



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2006-2007

(Reference: Appropriation Bill 2006-2007)

Members:

MS M PORTER (The Chair)
DR D FOSKEY (The Deputy Chair)
MR M GENTLEMAN
MS K MacDONALD
MR S PRATT
MR B SMYTH

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 27 JUNE 2006

Secretary to the committee:
Ms S Lilburn (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 that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the committee office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

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The committee met at 9.35 am.

Corbell, Mr S, Attorney-General, Minister for Police and Emergency Services and
Minister for Planning

ACT Policing

Fagan, Ms Audrey, Chief Police Officer
Williams, Mr Paul, Director, Corporate Services
Cresswell, Mr Jason, Coordinator, Finance, Exhibits and Logistics

ACT Emergency Services Authority

Foot, Mr David, Acting Chief Executive Officer, ACT Ambulance Service
Prince, Mr David, Chief Officer, ACT Fire Brigade
Crowhurst, Ms Moira, Acting Chief Finance Officer
Ross, Mr Michael, Chief Officer, ACT Rural Fire Service
Burkevics, Mr Bren, Acting Chief Officer, ACT State Emergency Services
Ayling, Mr Steve, Assistant Commissioner, Emergency Management
Bennett, Mr Ian, Assistant Commissioner, People and Development

Department of Justice and Community Safety

Leon, Ms Renee, Chief Executive
Phillips, Mr Brett, Deputy Chief Executive

THE CHAIR: Before I read the card, I will just let people know that Hansard are having difficulty sometimes picking up people's voices on the microphones. If you make sure you don't lean back in your chairs when you are at the table, and speak into the microphone, we should be okay.

I would like to welcome everybody. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation, for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter. I am sure you all understand that. Minister, would you like to make some opening remarks?

Mr Corbell: I would like to make a brief statement before we undertake questions in this area. I will start by acknowledging the work of the Emergency Services Authority commissioner for the past two years, Mr Peter Dunn. I would like to thank him, along with his team at the ESA, for their dedication and commitment to providing an extremely high level of essential service to the Canberra community.

As members would be aware, Mr Dunn has indicated that he will shortly be resigning from the ACT government service. On behalf of the people of Canberra and the government, I would like to thank him for his contribution and the extremely dedicated and effective way in which he has worked to deliver the government's and the community's requirements for emergency services.

The budget decisions that have been taken by the government are designed to manage

expenditure and maximise the return the people of Canberra get for their public dollar. Having said this, we recognise the importance of maintaining front line emergency services for the community. It is a vital service, which faces ever-increasing demands.

As members will be aware, one of the decisions in this year's budget is to discontinue the ESA as a statutory authority, with its financial and administrative functions to be integrated with those of the Department of Justice and Community Safety. There will be a range of financial and administrative efficiencies achieved from this integration.

What I want to say very clearly and up front, as I have already said publicly on a number of occasions, is that the operational independence and the roles and functions of each of the four services within the Emergency Services Authority will remain the same, and the government remains committed to ensuring that the Canberra community receives timely, responsive and high quality emergency services.

The government does not believe that the financial and administrative changes we have put in place in any way affect the operational independence of the four services. I will be very happy to expand on that in questions later today if members so wish.

It is important to stress that the government has not made any statutory changes to the powers of the four chief officers or the commissioner in relation to their operational roles. This is very important, to maintain their operational independence and to ensure there remains clear and direct advice from the heads of our emergency services to the minister and the government of the day. This is the commitment that we retain, and I believe the administrative changes we have put in place will ensure that the operational independence of the four services remains.

As part of these changes the commissioner of the new emergency services agency will report to the chief executive of the department on the overall strategic direction and management of the emergency services. We are very conscious of staff and community sensitivities surrounding this administrative decision and my department is working closely to manage the integration in a consultative and collaborative manner.

I would like now to turn to the issue of what the government is providing for in this year's budget when it comes to emergency services. First of all, \$12.8 million is proposed to be appropriated to establish the new emergency services headquarters, including a new comcen, specialist outdoor training facility and emergency services support centre at Fairbairn, with further funding to be provided in 2007-08.

Some \$691,000 will be spent to employ an additional 16 firefighters for the ACT Fire Brigade, which will mean that, for the first time in 15 years, the ACT Fire Brigade will be at its optimal level of staffing. Some \$50,000 will be appropriated for the recruitment of an additional 50 volunteer firefighters for the ACT Fire Service, an important step to maintain the operational capacity of this particular service.

There will be \$70,000 for the recruitment of an additional 80 volunteers for the ACT SES. The SES performs an important range of roles throughout the year and I know this additional funding will be welcomed by people in that service.

Members would be aware that there is \$1.45 million for a new aerial firefighting

appliance for the ACT Fire Brigade; \$700,000 for the upgrade of urgent and essential items in emergency services stations; \$1.5 million for the continuation of the emergency services vehicle replacement program, which will include new firefighting vehicles for the ACT Fire Brigade and the ACT Rural Fire Service; and \$320,000 for the provision of essential personal protective equipment for all emergency services personnel.

In concluding, can I just highlight that, clearly, with the departure of Commissioner Dunn we are going through a process of some change. I am pleased that Mr David Prince, who is the chief officer of the ACT Fire Brigade, has agreed to act as the commissioner for the period of the recruitment of a new permanent commissioner. I would like to thank Mr Prince for his willingness to step into this role. He and I, along with staff of the ESA, would welcome your questions and will endeavour to answer them.

MR PRATT: Good morning, minister. Good morning Mr Prince—and congratulations on your acting role.

Mr Prince: Thank you very much.

MR PRATT: Can you explain, please, what those savings will be and how the transfer of ESA—I presume it will not be called ESA anymore—into the JACS department will increase operational efficiencies.

Mr Corbell: It will be ESA. We have decided that the new organisation will be called the emergency services agency; so ESA remains its acronym. That is important because there is a high level of brand recognition amongst the Canberra community about what the ESA does. So ESA will remain. Could you be a bit more detailed in your question, please? I am not quite clear exactly what you are asking me.

MR PRATT: Can you explain how the transfer of the agency into the JACS department will bring both savings and increased operational efficiencies.

Mr Corbell: Clearly, the ESA has a range of corporate headquarters and corporate HR and finance functions which, given the positioning of the ESA within the new justice department, are duplicated with those of the justice department itself. There is a range of efficiencies to be achieved through the amalgamation of corporate, HR and finance functions. The details of that work are still being worked through, because clearly this is a fairly major undertaking.

In addition to that, there will be a range of functions transferred from both ESA and the justice department to the new shared services centre. Both elements of my portfolio in that regard will need to comply with that new whole-of-government direction. That is where we anticipate the efficiencies will be achieved through the corporate, HR and finance elements of ESA.

MR PRATT: Can you detail the number of ESA headquarters staff in the administration area who will be transferred either into JACS itself or to the shared services?

Mr Corbell: All staff of ESA will become staff of JACS, because they are all part of the one portfolio area.

MR PRATT: Perhaps you could more define which of those you intend to transfer into the shared services.

Mr Corbell: I might ask Mr Prince to answer that, if he can.

Mr Prince: Through the shared services arrangements, there will be 19.92 FTEs moving across.

MR PRATT: Are you able to quantify the savings that you envisage or anticipate will be made by the transfer of the ESA in dollar terms?

Mr Corbell: The government has not set a savings target for ESA. The target that is in place in relation to ESA is for it to work within its existing budget. This financial year, we anticipate there will be a budget overrun in the order of just over \$5 million. The challenge for ESA for the coming financial year will be to work within its existing budget.

The ESA, because of its budget overrun this financial year, either has or is about to receive—I think it has—a Treasurer’s advance to accommodate its budget overrun. That is what we will be seeking to achieve. I am not quite sure what that means. You might like to ask someone else to explain that.

MR SMYTH: What has caused the \$5 million overrun?

Mr Corbell: The \$5 million overrun is related to a range of areas. Certainly a significant component of that is the level of overtime having to be paid to staff in the ACT Fire Brigade. The fire brigade has not been up to its optimum level, so a very large amount of overtime has had to be paid for that service. I might ask Mr Prince or Ms Crowhurst to detail the areas of the \$5 million overrun.

Mr Prince: The \$5 million overrun has a number of specific areas. We will outline them for you right now.

Ms Crowhurst: For this financial year we have an estimated cash overrun of \$4.573 million. That is made up of SES storm costs, additional costs, \$68,000; RFS extended bushfire season. I will just do the points and then the dollars, if you want them.

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Ms Crowhurst: Ambulance, Snowy Hydro SouthCare; additional fuel costs; additional operational costs; additional fire brigade overtime; funding gap. These are additional costs to InTACT. Those have also been partially offset by savings initiatives.

MR SMYTH: Could we also have the dollar values, please?

Ms Crowhurst: On all of those initiatives?

MR SMYTH: Yes, please.

Ms Crowhurst: SES storm costs, \$68,000; rural extended fire season, \$224,000; ambulance, South Hydro SouthCare, \$200,000; additional fuel costs, \$210,000; additional operational costs, \$1.33 million; additional fire brigade overtime, \$2 million; additional ICT costs for InTACT, \$1.775 million.

That has been offset by a meeting of savings initiatives and additional revenue of \$1.2 million. That gave us increased cash of \$4.573 million. There have also been some non-cash overruns relating to the recreation leave and long service leave provision adjustments; an adjustment with the ambulance billing, which was credits affected; and other non-cash savings, which brought the total to \$5.096 million.

MR PRATT: Is this \$5 million blow-out the fundamental reason why you pulled ESA back into JACS?

Mr Corbell: No, it is not. The overrun itself is not the reason, but clearly it is a factor. The key issue for the government, given the increased size of the ESA's budget—and let us remember the budget has increased by 49 per cent in the last three years, so there has been a very significant increase in the budget—was to ensure that all of its agencies were working closely with the centre of government to ensure they worked within the financial parameters set them by the government.

At the same time we wanted to achieve a range of efficiencies and reduce duplication in a whole range of authorities. The ESA is not unique in that regard, as you would know from this budget. There was a range of administrative efficiencies that could be achieved by its amalgamation back into the justice portfolio.

MR PRATT: I accept the points you have made about operational responsiveness remaining. What will be the chain of command, though, for the new ESA commissioner? Which passageway will that now follow?

Mr Corbell: On operational issues or on administrative and financial issues?

MR PRATT: Operational.

Mr Corbell: On operational issues the commissioner's statutory powers remain. The commissioner will have the role of advising me and/or the Chief Minister, as appropriate, through the territory crisis centre, on what steps we need to take to protect the community in the event of any significant incident.

MR PRATT: The existing chains of command and relationship between ESA and bushfire council reporting to the minister will remain the same?

Mr Corbell: The statutory functions of the bushfire council are unchanged. The bushfire council has a role in advising, obviously, the chief officer and staff of the rural fire service on day-to-day management and operational issues as they affect the RFS. The role is retained in relation to advising the commissioner, the role is retained in terms of advising me as the responsible minister, and the role is retained in my capacity to seek advice from the bushfire council on issues where I think their advice would be worthwhile.

MR PRATT: The chain of command for administration will be commissioner to head of JACS?

Mr Corbell: That is correct. In terms of administrative and financial decision making, the responsibility for the department's budget rests with the chief executive of my department, who is accountable to me. The commissioner will play an important role in working directly with the chief executive.

MR PRATT: Are you not concerned, though, that the administrative power the head of JACS will have over ESA means that the commission will be serving two masters—you operationally and JACS, which will control resources?

Mr Corbell: No, they only have one master, and that is the government. The chief executive of the Department of Justice and Emergency Safety is not some stand-alone entity that is unaccountable. She is accountable to me as the minister. That is where the accountability stops—with me as the minister. The line of authority is very clear in that regard.

I think we need to dispel some of the arguments that have emerged about this issue. I had a very constructive discussion with the bushfire council the other day, where a range of these issues was raised. What I said to them and what I am very happy to say to the committee is that the arrangements are no different from other elements of government that have operational and administrative elements to them. A very good example I used the other day was in relation to the hospital.

The hospital—in fact, both of our hospitals—are part of the department of health, but no-one seeks to tell doctors and nurses how to do their job. No administrator seeks to tell doctors and nurses how to do their jobs in terms of how they triage someone, what sort of care they provide to them, and so on. Those are matters that are properly the responsibility of the clinical services within a health care institution. But that does not mean that the budgetary, financial, corporate and human resource management functions cannot be integrated within a single entity.

That is what happens at the hospital. You have the hospital as part of the department of health, but it does not mean that the chief executive of the department of health tells the director of the emergency department how to triage people or how to respond in the event of an emergency. The same is the case when it comes to the emergency services agency being part of the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

MR SMYTH: How is this arrangement different from the arrangements that were in place on 18 January 2003? McLeod in his report referred to the failing of the old ESB—that lines of communications were unclear, too many masters in place, operational efficiency was obstructed by administrative interference. You are just going back to exactly what was in place on 18 January 2003. Why?

Mr Corbell: No, we are not. I can very clearly and succinctly rebut that. The difference is quite significant. Before 2003 we did not have clearly defined statutory powers and responsibilities for the four services. They did not have their powers enshrined to the degree and the level that we now have in our emergency services legislation. Those powers and those responsibilities are unchanged.

We did not have a commissioner before 2003. We now have a commissioner. That role, operationally, in terms of their powers, their independence and their ability to provide advice and warning to the government and the community is unchanged as a result of these arrangements. In addition to that, the structure of the territory now has in place for managing an incident of the scale of, say, 2003 is dramatically different. I will just point a couple of things out in that regard.

Let us go back and look at 2003. In 2003 we had absolutely every element of the incident, from micro to macro, being managed through the comcen. We had the absurd situation of the head of the Department of Justice and Community Safety, the head of the ESB, ministers—you name it, everyone was there—in the comcen trying to work out what was going on. There was no clear infrastructure to manage an incident of the scale of 2003.

We now have very clear arrangements and very clear forums established to make sure that everyone performs their role appropriately. In the event of another incident of the scale of 2003 coming along—let us say it is a bushfire, because that is obviously the most pertinent example—we will have the ability for the RFS to manage the incident through one of their fire command centres, either north or south of the lake, separate from the comcen.

They will have incident control through their own incident control rooms—not driving it out of the comcen. Comcen will be there to do the radio traffic and the immediate response, but the firecom will be there to manage the incident from their own incident control room.

In addition to that, the Emergency Services Authority will now have its emergency coordination centre being able to be run either out of Curtin or, when the new headquarters is built, at the headquarters at Fyshwick, where they will be able to coordinate the logistics and the integration of the other service arms in the event of a major emergency.

The ECC will be doing that to support the service that has direct responsibility—in this example, RFS—in case of a bushfire. We will then have, in the event of a major emergency, the territory crisis centre set up. That is where I will be, that is where the Chief Minister will be, and that is where the commissioner or his delegate will be, that is where the chief police officer and other heads of service will be as appropriate—for example, the chief health officer—to advise the government on what steps should be taken to warn the community or provide support to the community to make decisions about evacuation, the establishment of evacuation centres and so on.

We have a very clear arrangement now for the management of emergencies that separate the political and administrative or bureaucratic arms from the operational arms. We have both the physical infrastructure and the structure in place to properly manage an emergency of the scale that we saw in 2003. That is what is different. It is dramatically different from what existed before. It means that we are not going back to the ad hoc and haphazard arrangements we had in place prior to 2003.

MR SMYTH: In August 2003 when McLeod delivered his recommendations, the

government could not wait to implement them. They accepted them all, moved on them and said, “We will implement these.” Why has the key recommendation of the McLeod report only lasted three years?

Mr Corbell: I would argue that you only have to go and look at what McLeod has said. I know Mr McLeod has made some comments following the release of the budget.

MR SMYTH: Yes, he has.

Mr Corbell: He has said very clearly that he can understand that governments need to look for efficiencies in the context of a tight budget environment, but that the important test is to make sure that the operational independence of the four services is not compromised.

The issues I have outlined to you—the completely different framework that we have in place now compared to 2003 I think—demonstrate that the operational independence of the four service arms is not compromised. In fact, it is greatly enhanced from 2003. The changes the government has put in place are about administrative and financial efficiency. They are not about impacting on or compromising the operational independence of our four emergency service agencies.

MR SMYTH: Is this just a political move by the government to pre-empt the coroner’s decision when it is delivered?

Mr Corbell: No.

MR SMYTH: What if the coroner comes back and says that the existing ESA structure was the most effective way to manage emergencies in the ACT? Will the government then accept the coroner’s recommendations as quickly and as rapidly as they accepted the McLeod recommendations and revert back to an emergency services authority?

Mr Corbell: I don’t think it is reasonable to ask me to speculate on a report that has not been presented yet. We will wait and see what the coroner’s report says.

MR PRATT: How can you guarantee that the commissioner of the new agency will have equal power to any other departmental head when it comes to defining the operational user requirement and the priorities for operational planning and resourcing?

Mr Corbell: The commissioner is not a departmental head. The commissioner is responsible for this administrative—I use “administrative” in the broad sense of allocation of functions across government—element of government, the emergency services agency. The commissioner has certain statutory powers given to him or her under legislation.

In that regard, it is no different from a whole range of other statutory offices within government who sit within departmental arrangements but have particular statutory powers that they must exercise independently of government, and which they do successfully every day.

MR SMYTH: You said in your introduction that you valued the work of Commissioner

Dunn in his time as the head of ESA. If his work has been so good and you respect his opinion so much, surely his resignation is a condemnation of what you are doing?

Mr Corbell: I will not speak for Commissioner Dunn, but he issued a statement and he made it very clear that his resignation is not a protest. He said that in his statement.

MR SMYTH: That might well be in the statement, but you cannot read it any other way.

Mr Corbell: You can read it any way you like, Mr Smyth; I cannot stop you from doing that. Mr Dunn's words are his words and that is what he has put in his statement.

MR SMYTH: The blow-out in the budget of \$4.5 million follows the blow-out in the budget last year of \$5.449 million, and some of the elements are exactly the same. Minister, why did the government not put in controls to limit the spending of ESA to its budget?

Mr Corbell: The government sought to achieve greater control in the budget of the ESA. We do not consider it acceptable for any government agency to run over its budget. This coming financial year we will be working to ensure that the agency works within its budget.

MR SMYTH: So after a blow-out last year of \$5.5 million, how is it that it has been allowed to blow out its budget by \$4.5 million this year?

Mr Corbell: Clearly, the arrangements that have been put in place to manage its budget have not been effective. We need to make sure they are effective in the coming year. That is the clear task I have been given as the new minister, and that is what I will be expecting the public servants who report to me to achieve.

