacy issues in all these cases. As chief executive, I am bound by very stringent privacy issues. So it is very important that these questions be in the broad and not concerned with detail.

**THE DEPUTY CHAIR:** As chair of the committee, I am sensitive to that. I remind members that, when asking questions about this, they are to keep that in mind and to listen to the answers being given. If members have questions that would lead to identification and breaching privacy, they should take up the opportunity to have a private briefing on the matter.

**MR MULCAHY:** These questions do not breach privacy; they go more to the conduct of the office. Mr Duggan, are you saying that you do not believe that the court found your office had acted either inappropriately or contrary to the law; that it was purely a technicality that—

**Mr Duggan:** We made an application to the Children's Court. That is what we did. We made an application to the Children's Court. That matter was referred to the Supreme Court by the parent and the matter was overruled.

**MR MULCAHY:** Given that the allegations that formed the basis of your action were received I think two months before your office took action, what was the imperative that made it necessary to have the subject child removed with the assistance of armed police?

**Mr Duggan:** For me, this is now getting into the detail. I am not avoiding the question, but it is getting into the detail of that matter.

**MR MULCAHY:** Right.

**Mr Duggan:** They are individual matters pertaining to that case. It would be better if we gave you a private briefing. There is quite a lot of detail on this matter.

**Ms Lambert:** That is right.

**MR MULCAHY:** I am just wondering about the reason for the delay. Do we need a private briefing for that?

**Ms Gallagher:** I will give you a scenario. I know that you were one of the members who attended the child protection training offered in relation to how matters are dealt with. In any case, a number of interventions and ways of monitoring can be undertaken by care and protection before any legal intervention is seen. Those decisions are made at the time in the best interests of the child.

You could work with a family for a year before seeking a court order to remove that child or an order to monitor that child. These changes occur day by day in any number of scenarios. You have to understand that there is a lot of work before decisions are taken about legal intervention; they are not done just because there is a worker there who is a bit free to take a matter to court. That is not the way things are done.

**MR MULCAHY:** I understand that; that makes some sense. But what does not make a lot of sense is that the matter dragged on for two months. Then suddenly we had six armed police rushing in to seize the child on Christmas Eve. That is the bit that I struggle with.

**Ms Gallagher:** Again, Mr Mulcahy, we can give you a private briefing, to give you as much information as can be provided to ease your concerns around this case. As I said, any intervention taken at any time is made in the best interests of the child at that time. There can be any number of reasons about the level and timing of the intervention.

**MR MULCAHY:** And was it not true that Justice Crispin had reached a view that your office had acted inappropriately and he found that there had been breaches of legislation and denials of natural justice?

**Ms Gallagher:** Again, if you have some genuine concerns about how this case was dealt with, we need to deal with it outside a public forum.

**MR MULCAHY:** What about the legal counsel for your office? Did they believe or suspect that the legal basis underpinning your office's action was invalid? If so, was this view communicated to the office? If so, what did your office do about it?

**Ms Gallagher:** I am not going to answer any more questions on this matter, Mr Mulcahy. We have made the offer of a briefing to give you as much information as we can about this situation. That is entirely appropriate in accordance with the laws that

govern the privacy and confidentiality of matters relating to children who may come into contact with the care and protection system.

**MR MULCAHY:** We are not asking you to put the family's details on the record; we are asking about the conduct of your office and the procedures—

**Ms Gallagher:** It is a very small jurisdiction, Mr Mulcahy, and I am not prepared to talk about it.

**MR SESELJA:** But the question about legal counsel's advice does not go to the detail of the case at all, any more than any of these other questions.

**Ms Gallagher:** You disagree with what I am saying; that is fine. We are offering you a briefing on this case. If you still have concerns, talk to me about them. But I will not talk about one legal matter relating to one child in one family in the ACT. I am just not going to do it publicly.

**MR MULCAHY:** My concern relates to the process that is being adhered to by your agency. It is a matter of process, not—

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, I understand, Mr Mulcahy. As minister in charge of this agency, I can sit here and say that I am extremely confident in the responses given by this agency in all matters relating to care and protection of children. I have no concerns about how matters are being dealt with.

**MR MULCAHY:** Even though a judge of our courts has certainly taken very adverse views about the conduct of your office.

**Ms Gallagher:** I am not going to pass judgement.

**MR MULCAHY:** He has though.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, I know he has; I have read that. But I am not going to criticise the judge's comments. In the areas for which I have responsibility—where two sides of the story can be seen—I can tell you that I have no concerns about the response provided by the office in relation to that matter.

**MR MULCAHY:** Consequent to Justice Crispin's decision, you do not feel the need to take any remedial action regarding the way your office is operating?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**MR MULCAHY:** And there is no basis for saying that the legal counsel had raised concerns prior to the matter ending up in the Supreme Court?

**Ms Gallagher:** Mr Mulcahy, I direct you to a question on this matter that I have taken on notice from Mrs Dunne and answered—question number 164.