MR SMYTH: Can you detail when the changes were made?

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I refer to page 225 in BP4, strategic and operational procedures. Can you tell us where we are with the establishment of the new emergency services headquarters at Fairbairn? How is it progressing?

Mr Corbell: The new ESA headquarters is progressing. As members would know, a range of functions have already been transferred to Fairbairn. At the moment the air support operation centre is located at Fairbairn along with the Rural Fire Service. So we have the capacity for the housing and operational needs of aerial fire fighting arrangements when those machines are available during the fire season. They are located in one of the hangars at Fairbairn. As part of that hangar building the Rural Fire Service has been relocated to Fairbairn and it has its headquarters there. Its planning functions and one of its incident control rooms are also located at Fairbairn. It is a good set up and one that gives it a level of capacity it has never previously had.

In the coming 12 months the government will be working to transfer the bulk of the ESA's functions at Curtin across to Fairbairn. Work is now in the detailed stages for the fit-out of some existing buildings at Fairbairn and the construction of a new building. The new building would accommodate the ESA's headquarters function and also its new communications centre. I might ask Mr Prince to give you a bit more detail on that.

Mr Prince: Thank you, minister. The ESA headquarters at 15 Amberley Avenue is a new building that will accommodate not only ESA executive but also emergency management arrangements, facilities management, fleet management and communications. ACT SES headquarters operations will go in there and also the ACT Ambulance Service. A specialist outdoor training facility will provide a number of facilities for vertical rescue, trench rescue, hot fire training and urban search and rescue training. We will also be looking at a current building, the simulation and training centre, at 40 Laverton Avenue. A number of staff members are to go in there. We will be moving them in there shortly.

The ACT SES Pialligo unit, the old headquarters unit, will be moving into 13 Pearce Avenue, which has some minor training rooms as well. The front part of the support centre at 17-19 Amberley Avenue will accommodate ACT Fire Brigade headquarters and the fire safety and fire training area, which will be relocated later this year or early next year. The other component that will go in the rear will be a special operations capability. We will be looking at a number of facilities from Fyshwick. That will pick up our chemical, biological and radiological cache and our urban search and rescue cache in a warehouse in the rear of that building.

MR GENTLEMAN: Are you going to move all of Fyshwick there?

Mr Prince: No. The operational pumper and crews, and ambulance crews at the joint emergency services centre at Fyshwick will remain. We will consider moving the breathing apparatus section based on the parameters within the financial arrangements.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I refer to page 230 of BP4, output class 4, which states:

The results of measures taken in advance of an emergency aimed at decreasing or eliminating its impact on the community and the environment.

What are those measures?

Mr Corbell: I might ask Mr Prince to answer that question, if he can.

Mr Prince: Obviously, with any prevention and mitigation strategies, we need to look at the broad gamut right across the four agencies. I will commence with SES and refer, first, to storm and flood issues and to how we work with the community to inform them what to do in storms and floods. The Rural Fire Service has been doing significant work with the community over the last couple of years in prevention and mitigation and working with land managers as well. From a fire brigade perspective, we have been looking at electrical components, escape plans, smoke alarms, et cetera. The ambulance service obviously gives people hints about what to do in cold or hot weather and it also looks at CPR.

THE CHAIR: Minister, when you were making your introductory remarks you outlined a number of expenditure areas. I note that page 230 of BP4, output 4.1 states that an amount of \$15,448,000 has been allocated. The amount that was allocated for 2005-06 is not mentioned because it was brought over from another area. However, I believe it was \$13,494,000. I presume the additional resources that you talked about in your

introductory remarks are the reason for that larger amount?

Mr Prince: I will go through a number of areas. The total cost has increased in the budget. The factors contributing to that increased cost are: notional superannuation contribution rates, \$2.639 million; fire brigade work value cases, \$1.985 million; the establishment of the emergency services headquarters at Fairbairn, \$2.187 million; personal protective equipment and clothing, \$80,000 a year for the next four years; and high-rise aerial appliance and additional recruitment colleges, \$811,000.

MR SMYTH: I have a supplementary question relating to the headquarters. I assume that the headquarters will have air-conditioning, heating and cooling?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Minister, are you aware that after two years since its move from the Guises Creek location to Tuggeranong that the Tuggeranong SES still does not have any form of heating or cooling in its building? It is particularly hot in the summer and as it is a concrete structure at this stage of the year it is quite cool. When will the volunteers get adequate heating and cooling in their facilities?

Mr Corbell: I know that a whole range of volunteer sheds around the city do not have heating or cooling, or they have cooling or heating in only some parts of their sheds. Many sheds are large structures and you cannot, for example, heat or cool vehicle bays of large sheds. No, I was not aware of the situation in the Tuggeranong SES. The government has allocated approximately \$700,000 for the urgent repair and upgrade of all emergency services stations. Is that correct?

Mr Prince: That is correct.

Mr Corbell: So a prioritised list will be put together. A condition audit and an occupational health and safety audit will be completed by the end of June. That will enable the ESA to determine the highest priority in relation to urgent repairs and occupational health and safety issues that need to be addressed with that amount of money.

MR SMYTH: When will the occupational health and safety audit be done?

Mr Corbell: I am advised that that audit will be completed by the end of June, if it has not been completed already.

MR SMYTH: As another example, the SES unit at Tuggeranong was moved there on a temporary basis. It has been there for two years. Volunteers have been told that a decision will not be forthcoming on a new and permanent headquarters for that group for at least two to three years. Is that acceptable, minister?

Mr Corbell: The government has not made provision for new sheds for any of its volunteer units. Clearly, a range of SES units have indicated their preference not to continue with the arrangements you put in place, Mr Smyth—to co-locate SES and RFS functions together. With the exception of only one or two brigades, we know that the co-location of the SES and the ACT Bushfire Service has not been welcomed either by

one party or the other, or by both the parties. Of course, those arrangements were put in place when you were in government. So we are now having to managing that. We are managing it in the best way possible with the limited resources that are available for it.

MR SMYTH: But is it a good use of limited resources to allow the de-merger, as it were, to go into temporary facilities and then to leave them there for two, three, four, or five years until you have money to come up with permanent facilities?

Mr Corbell: Where that has occurred the SES units have indicated a preference not to be located with ACT Bushfire Service volunteers. I know that the chief officer of the SES and his staff have sought to accommodate that, but it has been on the understanding that there is no immediate provision for new permanent accommodation for those units where they have chosen to move. Those units have indicated themselves that they do not want to be co-located; so other arrangements have been put in place for them.

MS MacDONALD: Mr Prince, you referred earlier to the budgetary allocation for personal protective equipment and clothing, which is to be found on page 88 of BP3. BP3 states:

This provides for specialist Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing.

What does that entail?

Mr Prince: You are talking about structural fire fighting overpants and gear, bush fire fighting gear, ambulance overalls, personal protective equipment, overalls, helmets and boots. It is the whole gamut in relation to clothing and equipment for personnel. This year we have \$80,000 to manage that program.

MS MacDONALD: I note there is \$80,000 in the out years too.

Mr Prince: That is correct.

MS MacDONALD: Why is this specialist equipment, and how is it different from what is already available?

Mr Corbell: It is to allow continued supplies of PPE to be made available. As Mr Prince said, it involves the type of clothing needed by volunteers and paid members of the fire brigade, volunteers in the RFS, volunteers in the SES, and paid staff in the ambulance service. They all need particular types of equipment that meet their basic operational safety when they are on a fire ground or in other emergency situations. Equipment for the fire brigade is treated to a particular level and it is flame and heat retardant. Boots, helmets, and so on are treated to a particular level.

THE CHAIR: I assume that would include CFU volunteers?

Mr Corbell: Yes, it meets the needs of CFU volunteers as well.

MR PRATT: Minister, I refer to the establishment of ESA headquarters and ask you to clarify one issue. Does the audit that is being conducted on emergency services facilities include every shed, building, office, fire station and ambulance station?

Mr Prince: That is correct. Thirty-nine facilities within the emergency services authority or agency are being worked through at the moment so we can prioritise from an occupational health and safety perspective and establish the condition of those sheds and stations.

MR PRATT: By the end of June?

Mr Prince: We commenced a couple of weeks ago. At this stage I believe it will be the end of June or early July; so it could be next week.

MR PRATT: Would the results of that audit be ready in time to brief the committee?

Mr Corbell: I do not think so, given that today is the only hearing day.

MR SMYTH: You could always come back next week.

MR PRATT: Once that audit is complete will you be in a position to tell us what will be the bill to achieve the refurbishment and upgrading of all 39 facilities?

Mr Corbell: I think it is fair to say we know that the list of items on that audit will be ranked in order of priority. Only those with the highest priority will be able to access funding. I imagine it would be a fairly comprehensive assessment and not all those items would be able to be accommodated within the \$700,000 that has been allocated.

MR PRATT: But you would be able to categorise those that were urgent and those that were medium term to long term?

Mr Corbell: Yes. Mr Prince pointed out to me that the purpose of the audit is not to create a bill that establishes what you are going to spend; it will be an audit of condition and assessments will be made as to what items get priority.

MR PRATT: Why would you not want to create a bill, even if it is multi-phased?

Mr Corbell: Mr Prince might be able to answer that question.

Mr Prince: The most important thing strategically is to have a look at the rolling replacement program for our facilities and to obtain an understanding, over a number of years, of what we can achieve within budget. The most important thing for us is to address any initial occupational health and safety concerns and then deal appropriately with the condition of stations and sheds.

MR PRATT: Minister, with ESA headquarters and other ancillary elements being built in and around it, can you give us a breakdown or a ballpark figure of where that \$17 million will go?

Mr Corbell: Earlier, in answer to Mr Gentleman's question, Mr Prince referred to the range of buildings that will be accommodated in that fit-out.

MR PRATT: Yes.

Mr Corbell: There are buildings and new headquarters for the fire brigade, buildings for the SES, and so on. Assistant Commissioner Ayling might be able to assist you further.

Mr Ayling: I would like to comment on costs and the allocation of funds for the Fairbairn precinct initiative. It is divided into two parts. The first component is the costs associated with the building lease for facilities out there and the second component—which is what your question was about—is the capital expenditure for fit-out. That will be divided in three ways. The establishment and fit-out of ICT infrastructure will happen in three parts. The first component is the area infrastructure to put broadband connections into various facilities, connections within buildings, and then specialist communications equipment in the comcen and ECC, for example.

The second component is the fit-out of facilities. We have a combination of existing buildings, one new building for the new headquarters and a new facility that is a specialist outdoor training centre. The fit-out will add to what the capital airport group provides as the base lease standard for those buildings, which is at a high level as evidenced by the ASOC building that we took over. We will provide a fit-out for those buildings, which includes internal fixtures and fittings, internal walls that may have to be moved, and so forth.

The third component of the \$17.23 million is the acquisition of specialist equipment, for example, which will include vehicle hoists for the new workshop. So divided into three ways is specific expenditure on the buildings themselves. In our budget dealings with cabinet we identified projected expenditure on each of the buildings based on a normal industrial standard for fit-out of office space and fit-out of specialist areas. Specific costs will be determined through the acquisition process headed by ACT Procurement Solutions and the ACT Procurement Board to identify specifically, for example, how much would be spent in the office area of the support centre and how much would be required to fit-out the workshops and logistics centre.

MR PRATT: Forgive me if you have already detailed this but how many buildings will be leased and what is the total number of new buildings?

Mr Ayling: There are seven existing buildings, one new building and one new facility. Our approach was to define it as the ESA headquarters and support complex, which comprises a number of centres. You have been briefed on and have visited the air support operations centre.

MR PRATT: Yes.

Mr Ayling: The next centre is the simulation and training centre, which comprises two leased buildings. We are hoping to occupy those fairly shortly when the lease arrangements are finalised. The support centre will comprise two existing building, the logistics centre will comprise two existing buildings, and the headquarters is a new building. The specialist outdoor training centre will occupy a certain patch of ground and comprise a range of specific training facilities, including some training rooms, crew and staff ablutions, and so forth.

MR PRATT: Could you tell me what the breakdown of staff will be for the new ESA

headquarters and those other elements? Are you able to give an estimate? I know you cannot give me any detailed figures, but what is your estimate?

Mr Corbell: I do not think we can do that at this stage, Mr Pratt. The break-up of staff in the new agency is yet to be fully itemised and worked through. It is still early days.

MR PRATT: Could you give me a total estimate? Once administrative staff have gone could you give me a total estimate of staff in ESA headquarters?

Mr Corbell: No, we cannot do that at this stage.

MR SMYTH: Why not, minister? You put together a budget. You obviously made an estimate because you have included the cost of wages, superannuation, fit-out, new desks and computing services. You must have some idea what staff you will have?

MR PRATT: You know what space is available.

Mr Corbell: I do not want to give a particular number because that number may be subject to variation. When any numbers are given in estimates committees governments tend to get held to them, which is fair enough.

MR SMYTH: It is called accountability.

Mr Corbell: I am trying to be quite upfront with you in saying the detailed break-up of full-time equivalents across the organisation is yet to be fully resolved as a result of these changes. They will be fully resolved in the coming months. I will be happy to advise members directly or through the Assembly once that has been resolved.

MR SMYTH: How did you come to the figure in the budget papers for your staff budget? You must have some idea?

Mr Corbell: As I indicated, the government has not imposed savings on ESA separate from the changes that are being made in whole-of-government arrangements for shared services and so on. The challenge for ESA is that it has a budget overrun. That budget overrun will need to be addressed because the government is not prepared to accept further budget overruns. So the ESA and the managers of ESA, the commissioner, and the chief executive of my department, in particular, will need to work out and advise me how they are going to accommodate and manage that budget overrun to keep the operations of the ESA within budget.

MR SMYTH: On the budget overrun, an advertisement was placed in a number of journals in November last year. One of the attributes of individuals was that they be able to provide an analysis on the identification of financial and resource anomalies—an interesting statement to go into a job application. Could Ms Crowhurst tell us what financial and resource anomalies were discovered by that person?

Mr Corbell: I think the issues were outlined to you in answer to an earlier question. We identified the components of the budget overrun. We just provided that information to you.

MR SMYTH: What about the anomalies? The word “anomaly” is an interesting word to put in an advertisement. Were any anomalies found?

Mr Corbell: An anomaly is an item of budget overrun. Those have been identified; we have provided that information to you.

MR SMYTH: This individual was also to develop, coordinate and maintain all performance and budget reporting documentation within time frames and guidelines. Has that been done?

Mr Corbell: Yes. I believe that for some time now, certainly since I have been minister, the ESA has been reporting comprehensively and adequately on its budget performance and where it is facing particular challenges.

MR SMYTH: When did the \$4.5million blow-out first become apparent?

Mr Corbell: I have certainly been aware of it ever since I have been minister.

MR SMYTH: Why have you left it until today to announce that you will be going to Treasurer’s advance to receive \$4.5 million to cover the blow-out?

Mr Corbell: I do not think we have. In fact, I think that has already been advised publicly. If it has not, clearly it was the way the budget overrun was accommodated last year as well.

Meeting adjourned from 10.31 to 10.49 am.

Mr Corbell: Madam chair, just before the break, a question was asked about savings within the justice department. I have been advised during the break that, in addition to the shared services arrangements and obligations that the ESA will have to meet as part of being within the justice portfolio, the budget does identify \$743,000 worth of savings in this financial year as a result of an amalgamation of activities separate from shared services, and that grows to \$1.4 million in the outyears.

MR GENTLEMAN: Mr Pratt referred earlier to page 111 of budget paper 3. The last dot point on that page refers to station upgrades. We have heard about the emergency services upgrades at Fairbairn, but can you expand on the station upgrades in that area of \$700,000 and tell me whether they will include an upgrade of the Phillip fire and ambulance station?

Mr Corbell: We indicated earlier in answer to a question from Mr Pratt what this money is for. It is for urgent maintenance and repairs as part of the audit process that Commissioner Prince was referring to earlier in terms of the condition audit and the OH&S audit. In relation to the Phillip fire station, members would be aware that that station was briefly closed as a result of some OH&S problems. I will ask the commissioner to outline what has happened there, particularly at Phillip, because I know it has been a matter of interest to members.

Mr Prince: The situation at Phillip was about an exhaust extraction issue for diesel fumes from the fire appliance within the premises. It was actually allowing fumes to go

within the station area. We, in conjunction with the united firefighters union, ensured that we cleaned the station appropriately, we had a laboratory test done and we have fitted an extraction fan to finalise and fix the problem. The initial insertion of the fan was in an inappropriate place. It needs to be moved. It will be moved. Once it is moved, the truck will be back inside and the station will be functioning fully.

MR GENTLEMAN: So there is no need for a snorkel down to the exhaust.

Mr Prince: No. At this stage the extraction fan is extremely strong and, once it is in the right position and with appropriate airflow cuts within the premises, it will work very efficiently. I might add that, with the whole issue around operational station upgrades, we need to consider three things. They are the strategic plan overall for facilities, which is part of looking at it with government over a number of years, yet to be determined and agreed; the initial repairs against the OH&S audit and condition audit; and then, of course, a repairs and maintenance program that will work with DUS in an appropriate contract for all facilities.

MR SMYTH: Just on that program, minister, when I was in your seat the case was made to me that both the fire station and the ambulance station at Phillip had reached their use-by date, in conjunction with the Phillip police station. We have upgraded and built a new police station at Phillip. What is the long-term future of the ambulance and fire station at Phillip?

Mr Corbell: You are quite correct, Mr Smyth, that a number of our fire stations are reaching the end of their operational lives. The government has committed as part of its budget considerations that there will be an analysis of needs in terms of fire station facilities to take account of two things. The first is the age of a number of the stations and the other is, with the continuing growth of the city and new urban areas such as Molonglo not that far away potentially, we will need to look at whether there needs to be a rejigging of the spatial distribution of stations. So that will be work that will be happening over the next six to 12 months.

MR SMYTH: How much has been allocated for that study?

Mr Corbell: That will be work that will be done within budget.

MR SMYTH: Done within the existing resources.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR SMYTH: In the meantime, is the Phillip fire station compliant with occupational health and safety requirements?

Mr Prince: Yes, it is.

MR GENTLEMAN: I have a question on vehicles, minister. I understand that some money has been allocated for the purchase of new vehicles. Can you tell me what vehicles are to be purchased and expand on what vehicles there will be for the service?

Mr Corbell: Yes. I may not be able to recall all of them, so I might ask the

commissioner to assist me, but my recollection is that as part of the ESA's fleet replacement program we are anticipating that funding this year will be allocated towards a new pumper for the ACT Fire Brigade and a new superheavy tanker for the RFS. There will be two new ambulances, plus a lighting tower for the SES. Of course, that is in addition to the new aerial firefighting appliance for the ACT Fire Brigade.

MR SMYTH: What capacity will the supertanker have?

Mr Corbell: I ask Chief Officer Ross to come to the table. He will be able to help you with that.

Mr Ross: 6,000 to 8,000 litres.

MR SMYTH: So it will not be like the old Kenny, which had 40,000 litres.

Mr Ross: No.

MR SMYTH: Just on procurement, minister, how does that work? Does the department take into account suggestions from the volunteers on what they think they need and how is that responded to? From talking to a number of volunteers, particularly in the SES, no-one is sure where the call for a lighting trailer has come from. It has not been raised as a problem with me, yet the need for an elevated lift platform, which was raised very seriously and quite continuously for a number of months when we had two or three major storm incidents and a number of volunteers thought that they had been placed at risk, is not covered in this budget. How do we allocate priorities, how do we take into account what volunteers want and when are we going to have an elevated lift platform?

Mr Corbell: I will ask Mr Burkevics to answer your question.

Mr Burkevics: The requirement for a lighting tower has been identified in collaboration with the volunteers. We have a lighting trailer which is in excess of 15 years old. That trailer, because of the outdated generators aboard it, has been stripped of its generators, leaving us with very little lighting capacity. It was determined, as both an SES requirement and a support requirement for the other services, that a lighting capability was needed as a higher priority.

MR SMYTH: Who determined that the lighting platform was required over an elevated lift platform and when will the SES get an elevated lift platform that will meet their needs to look after the safety of volunteers and enable them to do their job better in storms and other situations?

Mr Burkevics: I can't answer in relation to when the SES will get an elevated work platform. I understand that a project between the SES and a volunteer of the SES is ongoing and it has resulted in a report being submitted to the chief officer SES. That report is still under consideration.

Mr Corbell: I think it is fair to say that the chief officers of both of the volunteer services, the SES and the RFS, and their deputies do engage closely with SES commanders and RFS captains. Certainly, I have had the opportunity to be present at a meeting which I know happens on a regular basis between commanders of the volunteer

units and the chief officer and deputy chief officer of the SES. That is an important forum for the leaders of the volunteer units to provide advice through to the commanders of the service as a whole. That is obviously an important forum. I know similar arrangements are in place for the RFS in addition to the bushfire council, which also provides important advice on those sorts of issues to the RFS. I know that there is a range of equipment that SES and RFS would like to see, but it is all about priority and it is all about determining what is the higher priority in terms of the operational needs of the service. That is ultimately a decision for the chief officers of the two services.

MR SMYTH: Following consideration of the report that you now have, if it is determined that the elevated work platform is required and required immediately is there room in the budget to purchase such a piece of equipment?

Mr Burkevics: I do not think I could answer that. It would come out of capital and I do not have that data with me at the moment.

MR SMYTH: Can you take that on notice?

Mr Prince: I would like to address that. I think it is important to understand that within our bids each year to government and going through the process we now have a capital allocation. Through the commissioner and the chief officers operationally we make a determination based on risk in issues across the board. So each year we have to take it, I suppose, on notice for ourselves to say we have a continued problem in a number of areas and we have got to weigh up what is the most appropriate approach.

MR SMYTH: What are those continuing problems?

Mr Prince: Anything with new technology is always an issue for us. A continuing problem is to understand do we have three or four ambulances and not have a fire engine, do we have a couple of fire tankers for the rural fire service, do we have command vehicles for the SES. We really have to look at our program overall. So it is not only vehicles in relation to this. We have to look at all the equipment that needs to go on them as well.

THE CHAIR: Will the new vehicles have compressed foam as well and how many compressed foam vehicles do we now have?

Mr Prince: We currently have four compressed foam tankers within the ACT Fire Brigade, two heavy and two medium, and we now have six units within the rural fire service. There is consideration, I think, in the specifications but yet to be determined.

MR GENTLEMAN: Whereabouts are those compressed foam tankers located?

Mr Prince: The ACT Fire Brigade ones are at Chisholm fire station and Gungahlin. For the rural fire service I defer to Mr Ross.

Mr Ross: We purchased three at the start of the fire season and they are single cab compressed air foam units. They have been distributed to Molonglo, to Gungahlin and to Geyser's Creek. At the start of every year we assess the fire risk around the ACT. So it is

quite possible that we will redistribute those vehicles at the start of every fire season. We recently purchased another three. They are dual cab compressed air foam tankers. We are going through the process now where we might be deploying those in the coming fire season. The deployment of our vehicles is something that we have talked about a lot lately. We vary that deployment, depending on the season's risk.

MR GENTLEMAN: Geysers Creek and Tharwa are about the farthest to the south of the region of the rural service. What have we got at Tharwa at the moment?

Mr Ross: At Tharwa we have an old heavy-water tanker, one of the large supertankers. Because of the bridge problem that we have at Tharwa we needed to make sure we had water on the other side of the bridge because of the longer route that we would have to take to get out to Tharwa. We also have a small compressed air foam unit that works out of Tharwa as well.

MR PRATT: Returning to the ESA headquarters staffing levels, clearly there is some idea of what the new buildings will be. With some idea of that, surely you must have a rough idea of the staffing required to man those new facilities. Do you have an upper level in terms of budget planning on this?

Mr Corbell: We do know what the full-time equivalent is proposed to be for 2006-07. The advice I have from the commissioner in terms of the headquarters at Fairbairn is approximately 130 to 145 people.

MR PRATT: Is that after the 19.22 FTEs have gone across? Is it minus that component?

Mr Prince: Mr Pratt, I think it is going to be difficult for us until we have actually had a look at the structure overall, and we have to understand with the merger within justice and community safety and also the shared services approach that we need to determine exactly. I think any approximation at this stage is really a guess on our behalf until we have really clarified what it means.

MR PRATT: Fair enough. As to the strength of the ESA now, before the 19.22 FTEs transfer to shared services, what is about the current FTE strength of ESA headquarters?

Mr Corbell: At the end of this financial year, I am advised, it will be 545.4.

MR PRATT: Is that for ESA headquarters plus agencies? Surely it must be.

Mr Corbell: That is ESA FTE in total. That includes the fire brigade—

MR PRATT: The emergency services in total.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR PRATT: Are you able to hive off ESA headquarters itself?

Mr Corbell: No. The reason for that is as I have already indicated to you, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Can you take that on notice?

Mr Corbell: I think I have already indicated to you why I am not able to give you a precise figure at this stage, but I am very happy to give you a precise figure once the merger arrangements have been resolved.

MR PRATT: Sorry, I will just clarify that. I am talking about the strength of the existing ESA headquarters.

Mr Corbell: Existing. I beg your pardon.

MR PRATT: For 2005-06.

Mr Corbell: We will see if we can get that for you. I am advised approximately 100 people.

MR PRATT: So there could very well be an increase in the existing strength of ESA headquarters?

Mr Prince: No, the issue is we have outposts that we have to bring in. We have people at Rae Street in Belconnen, we have people at Egan Court in Belconnen, we have people at Fyshwick and we have people within the workshops. There are a number of people external to ESA headquarters at the moment.

MR PRATT: When you talk about ESA headquarters as envisaged for 2006-07, are you really talking about those other support elements as well that currently sit in other stations around the place?

Mr Corbell: Workshops, stores and so on, yes.

MR PRATT: I guess we will have to wait until you get all that settled, but it will be interesting to see the break-up for each of those agencies.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I bring you to page 243 of budget paper 4 under output class 4.1. The first point there relates to community satisfaction levels. You had a level of 80 per cent in 2005-06 and you have estimated 90 per cent for 2006-07. Can you tell us how you propose to achieve those results and how they are being given to you by the public?

Mr Prince: We are currently doing a survey of a group of people through the community centres in Weston Creek, Belconnen, et cetera, and we are getting samples currently. That is being finalised at the moment. In fact, the Weston Creek one is, I think, the final one for this year. It is on tomorrow evening. Once we have all that data we will be able to have a look at how we are travelling.

MR GENTLEMAN: Have you targeted Weston Creek because of its previous association with the bushfires?

Mr Prince: It obviously has had a very strong association with the Emergency Services Authority since the bushfires.

MR GENTLEMAN: In the same output class there is a new line for administrative support training for which you have a target of 65 per cent. Can you tell us what that is about?

Mr Prince: It is in relation to the operational support training levels. It is about the new Australasian interservice incident management system and a training program is being implemented. That is ensuring that across the board for the emergency services, in all four agencies, we are looking at incident management, command and control, but we are also integrating and working with each of the services so that we can develop appropriate incident management teams.

MR GENTLEMAN: Has the system gathered up other emergency groups?

Mr Prince: It is the main one for emergency services within Australia and it is certainly an issue for us to understand what training is required across the board for all of our people. That has been developed this year and we will be implementing that process in 2006-07.

MR PRATT: I turn to communications, budget paper 4 at page 247, and the \$3.6 million rollover identified there. Why has the communications upgrade program been rolled over to 2006-07?

Mr Prince: There are a number of reasons. I will ask Mr Ayling to step back up, because he will have those answers at his fingertip. The changeover of the project team has modified the project time lines, but there are a number of other factors as well.

Mr Ayling: Mr Pratt, as I think you are aware, the radio project is quite an involved project. It has nine subprojects associated with it. It is a fairly ambitious project, to be delivered in quite a short period of time, to redress the operational deficiencies that we are all fully aware of. The procurement plan identified a certain spend pattern for the capital component that was allocated by government in the implementation of those subprojects, primarily in the big three, the TRN, portal and FireLink. In the deliverables for those projects there has been some slippage. That is quite a reasonable thing to occur in a major project. I can give details. For example, in the TRN project, phase 2B of the rollout, some of the actions are not totally within our preserve and that has caused a slippage in the construction of the two towers and associated equipment for phase 2B. Rest assured that the total allocation provided to us is going to be expended with a good result.

MR PRATT: What has been the hold-up with those two towers? Which other authorities have yet to come to the party?

Mr Ayling: All authorities have come to the party. Phase 2B requires towers to be constructed at Mount Tennent and Mount Clear. The Mount Tennent tower is quite an important tower for us. We work closely with Environment ACT on the issue of providing power to that site. The option is to have it self-contained with wind or other sourced power tailored to the specific needs of the equipment there or to run mains power into the area. That sort of deliberation of planning, as you can appreciate, is fairly complicated and involved and we have a way ahead for it.

Another issue with the Mount Tennent tower is that we don't own the tower and in the ACT various agencies use the available towers for their communication systems. As to the Mount Tennent tower, for example, we are now advised that the current tower is at its maximum loading of antennas and other kit on it and we are working to rectify that, to establish a tower alongside it. I just highlight those as a couple of examples as to the complexity in rolling out something as involved as the radio project, particularly the TRN component.

The other tower in question is at Mount Clear. It is actually located in New South Wales, just across the border to the south, and we are working with the New South Wales authorities, including our equivalents who are rolling out the New South Wales GRN, to collaboratively work to have that tower put up as well. The objective for both of them is in this calendar year.

MR PRATT: In terms of the power requirements for Mount Tennent, are you confident that those objectives will be achieved this year as well?

Mr Ayling: That is correct.

MR PRATT: What is the cost of those towers?

Mr Ayling: I don't have the specific costs with me, Mr Pratt. I would have to take that on notice.

Mr Corbell: We will take it on notice, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Please. In the annual reports hearings in November 2005, we got an update from Commissioner Dunn on how the TRN rollout was going. Does phase 2B bring you to completion of the TRN rollout? How many more towers do you have to go?

Mr Ayling: Phase 2B will complete the establishment of the towers which provide the backbone infrastructure. It is important to recognise with the rollout of the infrastructure that the New South Wales GRN is blossoming around us as we speak, so that our use of their towers and their use of our towers as part of a meshed network is occurring. For our program, 2B will be complete the number of towers. Phase 3 will be the extension of the TRN into the new comcen at Fairbairn. That probably will have a tower associated with it at the comcen.

I would add that the coverage provided by the digital network is very good in the ACT. We decided to split phase 2 into two components. The first part of 2A was Mt Ginini and Mt Baldy, I think. We split it into two phases. As we recognise the need to split phases for achievable objectives, we split it and 2A, with those two towers, and it is up and running. We are achieving very good coverage throughout the area with that. The coverage being found on the ground, as is always the case, is greater than the theoretical predictions provided by Telstra in their design of the system.

MR PRATT: RFS units are still using VHF, are they not?

Mr Ayling: At the moment, VHF remains the primary system for the RFS. TRN is available as an alternative system. With the rollout of phase 2B, we will be making

judgments in the next two months. I have aimed for not later than 1 August to make a judgment based on the achieved coverage of TRN to determine whether TRN should be the primary means to conduct RFS operations in the forthcoming fire season and have VHF as an alternative or vice versa. We will base our judgment on coverage in the area of operation and the maintenance viability of the systems.

MR PRATT: With the operational user requirement designed in 2003 for the entire communication suite of programs, and the appropriation of the \$23 million-odd, from memory, was not the aim of TRN to replace VHF entirely and to withdraw the old VHF equipment?

Mr Ayling: That remains the objective. That has not changed. It is just a matter of timing. What we cannot do, as you would appreciate, is jeopardise the operations of the RFS until we have a system that is fully accepted into service. There is no question about the viability of the TRN network. It is just coverage. We are doing practical testing at the moment to confirm the coverage and we will make a judgment.

MR PRATT: But the introduction of service of TRN has taken a hell of a long time, has it not? So these problems you are talking about, hopefully they are simply power. Are you fairly confident now TRN is going to completely replace VHF in 2006-07?

Mr Ayling: No. As I explained, we have to make a judgment. If we take an outcome-oriented approach, the RFS will be provided with reliable and good-capacity communications to support their operations. It may be that it is VHF primary and TRN alternative for this forthcoming fire season. It may be that it is the reverse of that. We are going to make a considered judgment as a team and we will make that as early as we can. With my responsibilities, I am suggesting that 1 August should be the time for the judgment to enable the RFS to undertake their period of battle procedure before the start of the fire season, noting that it could start earlier.

With regard to your comment that it seems a long period of time, the TRN component of the radio project is complex. The project team has been working closely with its New South Wales counterparts InTACT and Telstra and they are moving at a good pace forward. If we had had our druthers, the whole thing would have been in and fired up with all towers up and everything happily happening by now. But there have been some delays and, as I have highlighted there, practical delays largely beyond the control of the ESA.

Mr Corbell: Can I say too that the interoperability is an important element of this project.

MR PRATT: With TRN?

Mr Corbell: Certainly from what I have been able to see directly, we have now seen instances where emergency services from RFS, SES, New South Wales SES, have been training together, using the TRN network. From my direct experience I have seen New South Wales SES working with ACT SES and RFS through the TRN and that has worked well. Clearly we are heading in the right direction. Certainly TRN's coverage is growing considerably, particularly over the southern, south-western and north-western parts of the ACT in the more mountainous country where it is important for RFS

operations, and is certainly giving us a much improved coverage. But, as Assistant Commissioner Ayling says, it is a staged approach.

MR PRATT: Are you able to quantify what you believe you have reached in coverage now with TRN? Is there an accountability factor there that you can use as a measure?

Mr Ayling: If we had our druthers, we would live in a billiard table patch of ground. There will never be 100 per cent coverage of any UHF or VHF system. Our approach to that is to dominate our area of operations, to know where the coverage is, and, in areas where the coverage is poor because of the terrain features, to be able to deploy our deployable communications unit and our communications trailer and so forth to put a re-trans capacity into it. Our objective is to maximise the readily available coverage and most importantly to know where the coverage is not there, and to be able to do something about it in the time of operations. An ace in our pack, so to speak, is the blossoming of the TRN around us, in that from the New South Wales side, as that unfolds, our coverage and capacity will be enhanced because an SES or an RFS unit might be hanging off one of their towers coming in to the network and speaking directly to the comcen.

MR PRATT: So you cannot give a percentage quantification at this time?

Mr Prince: I think the most important thing is to understand that the percentage may help or may not. It is a technical approach. We have to overlay here the operational perspective in relation to firefighter safety in the field. Before we do anything, I think the chief officers and I will ensure that the technical realities are understood, and that in parallel we run both systems to make sure that we can cover appropriate areas. We need to know where we can operate and how we can operate and what procedures and processes we need to have in place to be sure that the captains out there dealing with firefighters know the right procedures as well as having the technical grounding.

MR PRATT: I understand all that and entirely agree, and, yes, there are still more towers to go, but you still cannot tell this committee what you have achieved in the past couple of years with coverage.

Mr Ayling: If I can answer that, Mr Pratt, separately I can provide details of the technical assessment of coverage of the network and, if the minister agrees, we can brief you on the proven coverage on the ground.

MR PRATT: Or even if you can provide something on notice, please.

Mr Ayling: Yes.

Mr Corbell: Happy to take that on notice, Mr Pratt.

MR SMYTH: Commissioner, is it acceptable that a project that was started in 2003-04 still will not be fully operational in the 2006-07 bushfire season? That we are to make a decision on 1 August as to what will be the primary means of communications for volunteers in the field, I would think is absolutely unacceptable. Would you not agree?

Mr Corbell: I think what is unacceptable is having the inheritance from a previous

government of a radio network that should be in a museum. That is what is unacceptable. That is what this government has provided the funding for to address. The VHF network that we have should be in a museum.

MR SMYTH: That is fine, minister, but you started a project in 2003-04—

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, please do not interrupt.

Mr Corbell: For the seven years that you and your predecessors were ministers for emergency services you did nothing to provide the funding to tackle this issue. In contrast, we have. It is a complex, technical exercise. Yes, it has taken longer than we anticipated for the reasons that Assistant Commissioner Ayling has outlined, but we at least have put in the money, the time and the effort to give our firefighters a radio communications system which is not a museum piece. That is the real issue.

MR SMYTH: There were significant upgrades in the late 1990s, as you know, minister.

Mr Corbell: Well, it did not work, did it, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: We can argue about what we did and what she did and what was not done but the problem is that, four years after the start of this project, it is still not fully operational, is it?

Mr Corbell: Well, through our services it is. TRN is used by the fire brigade, by the ambulance service, and by the SES. It is not the main vehicle for communication for the RFS, as Assistant Commissioner Ayling has outlined, but it is used as a secondary form of communication. I am sure, as you would know, Mr Smyth, it is used quite frequently now by RFS units for particular exercises, particular activities, and even for particular fire incidents in the past fire season. So it is used, but the question that Assistant Commissioner Ayling has outlined is: when should it become the primary voice communications channel for RFS?

MR SMYTH: When is it likely to become the primary voice channel communication?