**MR MULCAHY:** I understand that you refused to answer most of that question on section 405 grounds.

**Ms Gallagher:** As I said, we will provide you with a briefing. But as to commenting further, I will not do it. I will await your media release on it, and I will respond in the media accordingly.

**MR MULCAHY:** You do not need to be inflammatory.

**THE CHAIR:** If there are no further questions on this output class, we will move onto output class 2.1 “Child development, family support and prevention services”.

**MS PORTER:** Briefly, on page 300 there is a reference under output class 2 to the adolescent day unit. Could we have certain information about the adolescent day unit?

**Ms Ash:** The adolescent day unit is based at Erindale school. It is a unit that specifically works with young people who have primarily non-diagnosed mental health type issues that impact upon their ability to maintain their school attendance and performance. It is a unit where the education department provides a teacher. We have youth workers and a coordinator. This program has a history of being very successful. As you do with every program, we are reviewing and making sure that it still meets the targets that we require of it.

**MS PORTER:** Is it for children throughout Canberra?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**Ms Ash:** Referrals come through a coordinated referral panel, which includes a mental health representative, and staff from the ADU and the education department.

**MS PORTER:** I notice that, under Mr Hargreaves’s portfolio, there is mention of a north side community-based service supporting youth and young adults.

**Ms Gallagher:** Which one is that?

**MS PORTER:** It is under Mr Hargreaves’s portfolio. On page 270, under the budget highlights, it mentions a north side community-based service to support youth and young adults. I was just wondering how these two work together.

**Ms Gallagher:** I think they are different programs.

**Ms Ash:** They are different programs. But sometimes, in a jurisdiction the size of the ACT, there will be young people in common. Where that happens, the caseworkers liaise as to how the best support can be provided.

**Ms Lambert:** Frankly, the great advantage of having this in a combined portfolio is that we will now need to be able to do more work that starts with the young person and spans out across the range of services that we have in the portfolio. That is a great advantage to us. I will be quite frank: we have yet to make the most of that. But, over the next year, that will be a priority for us.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, in budget paper 4, page 304, a comment is made about the

parents as teachers program. Could Ms Ash give us some information on that program?

**Ms Ash:** We commenced the parents as teachers program a few years ago. It was a whole program that we imported. We then customised it for ACT families. It is specifically for families with children up to three months of age. Those families can remain in the program until the child is around three years. One of the nice things that we are able to consider doing at the moment is co-locating the two workers in parents as teachers with the child and family centres. As we are part of the department, we are more and more able to look at a continuum of services from universal, through to targeted and through to foster care and residential. The co-location of the parents as teachers program with the child and family centres will mean that the early intervention prevention services of the office and the department work more hand in hand.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** The *Territory as parent* report recommended establishing a commissioner for children and young people. The government agreed to establish the commissioner. Can you show us where the funding is for that commissioner?

**Ms Gallagher:** The funding is in the budget for JACS, not within this agency. But I am happy to answer the question. It is going to sit within the Human Rights Commission. That money goes to JACS. The money is there to pay for a commissioner. We are currently finalising the legislation for introduction.

Once that is introduced, we will undertake a national recruitment exercise for the position to be filled and we will kick that off. It is an exciting time. It is the first time that we will have a commissioner for children and young people in the territory. It will have a different role to that of the community advocate—a quite separate role. From my point of view as minister in this area, it will be an enormous resource of advice and guidance to government on issues affecting children and young people.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Will the views of the children and young people be reflected in the model for a commissioner?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, that work has already been done. In fact, I think we have released those reports publicly. There has been extensive consultation with children and young people about what sort of commissioner they would like to see. Those responses vary. But, like the children's plan where we consulted extensively with children, the children and young people's responses were very insightful and provided enormous guidance in putting the model together.

The commissioner will not be operating out of McDonalds and we will not be able to deliver a commissioner with superpowers or one that wears a red cape. All the fantastic input—that is, that children should be kept safe and that governments should listen to what children say—has been reflected in the model that we will put through the legislation.

**Ms Whitten:** The budget funding for the commissioner for children and young people is in the justice and community safety portfolio. It is on page 350 of budget paper 4. It is a commitment the government has made of \$1.5 million over four years. The views of children and young people have been taken into consideration for the model. On 8 April the minister released three reports—a separate report and a combined report—that



summarised the consultation undertaken with children and young people. It included consultation from the public submissions.

More than 2,500 people were engaged in the consultations for the commissioner for children and young people. The government has already introduced the legislation for a human rights commission and amending legislation is proposed for the autumn sitting. The views of children and young people are being taken into consideration, particularly in respect of the functions of the children and young people's commissioner. Children and young people are being involved in decisions about their lives and about the quality of services. They will also have the ability to make complaints—if that is what they wish to do—which is consistent with the human rights commission model.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much minister and officials.

**The committee adjourned at 12.55 pm.**