Mr Corbell: I think Assistant Commissioner Ayling has answered that question.

MR SMYTH: Well, I do not think we got an answer at all.

Mr Corbell: He told you a decision will be made prior to the coming bushfire season as to whether or not it should become the primary channel for RFS.

MR SMYTH: For this season?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR SMYTH: What about for next season? When will the project be complete?

Mr Corbell: No, for the coming season, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Yes, but I am asking for the season after. When will the project be

complete and when will it become the primary voice communication channel for the RFS?

Mr Corbell: It has just been indicated that the intention is for this project to be completed in the coming financial year.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, item h on page 243 of budget paper 4 indicates that the audits of bushfire operational plans are 100 per cent for this year and will be 100 per cent for next year as well. Does that mean that all of these bushfire operational plans are completed and in place, and are there annual reviews of these plans?

Mr Corbell: I will ask Chief Officer Ross to answer that question.

Mr Ross: The bushfire operational plans are put in by government agencies each year. Those plans are reviewed and then sent back to the agencies for modification. Plans then have a 100 per cent desktop audit during the course of the financial year and there is a 10 per cent field audit across all plans during the course of the financial year with a reporting process back to our minister and to the appropriate ministers who are in charge of those departments that have been audited.

THE CHAIR: Sorry, Mr Ross, could you explain the 10 per cent? I did not catch that.

Mr Ross: Sorry. There was 100 per cent desktop audit across the plans and a 10 per cent field audit component. So we physically go out in the field and look at those.

MR PRATT: I return to TRN, minister. Can you explain whether money spent on TRN over the past two-odd years has been in excess of that appropriated, and can you clarify what that appropriation was within the \$23.6 million total appropriation for communications?

Mr Corbell: I will take some advice on whether it is within the appropriation. I am sure Mr Pratt already has the figures, but I am happy to provide them again. For financial year 2003-04, TRN received a budget allocation of \$312,000. In 2004-05 it received a budget allocation of \$9.7 million. In 2005-06 it received an allocation of \$2.9 million. So those are the previous financial years. Whether or not they are all within appropriation—has this project been without appropriation?

MR PRATT: Can you take that on notice, please?

Mr Corbell: I am happy to do that.

MR SMYTH: Sorry, do you have that knowledge there?

Mr Prince: Consistent with the approved procurement plan.

MR SMYTH: What was the expected outcome of expenditure on TRN back in 2003-04?

Mr Prince: In total?

MR SMYTH: In total.

Mr Prince: \$312,000.

MR SMYTH: No, sorry. The all-up project, when it was approved to go ahead, was expected to cost how much over however many years it was to be delivered?

MR PRATT: That was a slice of the \$23.6 million appropriated?

Mr Prince: \$23.668 million for communications overall—

MR PRATT: That was the total appropriated for communications. What slice of that was for—

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt, we are not to speak over the witnesses when they are replying to us. Hansard is finding it very difficult to pick up. Please wait until they finish speaking and then ask your questions of clarification.

MR PRATT: My mother always told me that too. You are quite right, chair, thanks.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Please continue.

Mr Corbell: I will ask Assistant Commissioner Ayling to give you the detail on this, Mr Pratt.

Mr Ayling: The procurement plan for TRN totalled \$15.7 million as a proportion of the \$23.668 million. The procurement plan that was approved had that expenditure spread over four financial years commencing in 2003-04 with the lion's share in 2004-05 with 2005-06 and 2006-07 having the residual expenditure.

MR SMYTH: So the expenditure expected in 2006-07 on TRN is?

Mr Corbell: \$2.825 million.

MR SMYTH: So there is a small overrun?

Mr Corbell: No, it is not an overrun. It is an allocated amount.

Mr Ayling: If I can make the point, gentleman, that the TRN is but one of nine subprojects of the radio project. It is the lion's share of the allocated capital, but it is not the only one. I reiterate that from my point of view the project is proceeding well. It is a complex project and the project team and associated folk have been doing a good job and we are driving hard to have the TRN as the primary for this forthcoming fire season. But we will proceed as I explained earlier.

MR PRATT: I now turn to Firelink. During the 2005 annual reports the commissioner acknowledged that the digital data communications program Firelink had not then been fielded, had not then been fully introduced to service as per the original intention, but he said it would be completely in service by the end of the fire season 2005-06. Has that been achieved?

Mr Ayling: No, it has not been fully introduced into service. The revised target date was the end of this month, 30 June. I understand you have been briefed on the Firelink project. It is a fairly revolutionary approach that provides significant capabilities in the field. As with all revolutionary projects there are two dimensions. One is the technical dimension and one is the procedural dimension. It is important to understand, in my opinion, that when you are looking at when projects were introduced into service that there are those two components. The first part the project team delivers on. The second part the chief officers and their operational teams deliver on. That is, how to alter or introduce new operational procedures, test those procedures and document them in SOPs and train with them so that the systems are fully introduced into service.

MR PRATT: Can you confirm, please, the number of vehicles intended to be fitted out with the Firelink white boxes and how many of those have been achieved? Secondly, can you confirm the number of emergency service users and teams yet to be trained?

Mr Corbell: We will take that on notice, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Do you want me to clarify that?

Mr Ayling: I understand the question. I have the Firelink concept of ops with me. I would prefer to take it on notice. I have the information but I would have to dig it out of the file.

MR SMYTH: Mr Prince, how many volunteers do we have in the RFS, in the CFUs and in the SES?

Mr Prince: In all areas? Let me have a look at my FTEs overall. The community fire units, 740; in the RFS currently numbers are around 450; and about 200 in the SES.

MR SMYTH: How do the numbers in the RFS and the SES compare to the numbers that are required to fulfil the roles of both services?

Mr Prince: One of the issues overall is the recruitment strategy that we are looking at for all services. Obviously about 50 additional volunteer firefighters for the RFS are required—I will be working at that this financial year—and approximately 80 additional volunteers for the SES.

MR SMYTH: That does not answer the question. How many RFS volunteers are required and how many SES volunteers are required to fulfil the obligations of both services?

Mr Corbell: That is a bit like asking how long is a piece of string, Mr Smyth.

Mr Prince: I think the difficulty in relation to emergency services is the range of tasks that we have and how often you have them. With storm incidents we know there has been a significant increase for the SES, and its numbers will obviously always ebb and flow through a process of people coming and going. There is a difficulty in maintaining appropriate numbers, but I will ask both chief officers if they can give us a figure.

Mr Ross: For the Rural Fire Service, the AIMS best practice report that we

commissioned earlier this year identified that to have a series of type-2 incidents—and for those who do not know, type 1 is a very small fire, type 2 is an ongoing continuing fire and type 3 represents the sort of 2003 scenario—the ACT would need 700 volunteers to address that sort of fire on a continuing 10-day rostered basis. The fact that we do not have 700 volunteers does not prevent us from attending type-2 fires, but it prevents us from doing it on a 10-day rostered basis. So we know that there is a point in time when we would have to acquire resources from other parts of Australia to help us fight that fire. So it is the knowledge of having to know what your resources are before those fires start.

MR GENTLEMAN: How does that compare, per capita, with other regions? New South Wales, or—

Mr Ross: As far as volunteers go?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, the numbers.

Mr Ross: New South Wales has 70,000-odd volunteers, Queensland have 60,000-odd volunteers. You have to be careful when those figures are touted, and this is something we did very deliberately at the start of the year. When I asked the question when I first started the job two years ago I was told we had something like 700 or 800 volunteers. There might be that many on the books, but it is active volunteers fully trained and capable of fighting. That is why—if you look in our papers—our numbers have fallen. But now we have a real figure and now that we have an AIMS best-practice model to work to we can address that.

MR SMYTH: Under the AIMS best practice model, how many of the 450 that you nominate as members of the RFS are AIMS compliant?

Mr Ross: They are all AIMS compliant.

MR SMYTH: So we have 450 that could attend continuous type-2 incidents?

Mr Ross: That is exactly right. Be careful: when we say AIMS compliant, there is a level of AIMS compliancy, without drawing too fine a point, at the pointy end, doing the hard work on the ground, putting out fires, pouring water at fires, that everyone is AIMS compliant there because they have done their basic AIMS knowledge course of what AIMS is all about. At the higher level, at a strategic level planning for fires, there's a smaller pool. You do not want 450 people trained at the higher level of AIMS because you will never use 450; you'll only use a dozen or two dozen people at the most.

MR SMYTH: Are you aware of how many of the 450 are active?

Mr Ross: That is an active figure.

MR SMYTH: That is the active number?

Mr Ross: Yes.

MR PRATT: In terms of those other skills, and I presume you are talking about incident

controlling—

Mr Ross: That is correct.

MR PRATT: have you met the full requirement? Are all your officers fully compliant?

Mr Ross: Absolutely. All the officers required to run at the higher level of incidents have been fully trained. In fact, they were upgraded earlier last year.

MR PRATT: Were volunteers to walk through the door, do you have the budget to achieve the full 700?

Mr Ross: It would be physically impossible in a short period of time to obtain 700 volunteers, simply through attrition rate and also maintaining volunteer interest. It is something we are aiming for over, say, a five-year program. The budget figure we have for that gives us a growth figure for each of those years.

MR PRATT: You have the budget for 80 more, have you not?

Mr Corbell: That is right.

Mr Ross: Fifty more.

MR SMYTH: Fifty RFS.

MR PRATT: Fifty more, yes.

MR SMYTH: Could we have a similar appraisal of the SES numbers, please?

Mr Burkevics: The preferred target level of the SES is 350 volunteers. That was identified as a result of the McLeod report, which suggested the need for volunteers to cover a third shift arrangement. Our target is 350 and, similar to RFS, to attain that number now is difficult, considering the training and induction requirements and physical limitations of premises et cetera.

MR SMYTH: What is your program to get to the 350?

Mr Burkevics: Next financial year we are embarking on a course of four induction programs of 20 volunteers, which is quite a considerable induction program for the SES. Those additional volunteers will assist in the natural attrition of SES volunteers, which is 18 per cent per annum.

Mr Corbell: So that is 80 additional SES volunteers this year.

THE CHAIR: Are we going on more about volunteers or are you leaving that subject?

MR SMYTH: I thought volunteers were your favourite subject.

THE CHAIR: That is why I was going to ask a question.

MR PRATT: You go ahead, chair. I will come back to Firelink, if I may, after you.

SMYTH: Are you going to ask the question: what is the cost of a volunteer?

THE CHAIR: No, I was not going to ask that question. Minister, are you aware that there is a worldwide trend at the moment of volunteers not necessarily wanting to stay very long in organisations, with a high turnover of volunteers in all areas of volunteering and difficulties being experienced across the board?

Mr Corbell: Yes, I am, Ms Porter. Obviously, more and more people have more and more demands on their time. Volunteering for an emergency service takes a real commitment of time in terms of investment in the training, in making time available for the training and for associated activities. It is a real and serious commitment and certainly that does take its toll on some people. Some people find that, given all the other demands they have in their lives, they cannot continue to make that commitment.

THE CHAIR: So the point you are making is that it is a long-term commitment, rather than the short, one-off commitment that often volunteers want today or the limited time commitment many volunteers want. This one is over a number of weeks and months. In fact, it could be years.

Mr Corbell: It is definitely years. To be trained as a volunteer and to be capable as a volunteer, there is a significant period of time involved in either the SES or the RFS or the CFUs, for that matter.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, there was a sharp increase, I understand, in volunteers over the bushfire time and shortly afterwards. I suppose you find it a bit of a conundrum that that is the time you need to recruit, but you do not want to have those incidents to find the recruits.

Mr Corbell: I think it is fair to say the ESA have found, as have other rural fire services, the SES and so on in other places, that it is always during or after a big incident that everyone wants to get involved. But that does eventually wane, and that is certainly what has happened here in the ACT. It is three years ago now and people's interest in the issue has waned. Fires are not on the front page of the paper or in the forefront of everyone's mind every day anymore. That is a natural thing that the ESA has to manage.

Now, with the additional funds that the government has given them, they will be able to go out and get more volunteers, train more volunteers and equip more volunteers. We do know that there are still people who are interested, but it is certainly not the same volume of interest that it was three years ago. Often when people really, really want to volunteer, it is the last thing on the service's mind; there are lots of other things to worry about. Now is the time to do the recruitment and the training and that is what we are investing in.

MR PRATT: If I may, I will return to Firelink, minister. You might ask Mr Ayling to answer this. How many Firelink communication boxes are now installed on towers?

Mr Ayling: I would like to take the same approach I took to the earlier question. I will take it on notice. I can explain, as has been highlighted in separate information provided

to you, that the Firelink coverage is comprised of two components. One is a fixed infrastructure coverage where we seek to put the units on our existing communication towers and other locations. For example, we are just investigating putting one on top of Mount Ainslie to enhance the coverage in and around the airport area. The strength of Firelink is its mobile repeater capacity.

In terms of the specific numbers on towers right now, I will take it on notice and provide an answer to you. It would be the intention also, when the phase 2B towers go up, that we will put them on there as well. At the same time, as we go into our field testing to identify where the black spots may be, we will work out what we are going to do about them. There are two solutions for that. One is to put a repeater on the tower and extend the fixed infrastructure coverage. We will know that will be an area, if we are operating in there, where we will have to deploy the field communications trailer.

MR PRATT: Was not Firelink boasted to be a system that would be entirely mobile? Is not the fact that you are now going to fixed installations an admission that this system is failing in terms of its mobility?

Mr Ayling: I could not disagree more. Because we live in our area of operations, what we are doing is placing mobile units in permanent locations, if you wish; that is, sticking them on towers. The strength of the unit is in its deployability, and I think we have to look a bit more widely and say that it is highly likely that our SES and RFS have to be prepared to operate outside our area of operations. For example, if they had gone to Innisfail when the cyclone went through, they would have been able to take Firelink with them to provide the incident controller with a 2D or 3D common operating picture to enable the incident controller to have automatic vehicle location and short SMS texting to the deployed units. I think we should not be coloured by the fact that we are sitting in the middle of our area of operations. Of course we are going to use the fixed repeaters as much as we can.

MR PRATT: Firelink is not interoperable with New South Wales firefighting units unless they install a box. Isn't that true?

Mr Ayling: That is perfectly correct, and the acquisition included a number of spare units that could be fitted with vehicles of other services or other agencies who are allocated in support of our SES or our RFS.

MR PRATT: But how can you do that if it takes time to train crews? If there is a joint operation required and New South Wales units turn up, how can you train them in time to take those white boxes and operate them? Is that a pre-designated—

Mr Corbell: Mr Pratt, you keep following this red herring, and it is a complete red herring. The issue of interoperability is about voice communication. Voice communication is the primary form of communication for the RFS and the SES. So the primary issue around interoperability is voice communication—radio. Firelink is not a radio, Mr Pratt. I do not know how many times we have to try and tell you this. Firelink is not a radio. Interoperability is not the issue with Firelink.

MR PRATT: I know it is not a radio, but McLeod did require that interchange—

Mr Corbell: Interoperability for voice communications, and that is what we have achieved.

MR PRATT: But you are spending a lot of money—

Mr Corbell: Mr Pratt, you are obsessed about this issue, and I do not understand it. Firelink is not a radio, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: I know it is not a radio.

Mr Corbell: It is a short messaging service for data communication. It is a secondary form of communication. All primary forms of communication are by radio. Radio is required to be interoperable, and that is what we have achieved with TRN.

MR PRATT: But why, then, have you spent a very significant amount of money on a backup digital data communication system if the primary need is purely voice communications? Why are we spending so much money?

Mr Corbell: This has been explained to you on a number of occasions, Mr Pratt. I do not know whether we need to waste the time of the committee explaining it to you for the sixth or seventh or eighth time, but for the information—

MR PRATT: That is not true, minister.

Mr Corbell: I know because I have seen the number of FOI requests and briefings you have had on this issue, Mr Pratt. It has been extraordinary. It seems that, no matter how many pieces of paper we give to you, you cannot seem to understand the basic concept.

MR PRATT: How many FOIs have been answered, minister? None.

Mr Corbell: But perhaps for the information of other members, the purpose of Firelink is to provide a short messaging service to provide supplementary or additional information secondary to that which is communicated by voice to units on the ground. It also provides GPS location for vehicles so that GPS location can be provided to vehicles directly, as well as to incident controllers and to communication centres managing the incident.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, Mr Pratt does raise an interesting point, though. What is the communication ability with those other regions if they come into the ACT?

Mr Corbell: Well, they would rely on voice, and voice is achieved through the fact that we have a TRN network that can link into the New South Wales government's TRN network.

MR GENTLEMAN: So we would have full coverage with that?

Mr Corbell: I will ask Mr Ayling to elaborate on that a little.

Mr Ayling: We strive to have direct interoperability with the folk that we are likely to work with, recognising that there are technical and procedural dimensions of

interoperability. We cannot have interoperability with everyone, and that is where we have spare units, in this case Firelink units. There is a proven practice of attaching liaison officers to units that might be deployed from elsewhere to support your operation. Those liaison officers take the necessary communications with them. In our case, we would expect it to be TRN if they came from Queensland or somewhere else that did not have compatible frequencies and so forth, and Firelink if those units were being deployed where vehicle location and a common operating picture for an incident controller were deemed important.

MR GENTLEMAN: You mentioned Firelink earlier on and the mobile repeaters. How many of those do you have?

Mr Ayling: The beauty of the Firelink system is that each terminal acts as a repeater. So in other radio systems, earlier technologies, there was a designated repeater that would interoperate with a number of ground stations. The attraction of the Firelink is that it is a self-replicating network. Each vehicle acts as a repeater in addition to providing the communications for the crew of that vehicle. It is an automatic network that can be extended either serially or in an area and the radio connectivity is achieved by the system automatically to provide vehicle location, message texting and, most importantly, for the first time to give the incident controller an electronic common operating picture to see where his assets are dispersed. That would be in addition to the older proven method of marking it on a map.

MR PRATT: I have two supplementaries and then I think we can probably move on. Minister, the single source tender for Firelink was justified because the service wanted to have it in operation and fully introduced to service in bushfire season 2004-05. That has failed. The budget has blown out by 25 per cent as well. Can you now guarantee that this very, very late program will be fully operational by bushfire season 2006-07?

Mr Corbell: Well, my advice is the budget has not blown out.

MR PRATT: There is a 25 per cent increase.

Mr Corbell: The advice I have is that it has not blown out. I will ask Mr Ayling to give you some more detail on that and the other element of your question.

Mr Ayling: The information that I have been briefed on is that Firelink is within the original procurement plan, and the allocation for that was in the order of \$3.9 million. I guess the thrust of your question is: is it worth it and was there some other capability out there, such as the fixed network, Mobitech, that supports the fire brigade and RFS? The judgments were made by Commissioner Dunn through the procurement unit, not by the ACT Procurement Board. This breaking edge technology system that is now in use with a number of other users, including the Royal Australian Navy, suited our unique needs.

Irrespective of how much money the government puts into the rural fire service and SES, we are never going to have a large force, and in my view, as with the new CAD system, Firelink provides a valuable force multiplier to enable the chief officer RFS or the chief officer SES to better utilise his or her assets when they are out in the field. It is a system that provides us with capabilities that previously did not exist in the RFS and the

SES. We think it is a good system.

As with any new system, in addition to the technical and procedural aspects, there are some new concepts for how operations that this system enables us to do might be conducted. From my point of view the capabilities of those two services and the ESA as a whole really have been enhanced by the decision to proceed with the radio project, particularly these two subprojects.

MR PRATT: Minister, with Firelink, did any members of the ESA have any commercial links, directly or indirectly, with ATI before, during or after the tendering process when Firelink was chosen?

Mr Corbell: Not that I am aware of, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Can you take that on notice to check, please?

Mr Corbell: I think this information has already been provided to you, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: No. We have tried to get that information, minister, and we are not getting it. Can you take that on notice?

Mr Corbell: Well, it is a fairly serious imputation that you are making without any substance to it that there is some sort of corrupt activity. It is a fairly serious claim you are making. I am not aware of any, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: With all due respect, the question is not asked lightly. There are good reasons for that. I can only ask you to take it on notice.

Mr Corbell: Well, I have given you my answer, which is that I am not aware of any.

MR PRATT: So you will or you will not take that on notice?

Mr Corbell: I have answered your question. I am not aware of any.

MR PRATT: Thank you.

MR SMYTH: Minister, under the public service management act, statements of pecuniary interest are kept for senior officials. As well, senior officials seeking to get a second job must have approval. One of the dilemmas that seems to affect the head of the ESA is that when Mr Pratt, for instance, attempted to look at the statement of pecuniary interest, we found that it was actually held by the officer himself. Will that be changed because of reporting arrangements that you have now put in place?

Mr Corbell: I would have to take some advice on how the position would be treated in regard to the Public Sector Management Act. In relation to Mr Pratt's request for release of the declaration of personal interests, that matter has been referred to me, as the responsible minister, to be the decision maker on Mr Pratt's FOI requests. I have recently actioned that request and Mr Pratt should receive an advice shortly.

MR SMYTH: You might need to take this on notice, then. When the commissioner was

appointed, did he provide, under the terms of clause 17 of his contract, details of personal financial interests that he had, and did he seek permission to continue his involvement as a director with a company called Recoilless Technologies International Corporation?

Mr Corbell: I do not have the details of the declaration of interest in front of me, but the commissioner did make a declaration of personal interest, as he was required to do.

MR SMYTH: Did he seek permission to continue as a director of another company, as is required by the Public Sector Management Act?

Mr Corbell: As I was not minister at the time, I would need to take that question on notice.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, on page 244, output class 4.2, there are some accountability indicators. Could someone run us through the percentage targets for this coming year under c, structure fires confined to room of origin, and d, determination of cause of fire? Currently for c the percentage is 80. Perhaps we could deal with c first.

Mr Prince: Structure fires confined to room of origin is about response times and people getting to the scene on time. It is also going to be dependent on the propagation of fire within the room of origin, the actual loading within that room, how long the fire was going before it was reported. It is always going to vary. The fire investigators actually looking at the determination of the cause of the fire, along with the Australian Federal Police forensic people, if it is arson, are getting a better understanding of what is happening here in the territory. So we have actually changed those to reflect the more appropriate approach.

THE CHAIR: And the next one, d.

Mr Prince: For d, determination of cause of fire, with the fire investigators now on scene we are getting, I suppose, more confident and competent people having a look at fires on a regular basis and understanding the nature of what they are seeing and what they are dealing with.

MR GENTLEMAN: While we are on this output class, if I could just bring you back to page 231, there are references to response and recovery. Can you expand on the strategies relating to the response issues addressed there? It is under the heading "Output Description".

Mr Prince: It is very broad, Mr Gentleman. I think the situation there is to understand that with any response the improvement that we have to undertake in relation to understanding the risk that firefighters, ambulance officers, SES personnel and RFS personnel are dealing with is such that we want to control that by going through prevention and preparedness. We are really looking at targeting the community overall before we get to that point. The important thing is to increase public awareness and also increase the preventative components.

That then links in to the response component and looks at the strategies that we need to do to control, limit or nullify. With technology, we are finding appropriate practices in land management so that we can mitigate the extent of bushfires. That is also happening through the Building Code of Australia in the way that we operate in the structural fire area as well.

MR GENTLEMAN: What about the recovery aspect and the community area of that output class underneath?

Mr Prince: Essentially the main role for us there is to interact with the community more appropriately and ensure that recovery activities commence from the time of any incident. Our work through the emergency management committee and a number of other agencies around the territory has improved dramatically since the 2003 bushfires. We understand fully that it is necessary to look at business continuity and community recovery as early as possible. So we are now starting or commencing that process well and truly when the event starts.

That goes back to emergency management practices, where the appropriate plans are put in place—the operational plans are put in place—to deal with possible worst case scenarios and how the recovery personnel will actually commence their work prior to the event.

MR GENTLEMAN: And how long did that take to occur before?

Mr Prince: It probably was not occurring to any degree. We are actually analysing this more appropriately after community concern.

MR SMYTH: Minister, when you were the health minister, you said you would be turning ambulances around in a much quicker time at the emergency departments. Is that being achieved? Are ambulances leaving the hospital within the 10 minutes, as specified? Can you outline the number of instances where paramedics have had to stay with patients on gurneys in corridors or where ambulances have been required to stay at hospitals because they have not been able to gain access?

Mr Corbell: I will ask David Foot from the ACT Ambulance Service to give you an update on the situation there.

Mr Foot: The phenomenon of delayed offload at the hospitals has been impacting on us. This is not a situation that is unique to the territory. It has been experienced in some form or another in every other state or territory of Australia. What the ACT Ambulance Service has done, in consultation with ACT Health, is introduce a delayed offload procedure. The problem actually occurs when the accident and emergency department of the hospital reaches its peak handling capacity, obviously with a flow-through of patients through the department.

To mitigate this, we have put a number of strategies in place, in consultation with ACT Health, the hospitals and the unions, which involve the timely triage and offload of ambulant patients either into the waiting areas or areas that don't require high care. We do see delays; however, we have a number of strategies in place to address these as they occur.

MR SMYTH: Is the number of delays increasing or decreasing because of the procedures put in place?

Mr Foot: It tends to fluctuate from week to week. We meet with health on a weekly basis about delayed offload. For example, last week the delayed offload, say at Calvary, which normally is basically inconsequential to the actual delayed offload, had increased as opposed to the Canberra Hospital, which declined substantially.

MR SMYTH: How many instances of delayed offload were there at Calvary last week?

Mr Foot: I would have to take that on notice.

MR SMYTH: Is it possible to get—and I assume you would have to take this on notice—a list or a monthly summary of delayed offloads, and how many times ambulances have not been able to leave the hospital in the required time frame?

Mr Corbell: We will take that on notice. We will probably need to liaise with ACT Health, but we will endeavour to get you those figures.

MR SMYTH: There are also reports of patients in corridors, with paramedics in attendance. Could we also have that number of instances, please?

Mr Foot: That would be extremely difficult to quantify. When an ambulance is delayed at an accident and emergency department, as I said, there are a number of strategies that are enacted immediately through the admitting officer or the triage officer to allow that ambulance to offload. As to the exact instances where officers are left minding patients in a corridor, that may be fairly difficult for us to quantify. What we can do is answer the original question on notice as to how many times that actually occurs.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, while you have Mr Foot there, you mentioned earlier on, or I asked you about, the new vehicles coming into the ambulance service. Can you tell me what input working paramedics have in the construction or supply of these vehicles and/or any other equipment that comes to the service?

Mr Foot: Certainly. Ambulance has an extremely proud tradition, I would say, through its vehicle and equipment committee, which has been commended on a number of occasions. We have an extremely interactive role with unions, occupational health and safety representatives within the workplace and our staff alone. Through this committee we have a very clearly defined procedure where we will develop a base specification for a category one or intensive care ambulance vehicle.

That specification is then worked up through the committee, obviously bearing physical constraints in mind, best practices and OH&S approaches to the vehicle base as well. I am pleased to say that the vehicles we certainly commissioned earlier this year through the government initiative have been extremely well accepted by staff within the service.

MR GENTLEMAN: Is there any other special equipment ACT officers use that has been manufactured after their input?

Mr Foot: Certainly. I would not say manufactured. We obviously have requirements within the department for very specialised types of equipment. We are currently in the middle of a procurement process for new monitored defibrillators, and also we have just recently commissioned, or are about to commission, the new stretcher program, both of which were funded by government last financial year.

We have had teams of our staff dedicated to the stretcher program. We have also had key staff members from operational having input into the design parameters and application of the new equipment within the workplace. We maintain an extremely interactive role with our staff, within reason obviously, in the introduction and/or choice of new equipment within the workplace.

MR GENTLEMAN: As staff are getting older, how many are retiring? How many new staff do you need to get in? What are the promotion levels like?

Mr Foot: Unlike some of the other agencies, the ACT Ambulance Service does not tend to have an extremely high attrition rate of staff. I could not give you the exact figures at this point in time, but the average career estimate for a serving officer from my department at this stage would have to be anywhere between 10 and 15 years. However, I will take that one on notice if you need additional information on it.

MR SMYTH: The service seems to be in for congratulations under accountability indicator f. The 50th percentile is eight minutes, but for 2005-06 you achieved, if I am reading this right, 7.4 minutes.

Mr Foot: Certainly. There are a number of factors that impact on our response times within the territory. That may be due to population growth, it may be due to high demand or it may be due to delayed offload. There is a whole range of issues that impact on our response times. The challenge for us there is to ensure that we are looking at different strategies on how we are going to effectively manage that over time.

MR SMYTH: Sorry, that was a pat on the back. You are actually doing 50 per cent of cases in 7.4 minutes, rather than eight minutes.

Mr Foot: Our response times are very good. I thank you for the compliment, but we are very careful not to bang the drum too loudly.

MR SMYTH: Not all questions have barbs.

Mr Foot: Accepted.

MR SMYTH: But here comes the barb. Having achieved a 7.4 minute outcome for 50 per cent of your cases, why have you left the target for this year at eight minutes?

Mr Foot: Simply because to go to anything lower than eight minutes I would consider to be unrealistic at this point in time. We are seeing an increased demand for ambulance services within the territory. There is an average of about an eight per cent growth on a national basis per year. We have other extenuating factors that impact on our ability to respond, such as delayed offload or a general increase in emergency calls.

MR SMYTH: Is delayed offload affecting your ability to respond?

Mr Foot: Certainly. If we were not managing it correctly or if we were not managing proactively the strategies with ACT Health, it would certainly have a detrimental impact on our ability to respond, yes.

MR SMYTH: For the 90th percentile, indicator g, your target was 12.5 minutes, but 13.1 minutes was the outcome. What led to that?

Mr Foot: A whole range of mitigating factors. As I have previously identified, there are issues purely sometimes just based on demand, where we cannot provide enough resources to meet demand at the time. As hospital practices change within the territory, the throughput processes change and we have people discharged a lot earlier. Once again, that increases demand for non-urgent and urgent responses by ambulance within the territory.

MR SMYTH: Is that expected to get worse?

Mr Foot: Certainly the national trend in workloads will continue, yes.

MR SMYTH: Have you been adequately funded in this year to meet that trend?

Mr Foot: At the moment we are looking at a number of strategies. We are about to commence what we refer to as an operational review. We will look at doing an analysis, in combination with the other states and territories, on demand patterns and work patterns that are occurring, not only in the ACT but also on a national basis, to try and get a better understanding of what is going to actually drive demand for services within the territory itself and in combination with the other states as well.

MR GENTLEMAN: What criteria are involved in issuing a job to the helicopter away from the road-based ambulance service?

Mr Foot: The aeromedical tasks and guidelines are developed in combination with the medical retrieval unit in Sydney, which is the sole tasking authority for a response into New South Wales. It is critical to understand that, in the southern regions of New South Wales, health care is very sparsely populated, from a clinic point of view. Some of the existing establishments are certainly not in a position to offer the level of care that may be required, due to the trauma they experience in that region.

An example may be an entrapment on the Hume Highway. We know that will end up in Gundagai, which is a very small healthcare centre. We would certainly be requested to attend, to provide the high level of care that we do through the Snowy Hydro SouthCare aeromedical service. Other components for response of the aircraft may include search and rescue on behalf of AMSA or the Australian search and rescue office and also medical retrieval. That forms the majority of our work, which is interhospital work.

MR GENTLEMAN: Would that go to some of our rural areas far south of Canberra, but still in the ACT?

Mr Foot: It would be unlikely to put the aircraft into very close lying areas, due to the

fact that it is probably more effective to put a road resource in there at the time. It would solely depend on our ability to actually even put the aircraft in the air or on a judgment at the time by the duty officer as to whether it was better to resource it with a road resource or an aeromedical resource.

MR SMYTH: Just following up on aeromedical resources, indicator i says that the target is to get the helicopter off the ground within 15 minutes. I notice that the actual outcome for this financial year is almost double that—27.2 minutes. Note 7 indicates why, and it lists things like flight planning, deployment of paramedics, other tasks, aircraft reconfiguration and weather. Can you give us a breakdown in those different classes in note 7—the reason for the helicopter being delayed and taking off?

Mr Foot: Not an exact breakdown, but I think what we need to bring into perspective is that the 15-minute turnout time for the aircraft from time of call is benchmarked against some of the Sydney providers; ie, Careflight, Westpac or surf, which operate with a crew available to the aircraft immediately.

Certainly at the start-up of SouthCare that was not a requirement, due to the fact that the workload was a lot less than the other services around Australia. The judgment at the time—and it probably still stands—is that the value of having the physician available at the hospital to be able to respond to the base is of much more value than sitting at the base full time waiting for the next job to come in. We operate slightly differently, and obviously that extends our response times.

MR SMYTH: That is fine, but I notice that you don't have a target for the 2006-07 year. Why is that?

Mr Foot: Purely because the 15-minute target that was applied previously was probably considered to be unrealistic, given our crewing model.

MR SMYTH: Why not make it a 20, 25 or 30-minute target, then?

Mr Foot: I would certainly be open to discussion on that point.

MR SMYTH: If we are going to have a discussion, why have you not put a target there? How do we assess the effectiveness of the response if we don't know what we are judging it against?

Mr Foot: You need to be careful not to mix that up with the clinical outcomes for the patient at the other end. What you need to put into perspective is that a lot of our taskings are extremely long in the southern region and it is not uncommon for us to incur a greater than two-hour flight time. If it takes us a little bit of extra time to get the aircraft into the air due to flight planning, weather or ensuring that we have the right clinical mix or bloods on the aircraft, then I don't see that as a major drawback.

From a KPI or reporting point of view, as I have stated previously, the 15 minutes that was previously reported against was considered unrealistic, due to the fact that we provide a different crewing model arrangement here in the ACT than they do in the other states and territories of Australia.

MR PRATT: If I can just turn to hazard reduction, is the strategic bushfire management plan still in draft form or is version 2 now complete? We had a version 1 and a version 2.

Mr Corbell: Version 2 is still in production. Mr Ross might be able to assist you further.

Mr Ross: SBMP version 1 came out, obviously, a few years ago. At the time it came out it was envisaged that, all things being equal, we could have got a revised version out of that plan. I think the record should be clear that the SBMP, or strategic bushfire management plan, is a series of guidelines that help all the government departments and landowners within the ACT develop the bushfire operational plans that we mentioned earlier.

The fact that we don't have a revised version of the SBMP does not hinder in any way, shape or form the preparation of those bushfire operational plans. It would be good to have a revised version of the SBMP. That would help us improve on the factors that we already have in the SBMP and it would help us refine a lot of the data we have, but it would not hinder our capacity to prepare very comprehensive bushfire operational plans every year.

We could get lost in the wash of trying to rush so quickly into getting a revised version of the SBMP that we would lose focus on the preparation of the bushfire operational plans. I know there has been a lot of talk about it. The current strategic bushfire management plan is the only one of its type not only in Australia. You probably will not find another one in the world. It covers all tenures across the ACT and you will not get that in other states of Australia. It is a very comprehensive document in itself, and it is a very forward thinking document.

MR PRATT: Does that BOP lay down the benchmarks by which land managers must do their preventative planning, and does it provide the commissioner—or yourself, for that matter—with the power to ensure those benchmarks are achieved in time for the bushfire season?

Mr Ross: That is precisely what the current SBMP does. The bushfire operational plans stemming from those is what, as we mentioned before, we audited against to ensure that they achieve the guidelines that are set out. So yes, it does achieve those factors already.

MR PRATT: Are you satisfied that you or the commissioner of the ESA have the authority to empower land managers to meet preventative targets, which you yourself may even lay down?

Mr Ross: Yes, it certainly does. That is part of the revision process that we go through every year.

MR PRATT: What happened, therefore, in the bushfire season of 2005-06 with that little fire we had at Yarralumla where clearly—and this is the view of many—Urban Services had not completed their preventative tasks in and around the brickworks, and certainly between the brickworks and the Yarralumla suburban back fence? What was the breakdown there? Was it that the BOP did not lay it down clearly enough?

Mr Ross: No. That is a really good example, actually. What never came out in the press

on that was that the Yarralumla brickworks was a really good example of where all the preventative measures had been taken. Just after the 2003 fires ACTPLA, who at that stage were responsible for the land, removed all the large trees very close to the dwellings.

Two weeks prior to that fire occurring CUPP, who had just recently taken over the management of that area, slashed the grass. So the larger trees close to the houses were removed and the grass was slashed. Nothing more, from a preventative point of view in that brickwork area, could have been done.

The fly in the ointment was the fact that, over part of that border area on the interface, people still had the old brush hedges—not picket fences but brush fences. Where the fire ran to the brush fence, it ran up the brush fence, along the pergolas and into the houses. Where people had—some defiantly, I might add—put in Colourbond fences, the fire went to the fences and went out.

Without sounding pious about it, from an ACT government perspective, we had done the preventative measures with the trees and the grass. We had done everything we could up to the interface. At that next point, it was really up to them. I am not blaming the person for having a brush fence but, without realising it, the brush fence was a wicking process from the fire to the house and that caused the fire to run like that.

MR PRATT: I know that back fence is an urban services responsibility. Residents have said—do you agree or are they wrong—that long grass up to about five metres from that back fence was also a factor, in addition to those brush fences?

Mr Ross: The run the fire took was much more than five metres. It started several hundred metres down the bottom.

MR PRATT: I know that.

Mr Ross: By the time the fire got towards that back fence, a five-metre run was not going to cause a fire to do that. I know there would have been difficulty in slashing some parts of it just because of the contours in the ground. So you would not even have got it right to the back fence. But certainly the assessment made by my people of that area prior to that fire is that the slashing had been done as adequately as it could have been done in that area.

MR PRATT: I refer to the five-metre gap there, that residents indicate was the case. There is certainly a five-metre gap along the western edge covering a very significant portion of westerly aspects of the southern suburbs. Surely that is not a standard that you would want us to see again between the back fences and ACT Environment parklands.

Mr Ross: You have to be careful in the way you interpret that because with a five-metre gap—if all you had was five metres of long grass between your back fence and an open field, that five metres of long grass should not be the difference between a fire belting into your fence and taking a house out. It is the run the fire takes, it is the energy it develops. That is what happened with the brickworks. It was a bad, blowy day. Some people obviously lit the fire and the fire ran. It ran across cut grass. I am confident there is nothing more that could have been done in the brickworks scenario.

In the scenario you are pointing out, if we get carried away with the five metres behind the back fence, we will take our eye off the big picture. The big picture is making sure we have that patchwork quilt effect across the entirety of the ACT.

Despite all the best intentions that we have, we will never be able to have every blade of grass mowed and every area protected as we would like to have it protected—that simply will not exist in the perfect world we live in—but we will be able to get, with the strategic bushfire management plan and through the bushfire operational plans, a strategic patchwork across the ACT that addresses the major fire runs in the major areas of the ACT.

MR PRATT: But in addition to the quilt work pattern you want, particularly in ACT Environment managed land and some of the urban edges, for what don't you require a break? What is your benchmark in the BOP for the amount of cleared space you want between suburban house back fences and the long grassed areas? What do you lay down? What is your standard? I am talking about the westerly approach, not the north or the south.

Mr Ross: I would have to refer back to the guidelines of the SBMP. They are quite specific as to what is required. But we have to be careful. This might sound silly, but even a westerly aspect, depending on where that westerly aspect is coming from and what is between it—whether it is between houses or whether it is coming from a very rocky knoll—is site specific, so you have to look at that in isolation. I guess the concern I have had over the last 12 months is the concentration on specifics in small areas. We will run around chasing our tails doing that. We will never protect the ACT doing it that way.

Mr Prince: May I also say that the community awareness, their activity at their own back fences and that shared responsibility that we are encouraging them to take on, is the approach we need to have. Their back fences are also protecting their yards, so we would hope they are doing the right thing just outside the fences as well.

MR PRATT: Turning now to community fire units, minister, why have you not provided additional funding in 2006-07 to continue with a rollout of the CFU program?

Mr Corbell: It is a matter of priority. A large number of CFU units have already been funded. We took the decision that there were higher funding priorities for emergency services this financial year, in terms of PPE, additional bushfire volunteers, additional SES volunteers, additional vehicles and so on. That is where the priorities should be for this financial year.

MR PRATT: What was the number of CFUs you promised in light of the McLeod inquiry and post-2003, of course?

Mr Corbell: I am advised that the government has never promised a specific number of CFUs.

MR PRATT: Did McLeod recommend upwards of 80?

Mr Corbell: I am not aware of what McLeod recommended. I would have to take it on

notice as to whether or not he indeed recommended any figure.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much.

MR PRATT: Is the minister taking that last question on notice?

Mr Corbell: As I just indicated, I am not aware that McLeod recommended any particular figure but, if he did, I am happy to advise you of it.

MR PRATT: Thanks.

Mr Corbell: I am sure you have it on your bookshelf anyway.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Meeting adjourned from 12.29 to 2.07 pm.

THE CHAIR: I welcome the officers from ACT Policing. You should understand that these hearings are legal proceeding of the Legislative Assembly, protected by parliamentary privilege. That gives you certain protections but also certain responsibilities. It means that you are protected from certain legal action, such as being sued for defamation, for what you say at this public hearing. It also means that you have a responsibility to tell the committee the truth. Giving false or misleading evidence will be treated by the Assembly as a serious matter. I am sure you all understand that. Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Mr Corbell: No, not on this occasion, madam chair. I am very happy to go straight to questions.

MS MacDONALD: My question probably is more for the Chief Police Officer. I am curious about an issue which has been raised by my local Neighbourhood Watch group and which, I note, was mentioned in the paper on the weekend as well, namely, the decision not to publish certain figures in newsletters or on the internet. I am curious to know the reason for that, because it has caused concern within Neighbourhood Watch groups.

Mr Corbell: Before I ask the Chief Police Officer, Ms Fagan, to answer that in detail I wish to indicate that the government at no stage has made a request in relation to that information not being available. We were quite comfortable with the previous arrangements. I think the Chief Police Officer can give you a bit more context around what is happening there. That story certainly came as a surprise to me.

Ms Fagan: In relation to Neighbourhood Watch, I can advise the committee that in February 2005 ACT Policing and the Neighbourhood Watch Association's executive met and agreed that ACT Policing would continue to provide, and have been providing, statistics—I will go into the detail of what they are—on a monthly basis, but mutually agreed that they would not be published on their web site.

When I saw the article I too asked yesterday for a review of that and wish to point out to this committee that there is no censorship occurring from ACT Policing in what

Neighbourhood Watch choose to do as an entity on their web site. So we are working to have that retracted now. On the 28th, being tomorrow, the Neighbourhood Watch committee and ACT Policing are meeting on that point. I should point out it was a decision of the previous executive, February 2005. I wasn't in the role.

The data provided to Neighbourhood Watch on a monthly basis which appears in all the suburban Neighbourhood Watch newsletters covers monthly crime statistics, including the geographic area of a crime, the suburb, the start and end date of an issue, the start and end time of the issue and the street name, excluding the number. The offence types that are reported on and covered in those newsletters are assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, theft and criminal damage.

I might point out that it was the president of the Neighbourhood Watch Association with the ACT Policing executive that did agree to this way forward. My understanding is that there was some analysis, potentially premature analysis, occurring on the web site that would say things like a 400 per cent increase this month, but seen over a quarterly or an annual trend it really wasn't that. I think that the motivation was that it could be seen as alarmist, and yet we really appreciate the significant role Neighbourhood Watch has in helping the community understand the crimes and being able to assist us by reporting what they see either anonymously through Crime Stoppers or by the police assistance line.

I would like to assure the committee that that is being addressed. Similarly, attendance at Neighbourhood Watch meetings is being addressed. This is a key body. If you put Neighbourhood Watch with Crime Stoppers and with Community Safety House, these are all areas that we must engage with and be very active and support in whatever way we can.

MS MacDONALD: I appreciate that. I would just add that it was raised at a meeting that I went to at least two months ago and I had meant to pursue it. As it came up in the newspaper over the weekend and you were appearing today, I thought I would take this opportunity to ask the question. I do appreciate that and I will certainly relay it back to my local Neighbourhood Watch group.

MR PRATT: I have a supplementary question. So there has been no change at all, under any circumstances, to what was the traditional agreement between police and Neighbourhood Watch on those statistics which were published.

Ms Fagan: No change on what, sorry?

MR PRATT: The article in the paper is incorrect, meaning the story that you had been surprised by was entirely incorrect and there will be no change at all to what has traditionally been the agreement or the arrangement between police and Neighbourhood Watch on the production of statistics in their regular routine flyer.

Ms Fagan: There has been no change to that. We provide them monthly and they appear in the newsletters. There was an agreement struck with the president and the executive of Neighbourhood Watch not to post those results or analysis on their web site.

MR PRATT: Which are anomalies, yes, I see.

Ms Fagan: So they were being provided. The *Canberra Times* article actually says the president was satisfied. However, I don't believe that it is the role of ACT Policing to say what Neighbourhood Watch should or shouldn't do. The only thing I would point out is that if we get an analysis over a four-week period you might be skewing the data and I am told that two years ago this is what was occurring. For example, a 400 per cent increase may be four offences compared to one offence in the month, but over a year there is a much smaller margin. It is that alarmist part that I think was the motivation to manage it.

MR SMYTH: For what period will they now be posted on the web site?

Ms Fagan: I can't speak for what the Neighbourhood Watch Association do with their web site. It is just that we are not seeking to have an instruction that says to do this or do that. I think it is entirely up to them after we provide statistics to do with them what they will.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I take you to page 231 of budget paper 4. There has been an increase in the funding for ACT Policing in this financial year. There is a description of what that is going to provide underneath, but can you tell me and maybe expand on whether this figure includes the funding for extra police?

Mr Corbell: The government has made provision for 60 additional police in this year's budget and that comes on top of other allocations for additional police in previous budgets. By the end of the 2008-09 financial year there will have been an additional 100 police funded by this government, a very significant increase in the level of police resources. For the 2006-07 financial year an additional 27 positions will be funded. They are proposed to be distributed with 24 additional full-time equivalents to north and south districts and three full-time equivalents to the child sex offenders registration team, to give us the base capacity we need to meet our obligations in relation to the child sex offenders register, which is a national scheme.

In the following year there will be another 43 police trained, recruited and brought on line. Those officers will again work to supplement traffic and general duties patrols in north and south districts. In the final year there will be another 10 officers, so a very significant increase in the level of policing, but one that we believe needs to be provided to meet the demands police are facing in our community and to respond to the findings of the joint study on ACT Policing which the government commissioned approximately two years ago.

THE CHAIR: Minister, as to the increase of \$3.6 million in 2006-07, you just outlined the increase in the police numbers. Is that the total expense or are there other expenses in that \$3.6 million increase?

Mr Corbell: Which page?

THE CHAIR: I am sorry, on the same page, page 231, output 1, that Mr Gentleman talked about an increase.

Mr Cresswell: In terms of the budget appropriation, there has been \$3.7 million

appropriated in terms of the increased patrol strength in 2006-07. There has also been additional funding of \$478,000 appropriated in terms of ACT Policing facility upgrades. That brings it to \$4.2 million.

MR SMYTH: Just on that, if there is an allowance of \$3.7 million for additional patrol strengths and the CPI currently runs, according to the government's own document, at 2.75 per cent, the \$98.491 million that we currently spend, if you just add CPI, is taken to \$101.2 million. If you are then going to add \$3.7 million to cover the new patrol strengths, that will take it to about \$104.9 million, yet there is only \$99.5 million. Where are the savings coming from, minister?

Mr Corbell: I am sorry, Mr Smyth, I didn't quite follow your question. Would you do me the courtesy, please, of repeating it?

MR SMYTH: The current cost of AFP services for this financial year is \$98.491 million, page 231. The budget for next year is \$99.513 million. If you use the government's own multiplier for the consumer price index of 2.75 per cent—I won't even go to the wage price index—surely just to keep parity with what you spent this year and cover the CPI it has to go to at least \$101.2 million before you add anything else to it. Where are the savings coming from in the AFP that allow you to put on top of that \$3.7 million for extra patrol strength?

Mr Corbell: There are no savings measures for the AFP, ACT Policing.

MR SMYTH: There are no savings.

Mr Corbell: No, there are no savings measures. We purchase for a particular level of service and the figures that we have are the figures that we anticipate are what we will need to pay to purchase that level of service. In relation to cost escalations around wages and so on, I will ask Chief Police Officer Fagan to address that.

Ms Fagan: In relation to our certified agreement or what will be known as the collective agreement, that is still being negotiated through the AFP as one collective agreement involving all AFP people. Subject to the outcome of that collective agreement, we will provide advice to the minister for consideration of any further proposals that may need to be considered. That, of course, would be then a policy decision for government, but at this point our certified agreement, future collective agreement, has not been settled.

MR SMYTH: What has the AFPA asked for in terms of pay increase?

Ms Fagan: That is still a negotiating point and there are a number of unions covering the AFP, bearing in mind that the protective service integration also brought in the CPSU for some people, and I believe there is a further union as well. It is a relatively complex negotiating point. The AFPA representatives in the ACT are part of that dialogue and I am not briefed on what the claims are at this point.

MR SMYTH: Of the \$99.5 million that the ACT will pay in the coming year, what percentage of that will go on wages?

Ms Fagan: I don't have that precisely and we are best off taking it on notice to get a

precise figure, but it is generally as a rule between 85 per cent and 90 per cent at the higher end paid on salary; so a high percentage.

MR SMYTH: As 85 per cent of \$99 million is \$85 million, even a two or three per cent wage increase would see an additional \$2 million or \$3 million on top of the current bill. Where will that money come from?

Ms Fagan: As I explained, we would provide advice when we know the outcome to government, which is what we have done each and every year in any event.

Mr Corbell: The important thing to stress here, Mr Smyth, is that the ACT government does not control wage negotiations for the AFP, but I have had a discussion with both the AFPA and obviously Ms Fagan and the commissioner on this issue and have indicated to both of them that it would be useful for the ACT, obviously, to be kept informed of the progress of negotiations. But at the end of the day, we are not the decision maker around wage levels for the AFP.

MR SMYTH: Will you come back and ask for extra money from the Assembly? Will it be funded out of the Treasurer's advance?

Mr Corbell: I am not going to speculate because I don't know what the outcome will be.

MR SMYTH: You must have some idea. They are going to give you a bill.

Mr Corbell: Number one, I don't know when they are going to give me a bill, if they are going to give me a bill.

MR SMYTH: So are we crossing our fingers?

Mr Corbell: No, but the point I am making is that the territory does not control the wage negotiation process for members of ACT Policing. That is done as part of the AFP's broader wage bargaining framework and we will be kept informed as to how that progresses. If it means an adjustment to the budget, the government will consider how best to manage that adjustment.

MR SMYTH: Have you made provision in the existing budget, but not identified in this output class, for pay rises for AFP officers in the ACT division?

Mr Corbell: I am not aware of any provision being made. That would be something that would be considered as and when it emerged.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, while we are on the wages question, has the integration of the protective services component of the AFP had any effect on the budget for ACT Policing?

Mr Corbell: No, it hasn't. It is a federal function, a commonwealth function, and it does not affect us.

MR GENTLEMAN: But they will be negotiating as a block for their pay rise.

Mr Corbell: Yes, but we don't employ protective services personnel. They are not part of ACT Policing.

MR PRATT: Minister, given the CPI factor and given the negotiation on the certified agreement and the unknown end result of that, how can you guarantee that you will be able to purchase 60 additional police?

Mr Corbell: That is what the government is paying for and that is what we expect will be delivered. I am advised that the new positions do have a provision for the certified agreement.

MR PRATT: Okay. So you have got contingency in there to carry the certified agreement plus the other factors that we have just been talking about.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR PRATT: So you are hell-bent on getting those 60, no matter what.

Mr Corbell: Absolutely.

MR PRATT: Well done.

Mr Corbell: We need those additional 60 police over the next three years; there is no doubt about that.

MR PRATT: With regard to the 27 that you are seeking to purchase in 2006-07, what do you anticipate that that will take ACT Policing's FTE strength for 2006-07 to?

Mr Corbell: To 831, I'm advised. Is that right?

Ms Fagan: It is 833.

Mr Corbell: It is 833; I beg your pardon.

MR SMYTH: Is that 833 sworn officers?

MR PRATT: Is that in total? Is that sworn and unsworn?

Ms Fagan: Yes, it is 833 FTE that we are anticipating will be the FTE to settle, going from 796. So we are just adding 27 at this stage. The 27 are police, there are no administrative staff within that, and it is a commitment to high-visibility policing, response times, as an absolute priority.

MR PRATT: Is 796 your total FTE for 2005-06?

Ms Fagan: I beg your pardon?

MR PRATT: I think that 796 was the number you just used. Did you mean that was the existing FTE, 2005-06?

Ms Fagan: Correct, that is what we are currently working to. As to the minimum funded level that we are anticipating with the 27 positions, I did a simple maths exercise and said 833. The financial impact of it says 829. We will have to give you a brief on why there is a difference of four. If we are funding 27, plus 796, it is quite clear in my mind, unless Mr Cresswell would like to explain.

MR SMYTH: That is the beauty of new maths; the answer can be anything you want. Let's work on 833. Let's use your number. How many of those will be sworn and how many will be unsworn?

Ms Fagan: In the total?

MR SMYTH: In the total, yes.

Ms Fagan: I don't have a breakdown of what that will be at this point, unless someone can help with hands on. I can tell you that, as of 14 June, we have 845 FTE today, so we are now moving out of averages into what we have actually got today, with 624 sworn—I should not say today; I should correct that; this is at 14 June—and 221 unsworn.

MR PRATT: I presume the 796 is what you expect to have on 30 June. Is that your budgeted number for the end of the current financial year, in three or four days?

Ms Fagan: We average it out from the beginning and the end of the year and balance out. It must come to at least 796. I must point out that consistently over the past few years we have exceeded that. I put that down to good management of the staff in getting those numbers a bit higher.

MR PRATT: All right, but your annual report for 2005-06 is probably going to express a number something like that.

Ms Fagan: It will be the average.

Mr Cresswell: The annual report will have a staffing count as at 30 June. It will be a static figure. In all probability it will be in the quantum of 845 or thereabouts.

Ms Fagan: The report on government services will have the average.

Mr Cresswell: The report on government services will have this number, which is the average of the starting and ending points, just to keep everybody confused.

Ms Fagan: There is a number of demands on how we report figures.

MR PRATT: I do not know how you guys manage this moving feast.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, whilst we are still on these levels, if we were to take an operational officer off the beat in the ACT to take up a position overseas, how would that position be filled? Would it be filled from an operational position out of the national part of the AFP or from recruits?

Mr Corbell: Generally speaking, the ACT's expectation, I think, is the most important

thing, Mr Gentleman, and, if there is any transfer of AFP personnel from ACT Policing because of overseas deployment, we expect those vacancies to be filled. It is up to Ms Fagan and her team to work out how they are filled. The least preferred outcome is overtime, but overtime can be utilised. The other is transfer of other personnel from national operations into ACT Policing, but Ms Fagan is more across this than I.

Ms Fagan: As of 23 May, we had 28 of our staff deployed to the IDG. We factor into our work force planning a capacity that will work in the IDG. It is career development. It is an opportunity to serve, just like every other state and territory police service. As I have just pointed out, at 845 FTE as of 14 June we are exceeding our 796 FTE in any event. We manage that in proactive way by doing some careful work force planning to enable movement into and out of the ACT, because that is what generally occurs. I started here on 4 July as a movement in and somebody else would move out. That is the way we manage our FTE and our service to the ACT government purchase agreement.

MR GENTLEMAN: The minister touched on the use of overtime to fill in for people who are away. What are the overtime levels currently?

Ms Fagan: The overtime for this financial year to 14 June is totalling \$4,972,590.26. This equates to an average year-to-date payment of approximately \$9,085.18 per eligible employee.

MR GENTLEMAN: I was just trying to gauge a rough percentage.

Ms Fagan: About \$5 million of our \$94.7 million this year. We set that and we manage that. It gives us a particular surge at times—for example, Summernats—when we will have people come in and do extra work on overtime. It is an important component of that sort of surge capacity. Similarly for a major investigation where you can't predict, it will be beyond your patrol strength, but you will need extra staff in. So overtime is an important part of our planning.

MR GENTLEMAN: I would imagine that it would be a lot less expensive to pay officers overtime rather than trying to recruit and going through the training process to fill those positions.

Ms Fagan: It is getting the balance right and having a capacity that is there so that when we get the additional 27 FTE police we will then look at—and we are doing this right now for 1 July—what our overtime budget should be set at and perhaps we can modify it back a point, but we do hold some in reserve for operational duties.

THE CHAIR: What does the acronym IDG stand for?

Ms Fagan: The international deployment group which deploys to the Solomons, East Timor and a number of other places, Somalia now. There are a few.

MR PRATT: Is the IDG number of 28 included in that FTE?

Ms Fagan: No.

MR PRATT: Can you please tell this committee what you estimate will be the wastage

rate, the loss rate, of police for 2006-07? What attrition do you plan for?

Ms Fagan: Mr Williams has the detail on that.

Mr Williams: Mr Pratt, we are currently examining our work force plan for the next year, but the total attrition in terms of retirements, resignations and transfers, to be healthy, would be in the order of five per cent and we can manage that within our work force.

MR PRATT: Is that five per cent of the total FTE?

Mr Williams: Of total FTE.

MR SMYTH: So what is it? If five per cent is healthy, what is it?

Mr Williams: There are a bunch of varying definitions on what constitutes healthy separation, depending on the industry. Historically, our separation rates have been very low. Generally, we release only about three or four people a month for career development purposes. Provided we maintain the throughput of recruits at the start, which is what we have done, and we develop a recruit training profile for the next 18 months, we can sustain the reasonable passage of individuals who need to move on for career development purposes. We also take into account the effect of the baby boomers that are starting to move on and retire at their notional retiring age.

MR SMYTH: In the current financial year how many officers in the ACT have resigned from the AFP?

Ms Fagan: I think we need to take that question on notice as we do not have that detail here. I apologise for that.

MR PRATT: Can you give us a figure for 2005-06?

Ms Fagan: We should be able to provide you with figures for the year to date. We will get that back to you very quickly.

MR SMYTH: And possibly the two previous financial years?

Ms Fagan: They will be in the annual report. We are happy to provide figures for the two years.

MR PRATT: Does the additional policing program take into account the attrition rate? Are you talking about a net increase with these additional police?

Ms Fagan: Yes, it certainly does. We have had a very active recruiting campaign. In fact, 20 recruits started at stations last Monday. We are already 845 over, so we are hitting at a strong point as we come into the next financial year. Currently, three further classes are still going through recruit training, which enables us to factor in serving the international deployment group where we have attrition, retirements and movement of staff for natural career development. Those recruits are due to graduate in July, September and October. That is five classes this year and there were two classes last

year, plus three lateral classes. To make it simple, for the financial year 2005-06 a total of 138 recruits came into the ACT in a combination of base, new people and lateral from state or territory police services.

MR PRATT: I am looking at a series of figures in the annual report which show your FTEs as at 30 June, for the four consecutive years of this government, starting at a total of 802 for year 2001-02 and culminating in 796 for 2005-06. To me that indicates a net loss of six, but I know that you also recruited police in the last five years. How do you reconcile the recruitment rate you had over that period versus the drop in FTE—a net loss of six? I think that will impact on your plan for the 60 new recruitments.

Ms Fagan: In relation to what is set as the FTE, as I stated before, in the past two or three years we have exceeded the FTE rate of what the government requires and what we deliver. I am not clear on what set of figures you are quoting from. Are you going to what is set or what we have delivered? It is important to discern that because we have exceeded what the ACT government sought us to deliver and that stands on its own. In relation to planning next year for the 833, the recruiting we have already done factors that in and achieves it from 1 July. You have start-up and lead-up time.

MR PRATT: You have factored in anticipated wastage?

Ms Fagan: We have factored in wastage and we have also factored in aviation security. As the commonwealth now funds airport policing we will be required to provide of the order of 20 police for that area. They all sit as additional capacity until they are drawn from the commonwealth. In essence, it is a plus for the Canberra community.

MR PRATT: I am referring to four consecutive annual reports. Is it not true that annual reports are designed to give us authoritative numbers in the delivery of government services? If I cannot refer to numbers in the annual reports to what do I refer?

Ms Fagan: There are two. There is the report on government services about which you have sometimes asked questions and on which I am happy to report. So there is the annual report. The report on government services is an average figure and the annual report is a point in time figure. So we begin to talk about two different things. In some respects it is almost like Neighbourhood Watch. We have to be clear which set we are talking about in order to be clear about what service we are achieving.

MR PRATT: Which set of figures do you think we should be referring to in order to get a true picture of police strength, increases in police numbers, capability, et cetera?

Ms Fagan: I think that both are important. At a point in time we are required to report annually to government on what the service is. So that point in time figure is very important. We then have to get that as much in sync with the report on government services. That might be the focus that we should have because the report on government services averages them out. I plan in a monthly setting in the executive committee of ACT Policing, so we are finetuning it at that level. I believe that the point in time annual reports are equally as important as the report on government services.

MR PRATT: We have those government services numbers, do we not, so I do not need to ask you to take those questions on notice. Maybe this committee should have a look at

both sets of numbers to see what the delivery of service means in relation to police capability.

Ms Fagan: We would be happy to table those and go back the three years as well.

MR PRATT: Yes, please.

MR SMYTH: You mentioned airport security and 20 officers that are funded by the federal government.

Ms Fagan: Correct.

MR SMYTH: They are not included in the numbers that you quoted for ACT Policing.

Ms Fagan: No.

MR SMYTH: Where are they currently? Do they sit under ACT Policing but conduct a federal role, or are they run directly out of the national office?

Ms Fagan: They are not yet in place. We are working towards an implementation time of the end of September or early October. In the process of our recruiting activity we are building that capacity for the service at Canberra airport. A number of other states and territories are in the same position of building that capacity.

MR SMYTH: But you will not field 20 brand new graduates into the airport; you will draw them from other areas and recruits will backfill them?

Ms Fagan: There will be a mix of skills; that is correct. It is important that our recruits, throughout the 12-month experience phase of their training, complete a workbook that satisfies their graduate diploma. So a key aspect is that they do that part of their career first.

MR SMYTH: And that will be as AFP officers, not as Protective Service officers?

Ms Fagan: That is correct; they will be police officers. We are utilising a fairly strong phase of interest from lateral recruitment, or previously short-term retirees who are interested in coming back. So that is where we will purchase the experienced set.

MR GENTLEMAN: That was going to be my next question. How strong a field of applications do you get in the graduate course for recruiting in the AFP?

Ms Fagan: At the moment the national side looks after our recruiting. I have been advised that a total of 1,000 people are vying for positions in the AFP. So we are in a very strong position for people competing for recruit placements, whether they be in ACT Policing or the national roles, because they continue to recruit as well.

MR GENTLEMAN: Has that level risen over the last few years?

Ms Fagan: From my knowledge of it, it has been fairly constant. I am not an expert in the area but they are very highly contested positions.

MR GENTLEMAN: For how long does the graduate course go now?

Ms Fagan: It is between a 21-week and 22-week program, depending on public holidays. So if you have Easter, obviously it changes the length of time.

MR GENTLEMAN: A little earlier you talked about career management. In the past we have seen the removal of some promotional positions in the AFP. I think senior constable went a long time ago. How often does an officer have an opportunity for promotion in the AFP now?

Ms Fagan: The senior constable proficiency has returned, so that is in place. It is an accountability or a delegation that I have. A set of cases and evidence are presented to me for the issuing of that senior constable proficiency. It could be that somebody that has not been there a long time but who is a lateral and has a strong experience base from another force might get that position more rapidly. It used to be after six years but we have given further discretion to the right skill sets.

MR GENTLEMAN: So there are still good opportunities for career advancement through the ranks?

Ms Fagan: I believe so. We have constable, senior constable and sergeant and there are various bands within those labels. So there is fairly clear progression between various bands. You may be a sergeant but you could be band 6, 7 or 8, for example.

MR PRATT: You have an additional 60 police recruits, plus what you have in the pipeline. There are two groups of 10 and an additional 47?

Ms Fagan: An additional 43.

MR PRATT: When we get to the end of 2008-09 where do you think that number will sit against the national benchmark of police numbers per 100 head of population?

Mr Corbell: It all depends on movements in other jurisdictions, Mr Pratt. You cannot predict that without knowing movements up or down in other jurisdictions.

MR PRATT: Why is that?

Mr Corbell: Because it is an average figure. It is an average against overall national levels of policing, which could vary considerably between now and the next three years. I do not think that is a reasonable question to ask.

MR SMYTH: As of today how do we compare against the national average?

Ms Fagan: I have not done that calculation. We would need to take that question on notice and answer it for you. I just do not have that here.

THE CHAIR: Take that question on notice.

Ms Fagan: We will take that on notice.

Mr Corbell: I have to say it is the view of the government that the ROGS data on its own is not a good measure for what the level of policing in the ACT should be. It is certainly data that we should take into account and use in determining what should be the level of resourcing for ACT Policing, but it is not the only figure. There are issues about the way policing works in the territory, which is different from other jurisdictions, and that has to be taken into account as well. The nature of the population, the geographic spread of the population and so on, are all factors that should also be taken into account. We certainly have close regard to the ROGS figures. I think I have made it clear before, but I am happy to say it again for the purpose of the committee, that it is not the only figure we look at when we make the assessment about what the level of the policing service in the territory should be.

MR PRATT: I know we have had this argument before, minister, but is there a better way of testing the strength of your police capability other than looking at a national benchmark created by somebody for a good purpose?

Mr Corbell: I think a range of factors should be kept in mind. The ROGS data is a straight numerical measurement but it is not necessarily the only measurement. We would look at the performance of the AFP or ACT Policing against our key performance indicators, we would look at benchmarking that against other jurisdictions, and we would look at levels of crime. We take all those factors into account when determining what is a reasonable level of resourcing for ACT Policing.

MR SMYTH: Referring to reasonable levels of resourcing, there have been a number of reviews lately. For example, the Fisher review was done jointly with the commonwealth, an internal time and motion study was done by Commander Newton and I understand there might be a third review. Minister, you gave an undertaking that you would release those reviews. Will you now release them to the committee?

Mr Corbell: I intend to release very shortly the joint study that was commissioned between the territory and the AFP.

MR SMYTH: Is shortly this afternoon, tomorrow, or Friday?

Mr Corbell: No, it is not that shortly.

MR PRATT: Or is that one of those Hargreaves “not in my lifetime” type measures?

Mr Corbell: I cannot speak for my colleague. I have indicated previously that the report should be made available and it will be made available. As you probably know, I have indicated that I, in conjunction with Ms Fagan, intend to agree on a set of directions to give ACT Policing relating to priority for policing activity in the ACT. Once that work is finalised, which I think will be early next month, I anticipate that we will be releasing the joint study.

MR PRATT: What about what was euphemistically called the time and motion study originally worked on by the then director of operations, Ms Mandy Newton? Where is that study?

Ms Fagan: That internal study was incorporated into the joint study and it was all factored into the review.

MR PRATT: It has been rolled in, has it?

Ms Fagan: In relation to the Fisher review, it is my clear recollection that that was tabled, at least in federal parliament, and it is a public document.

MR SMYTH: My understanding is the Newton study came to the conclusion that ACT Policing, given the change in the mix and the increasing complexity of the work that it does—international influences on a city like Canberra and other factors—was understaffed by 186 sworn officers. Is that your understanding of Commander Newton’s conclusions?

Ms Fagan: I have not read that report. I have read the joint study. That was presented to government and as a consequence we have some budget announcements.

MR SMYTH: Do the budget announcements meet what the joint study said?

Mr Corbell: Yes. In my view and in the government’s view they do.

MR SMYTH: Chief Police Officer Fagan, in your view does it meet what the joint study said?

Ms Fagan: The joint study and the request we made to government were considered. I have already publicly said that I am very satisfied with the outcome in fulfilling what we had requested for a response effort in policing in the ACT.

MR SMYTH: Let us go through this step by step. Would you agree that the policing job has become more difficult over the last couple of years?

Ms Fagan: Policing in the territory has far better measures around it and a much clearer focus on what we are achieving. I think we have room for improvement on response times, particularly the second tier.

MR SMYTH: I am not talking about what you have achieved; I am talking about the job itself. Officers on the street tell me that it is getting more difficult and more complex. A huge amount of social work is involved. After 7.00 pm they are part-time mental health officers. The requirements to police the nation’s capital, given the international tensions, have made the job more complex and somewhat harder. Would you agree with their assessment?

Ms Fagan: I do not know from whom you are getting that assessment. In the main my staff do a professional and able job each and every day.

MR SMYTH: I agree. I am not challenging what they are doing; I am asking whether it has become more difficult.

Ms Fagan: I do not know from what. It has become more difficult because there is scientific evidence that we use. To me, “more difficult” does not seem that grounded as a

question. I think they are responding and they are well trained to do what is a difficult job. Is it more difficult? As a piece of new legislation arrives they need to be trained and to understand it. But I see the potential in staff to get that done and to do it well. So “more difficult” is quite subjective and just an opinion.

MR PRATT: CPO Fagan, there has been a change in the landscape in the last five or six years, in particular since September 11. Commissioner Keelty and others talked about the threat to Australia and specifically the threat to Canberra. The ACT is reasonably high on the national list of somebody else’s targets. Has that not added to the impost on your police force? For example, you now have to provide 20 additional police to the airport and you have to carry out intelligence-led tasks. Surely all this adds to the growing burden that our police have to carry. Is that not what Mr Smyth is getting at?

Ms Fagan: I am saying that there is a level of competency and adjustment in policing. When I look back it is a more complicated world than it was 26 years ago, but the training and their capabilities match that. The commonwealth funds the airport example. To me, that is officers I do not need to put there who will be out on the streets of Canberra.

MR SMYTH: Do we currently have officers at the airport?

Ms Fagan: Officers are available to serve it from city station. They will be free because we will have 20 other officers at the airport able to do some response work. That is a positive.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I refer you to the graph at the bottom of page 234 of BP4. In the media over the weekend and in yesterday’s media there were reports that motor vehicle theft in the ACT had risen, but this graph shows a reduction right through from 2003-04 to 2004-05 and an estimated reduction for next year as well. Can you explain the difference between the media reports and the budget paper?

Mr Corbell: I am just trying to get some more information.

Ms Fagan: If I may, minister, in the budget papers those are the targets and not the results. As we get to the end of this financial year we will be able to report on the results. Preliminary results around stolen motor vehicles are higher. I would have to put my hand on that for the moment but I do have that figure to a particular point in time.

MR GENTLEMAN: While you are looking for that figure, what programs do you have that are responding to inappropriate behaviour on roads? I remember the success of Operation Globin in Tuggeranong. Is that continuing and do you have other programs in the pipeline?

Ms Fagan: I can give you the stolen motor vehicle rates from 27 June 2005 to 25 June 2006. The number is currently at 2,164, which is up from 1,792. So that is not a good result. In relation to traffic, we have quite a number of initiatives. I will get the brief and I will be with you.

MR GENTLEMAN: This is quite often a question I am asked at my community stalls.

Ms Fagan: A new traffic plan was submitted to me just before the end of the calendar year, which has adjusted our random and targeted breath testing. We set a target of at least 75,000 random breath tests for this financial year. That has been exceeded. Our target is now beyond that. We still continue with a mix of targeted breath testing. We use the intelligence-led model and we set up breath testing at particular known spots where people are likely to offend. However, RBTs are consistent with the government's direction of high-visibility policing.

In relation to incidents of road rage or the like, we continue to ask the public to report them. We look at and respond to those through our own traffic management strategies. In relation to fatal collisions, the road toll for this calendar year sits at four, which I believe is in contrast to 12 at the same time last year. Last year was one of our highest rates, at 26. So we saw it as a key thing to adjust that traffic strategy in the latter part of the last calendar year.

Since January this year I have articulated and disseminated 14 separate road safety messages. The superintendent of traffic, Sergeant Daryl Neit, is a key communicator, particularly with collision investigations. We have run a number of campaigns jointly with New South Wales Police and also by ourselves. We continue to deploy the registration plate recognition system that will read a registration number. We have a database that tells us whether a car is registered, and we can react to that very rapidly. So that is quite an innovative piece of technology.

MR GENTLEMAN: The old program was that a patrol would pull a vehicle over, call the communications office and go through that whole procedure of trying to check on computer. How much time has that saved?

Ms Fagan: That still occurs. Our traffic strategy is as relevant to our traffic section as our general patrols. A patrol can, and does, pull somebody over and radio through and ask those questions. We have set up a traffic focus point with this technology, maybe coupled with an RBT. About two months ago I went out on a Friday evening and I was operating that RAPID system, along with random breath testing. So we actually can couple them and target an area.

There is a multitude of effort. For example, the random breath testing is not completely owned by the traffic section. All patrols are required to do a certain number of those random breath tests. So we have levered off, in essence, the New South Wales police campaign you may have seen where every car is potentially an RBT car, and we see that as an effective strategy.

As to burnouts, Operation Globin continues. It was established on 4 April 2005, and I will see if I have got some data here. Globin continues. I do not have the actual results of it to hand, but it is an effective strategy that is continuing in our traffic management plan. Similarly, we have a suburban ownership program, where traffic officers look after and become the intelligence and hot spot focus for a suburb. So if a member of the public reports in a traffic incident, that owner of that suburb, be it a motorbike police officer, will focus in on that area.

We are looking at implementing that into general patrols as well, as a suburban ownership or district zone ownership, because we see that as a key way to connect with

the community and keep a focus in a very tactical way, as well as the strategic intelligence-led policing.

MR GENTLEMAN: So would my constituents call the police station or Crime Stoppers?

Ms Fagan: They can either call the police assistance line or they can call Crime Stoppers, if they wish to remain anonymous or just pass on information. If they need police to attend, it is the police assistance line. But Crime Stoppers is the one-stop-shop for information that we can get to our traffic area or our relevant area.

MR PRATT: CPO Fagan, can I ask you what your advice has been to the minister on the merits or the demerits of the Victorian government's random roadside drug testing program in terms of its potential applicability or otherwise?

Mr Corbell: I have not received any advice from the police on that matter.

MR PRATT: Can I ask, therefore, what the police think is the drug driver threat to the ACT?

Ms Fagan: It is probably a matter more for the courts and the coroner, who classifies the findings. We see a mix, particularly in fatalities, around what we might globally label inattention, but we see speeding, drugs and alcohol all being contributing factors, particularly in various fatalities. So we are watching the Victorian program and, in due course, clearly can give advice to the government on that.

MR PRATT: Minister, I think I have heard your predecessor saying that this is something that you may consider in the future. Are you in a position to clarify your position?

Mr Corbell: My position is, of course, the government's position, and the government's position is that we are monitoring the Victorian experience. This is not an issue that I have directly dealt with since coming into this portfolio, but clearly it is an issue I will keep under a watching brief. If the police advise me they feel that it is of a robust enough nature to be delivered here in the ACT and if it is something which the government can resource properly, then we will certainly give consideration to it. At this stage Victoria is the only jurisdiction that is doing it, and I know it has had some teething problems in Victoria. I think we would rather another jurisdiction work that out before we embark on the process.

MR SMYTH: On that, CPO Fagan, has not Victoria just moved from a trial stage to a permanent status? I think we are all aware that there were teething problems initially. Are you aware that the move from trial to permanent status would indicate that the teething problems have been worked out?

Ms Fagan: I cannot speak for where Victoria is at. I simply do not have the answer before me. Put simply, we advocate any measure that can effect positive outcomes on road safety. It is on our list of policy priorities to consider, and I certainly have seen something pass my desk in the last two weeks. However, I do not have the information before me to make a judgement at this point in time, other than to say that, where we can

temper inappropriate behaviour in traffic, that seems to me a logical thing to be advocating.

MR PRATT: By that, do you mean that if we did have RRDT-type set-ups, that is another measure of perhaps checking delinquent drivers, just another community policing measure? Is that what you meant by that?

Ms Fagan: What I mean by it is that where we have a new measure that has a positive impact on road safety, I would be most supportive of that. What I need is the data, the testing and rigor to present that to government to argue, and we have not articulated that at this point.

MR PRATT: Are you aware of the studies that have been done across the country in at least six jurisdictions that show an alarming level of drug driver affected driving in terms of feedback on people who have been assessed as to what their habits are, as well as the findings on deceased drivers who have had drugs in their system? Is that not alarming enough for us to seriously consider adopting that program?

Mr Corbell: I think Ms Fagan has indicated to you what the issues are from her perspective. She needs to see more of the detail around this mechanism before it is something that she can advise government on, and I think that is an entirely reasonable approach to take.

MR SMYTH: You mentioned you have a policy priority process. Could you explain how that process works and what sort of time frame it normally takes?

Ms Fagan: Through its strategic plan and its business plan, the executive committee of ACT Policing utilises and sets various priority areas. The key outcome for this current year was consideration of the joint study, and that was something that took up an amount of time for our policy area. The next phase will clearly be around implementation. We sign off on those business plans and those priority areas. I have mentally marked that and already instructed Mr Williams to have this as an area, in conjunction with traffic, examined during this year.

MR SMYTH: Could you outline what other areas you consider to be a police policy priority?

Ms Fagan: I have not received all the business plans and we have not signed off on our strategic plan, so to go to a level of detail at this point without the benefit of a whole of ACT Policing presentation before me would make that rather difficult.

MR SMYTH: When is that process finished, the signing off on the business plans?

Ms Fagan: The process is in the throes of finishing now. I think our next strategic executive committee meeting is in mid-July, and we will have those finalised then. I must point out that I am meeting with all the managers this Friday. That is the penultimate effort.

MR PRATT: Minister, under the ACT property crime reduction strategy—and I am looking at budget paper No 4 at page 234—you have a target to achieve and sustain a

10 per cent reduction in burglary and a 25 per cent reduction in motor vehicle theft by December 2007. As there does not appear to be any funding allocated to crime prevention strategies in the budget, how will you achieve the 10 and 25 per cent reductions, respectively.

Mr Corbell: Well, the funding is in providing police with the capacity to do their work. Obviously we are providing an additional 27 officers this coming financial year, 43 the year after that and 10 the year after that. So it is about the police numbers to do that work.

MR PRATT: Will you actually get enough new police on the ground to make an appreciable difference of 10 per cent and 25 per cent by December?

Mr Corbell: It is my view that we are providing the police with the resources they need to meet their key performance indicators.

THE CHAIR: Through you, minister, could I ask if there are specific strategies that have been planned to achieve those outcomes?

Mr Corbell: I beg your pardon, Ms Porter. I thought you were talking to the committee.

THE CHAIR: No, I am talking to you.

Mr Corbell: Could you repeat the question, please?

THE CHAIR: It has been a long day for all of us. Mr Pratt referred to the targets of 10 per cent reduction in burglary and 25 per cent reduction in motor vehicle theft. I ask Ms Fagan, through you, minister, if there are specific strategies that we have in place to achieve those.

Mr Corbell: I apologise. Ms Fagan can answer the question, I am sure.

Ms Fagan: Thank you, minister. We have a dedicated effort in what is called Operation Halite. Their task is to work collectively with ACT government agencies and departments in the property crime reduction strategy. The targeting that Halite does is in relation to known past offenders and looking at pockets or patterns of crime to give that particular focus and effort.

I can advise the committee that for burglary we had a fall of 11.5 per cent, from 5,198 in 2004 to 4,602 in 2005. That strategy continues to be monitored through our committees. Unfortunately, I cannot give you precisely where we are at with it. I do not have the figures for the current financial year before me, but I could perhaps take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. With regard to motor vehicle theft, is there a specific strategy? You mentioned before that you were disappointed about the results. I note the target of a 25 per cent reduction by December 2007. I was just wondering if you were coming up with some specific strategies to address that.

Ms Fagan: We have two strategies. The Operation Halite team addresses burglary and all property crime, so it includes motor vehicles. This is a result that needs further focus.

This year we gave additional resources to the territory investigations group for a motor vehicle team to look at motor vehicle theft as well. The results from 2005 are showing that increase that I articulated earlier. It remains an area that we must focus on.

MR PRATT: Between now and December you still have to get new police on the ground, and Halite is working. National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council Inc figures show that the ACT's vehicle theft rate has increased by 22 per cent while the rest of Australia has dropped by seven per cent. How confident are you that you can achieve a reduction by 25 per cent? That is a big ask.

Ms Fagan: It is a big ask, and we have articulated what the results are thus far. My challenge in the workforce planning that we are currently doing is to give it a greater degree of focus and illumination to get some results. That is what we intend to.

MR PRATT: Okay. Good luck.

MR SMYTH: I have a question on police salaries. Recently I noticed a fantastic ad on the TV advertising why we should all run away and join the New South Wales Police Force—because they march so well and they have the highest salaries in the country. How do AFP officers compare with New South Wales police officers in terms of salary?

Ms Fagan: I am afraid I do not have that comparison before me. It is something that AFP National manages through our HR area. As I understand, it is relatively favourable, but I am going back to an historic knowledge that I have. I have certainly seen the advertisement that you speak about. I will have to take that detail on notice. I know we do not have that before us in a comparative sense.

MR SMYTH: All right. Well, if you have got a comparison not just with New South Wales but with the other jurisdictions, that would be appreciated.

Ms Fagan: We can do that.

MR SMYTH: The next question is about compensation claims. I notice in the 2004-05 annual report that ACT Policing had 114 active open claims with Comcare as at 30 June 2005. That is an 11.7 per cent increase on 2003-04. Is there a reason for that increase? How many active cases do you have as of today?

Ms Fagan: Mr Williams would be best placed to speak to our management of compensation.

Mr Williams: I would have to say that we do not have the figures, Mr Smyth, as to the Comcare cases that we are managing as of today. But I would say that our management of Comcare cases in recent years has improved dramatically with the staff's attention and skilling, but also making the workplace aware of the requirement to report and record instances where injuries or incidents have occurred.

Part of the increase in claims has, in fact, been attributable to an increase in awareness in the workplace of the measures that are to be taking place and are necessary. But I would have to get back to you on the claims that we have at this moment in time. We are in the process of assembling our annual report figures for this current financial year.

MR SMYTH: I do not know how you measure the taking of sick leave. Is there a measure where you determine what percentage of available work time is lost to sick leave?

Ms Fagan: It would require some analysis. Again, we would need to take that one on notice and report on the extraction of that. I am just not clear. We utilise the overtime capacity for our minimum strengths, so it is a very important part of our maintaining a policing capacity for the territory when we have members that are unwell.

MR SMYTH: All right. If you are taking that on notice, that is good. Perhaps we could have a comparison with the previous year. The number of officers who go off on stress leave, is that a problem for the AFP?

Ms Fagan: Could I just point out that, in relation to the label of sick leave, we actually do not have that. It is called personal leave.

MR SMYTH: Personal leave, as opposed to rec leave?

Ms Fagan: Personal leave as opposed to sick leave. Officers may—

MR PRATT: No. Personal leave as opposed to rec or any other form of leave.

Ms Fagan: Correct. I am sorry.

MR SMYTH: It is called personal leave. I am happy to see a personal leave measure.

Ms Fagan: Thank you. In relation to your last question—

MR SMYTH: Stress seems to be a plague in some areas. Is there some analysis of the number of officers going off on stress leave?

Ms Fagan: I believe it is at the lowest we have had.

MR SMYTH: Good.

Ms Fagan: That is through active case management, and it is a pleasing result that should permeate through in our annual report. I do not have that data before me, but we as an executive take a very active interest in assisting those officers who are returning to work to do that in a positive and constructive way.

MR SMYTH: If it is at an all time low, congratulations. I have just a final question on that series. I assume there is a process that officers facing disciplinary action go through so that fairness is provided to both sides. I have to admit it just came into my head, but is there a number available of officers who have faced disciplinary action this year, as opposed to last year?

Ms Fagan: That gets collated and reported on in our annual report.

MR SMYTH: All right.

Ms Fagan: We are a matter of days from that, and we can report that to you as it comes through. In response to your question, if I may, where a professional standards investigation is conducted, be it through a complaint allegation or a critical incident that requires examination, we are exceedingly mindful of having the professional support of our welfare officers, our chaplain and the AFP's contracted psychological services. They are quite rigorous in the application and they are pointed out to our staff. In my experience, that works in a very positive way to ensure the health of people in very stressful situations.

MR SMYTH: So if an officer is under inquiry, he is told the charges that he is facing or what he is being investigated for? Is that provided in writing?

Ms Fagan: Professional standards provide that service to us. Having worked in that area, I can advise that the officer, he or she, may be requested, through a written direction, to answer questions and be compelled to answer questions. There could be prior to that a criminal caution or they could be interviewed as a witness or they could be asked for a report. It depends on the particular complaint, allegation or critical incident. That is a judgement that is made.

For example, an officer may be a witness to another incident and it may be more appropriate that it is a witness statement, rather than a direction. So it just depends on the particular job.

MR SMYTH: But if an officer was being investigated for something he supposedly had done—

Ms Fagan: Yes.

MR SMYTH: he would be provided with the allegation in writing?

Ms Fagan: That certainly was the case. I should take that on notice, because I have not worked in that area for some time. In a criminal caution, you are normally advised of the allegation, provided with a criminal caution and given the opportunity to exercise your right to answer or not answer, just like every other person. The commissioner has additional powers under the act and the complaints act, oversights by the Ombudsman, to ask those officers, under direction, to answer questions. There is a compelling aspect to that that they must answer questions.

MR SMYTH: These enquiries would be carried out expeditiously to come to a resolution? They would not be left hanging around?

Ms Fagan: Within their resources. That is a key part. Bringing resolution is a key part to an internal investigation. It does have its stressors on a number of fronts.

MR SMYTH: Okay. So you will take that on notice? Could you provide me with a summary of how the process works?

Ms Fagan: We will request professional standards to provide you with a briefing paper on that.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I wonder if I could refer you to equipment within the service. How often is equipment renewed? If you look at vehicles, for example, other equipment, accoutrements, how often is the renewal process? Are there any new technologies that are coming on stream that you could inform us of?

Ms Fagan: I will perhaps start with the last part. Certainly we are always looking at new technologies, and some are developed in-house. The example of the registration system reading that I gave you was developed in-house by the AFP. It is a particularly innovative product. Currently the commissioner has moved forward on consideration of in-car computing and a black box-type technology for officers in patrol cars across the field of the whole AFP. That business case is currently being analysed.

We see that as a real positive. In-car computing, for example, would go hand in hand with high visibility policing. Rather than returning to the station to complete a management incident report, an officer could do that in the vehicle and be available and visible to the community. So that work is already occurring and once we get a firm view on its potential, then we would need to look at the costs and the practicalities of the business case and proposals.

In relation to our vehicles, in the main they are leased, and that is done in the most efficient way to cater for a high turnover. Obviously patrol cars are doing very high kilometres. They churn over based on, I think, 12 months or 40,000. I have just been advised it is 12 months or 60,000. Other cars will be on a slightly different scale. We have just had a radio upgrade, a rollout of portable radios. They move through their natural life. We are now on digital portable radios, and that is a real positive for the officers from a communication point of view.

We have a depreciation budget. We sit on the finance committee of AFP National and we have some rigor around our capital acquisition and depreciation to fund future acquisition. We often lever off the commonwealth purchases and we often gain from that as well.

MR PRATT: Minister or CPO Fagan, do you have sufficient resources to now ensure evidence proceeds to court in a more timely fashion, given the many court delays that we have heard about and which magistrates have made their noises about in the last year or two?

Mr Corbell: I think this is a matter on which the Director of Public Prosecutions provided some comment to this committee when he was present last week. He indicated then that the issue around forensic evidence was driven very much by different expectations about what level of forensic evidence should be available. For example, he made it clear it depended on what was being attempted to be proven in the particular case and that it was the DPP's expectation of what should be proven compared, perhaps, to what the defence case was which had, on occasion, led to some delays in proceedings.

This is a matter that I want wanting to explore further with both the DPP and ACT Policing. It is not a matter that I have had the opportunity to pursue in the last

week, but I am aware that there have been a number of issues, although I do not think it is as widespread as has been suggested. I will ask Ms Fagan to elaborate.

Ms Fagan: In the past year we have spent \$5.37 million on our forensic services, which is part of the reach into AFP National for those services. As the minister points out, the complexity that goes with forensic testing is not well understood, and I could take a little bit of time to walk you through some of that.

Essentially, there is a five-stage process that is involved in how we go through a test. If I perhaps just ground it very rapidly to save time, it may be that a crime scene has DNA, fingerprints and hair samples. They are all different areas of expertise and those different experts, in making their assessments, need to go through these stages and have, for example, peer reviews to meet the satisfaction of the courts.

Anything that improves the efficiency of case management for us to present to DPP and, in turn, to present to the court, I am very much in favour of. It has been a topic of much discussion between Mr Refshauge and I. It has certainly been a topic of discussion that I have had with the Chief Magistrate and the Chief Justice and we are motivated to do whatever is necessary within the reality of the expert analysis that needs to occur.

I might add that the cost and the effort that we provide was last reviewed in 2001. We are currently commencing a review, in conjunction with the Department of Justice and Community Safety, AFP National and ACT Policing on the rebasing of that amount of service we get. So that is perhaps another policy priority that we are working on right now to find efficiencies and try and streamline that where we can.

Mr Corbell: As Mr Refshauge indicated when he was here, we cannot discount what he called the *CSI* effect on people's expectations around forensic evidence, how quickly forensic evidence can be prepared and so on. It is not the completion within 45 minutes that you see on *CSI*. It is often a process that takes many weeks, or indeed months, to complete to allow evidence to be brought to the court.

MR PRATT: But part of ACT Policing's problem in the past few years has been surely that with AFP so busy with their national and international tasks it has been difficult for you to get that service?

Ms Fagan: We have been very active in managing our service. We have a prioritisation model that is chaired by the territory investigations superintendent. We simply have to prioritise. A murder investigation will take priority over a burglary, for example, in most cases. So we have to make some judgment calls on resources, and then you overlay the complexity of that five-stage process, and then the number of samples. So it is not something that is just going to pop through the pipe in a rapid way, but we are very clear on what we purchase and what we are getting, and we are reviewing that right now to see if that needs to be recalibrated.

Mr Corbell: To give you a bit of a feel, Mr Pratt, for the volume of work that is undertaken, I have this advice from ACT Policing. Between 23 June last year and 23 June this year, the biological criminalistics team commenced examination of approximately 486 ACT cases, which resulted in the examination of 958 items. That translates into around 1,986 extractions and 2,776 amplifications. During the same

period the team completed approximately 576 cases made up of around 1,302 items. So as you can see, it is quite a busy workload and one that, as I have previously stressed, can take time to complete.

MR PRATT: You have purchased forensic services in the past, I think, through local civilian means. In your review would you be considering an added police forensic capability?

Ms Fagan: We have used external in the past, the Victorian Forensics Institute, for example, where we purchased additional capacity. We do that in consultation with our forensics. They do not have all the in-house expertise either, and at times when we have a review point or a peer review, for example, which is a key part of expert evidence, we are purchasing some of those services outside. It is common to other police services as well.

MR PRATT: Would you be considering strengthening your own capabilities? Is that something you will be testing in this review process?

Ms Fagan: The review process is all about getting the best service for ACT crime investigation efforts. So there is no limit of where that will reach. I want to be satisfied that we are doing the high priority work in the most effective way. I do not know the outcome of it, but we will use our steering committee, made up of the three—Department of Justice and Community Safety, us and the AFP—to look at a model that best serves the ACT crime effort.

MR PRATT: Minister, can you explain what the situation right now is with the police agreement negotiations?

Mr Corbell: Police agreement negotiations are close to completion. I will be signing off on that, I would imagine, very soon. The agreement? I have to be careful with my language. You are referring to the policing agreement or the policing arrangement?

MR PRATT: The police agreement, the service that you purchase from the feds.

Mr Corbell: Yes, that is close to finalisation.

MR SMYTH: What is the policing arrangement?

Mr Corbell: The policing arrangement is the agreement between the territory and commonwealth to use the AFP for community policing. I have recently signed that, as has the federal justice minister, Senator Ellison, and the commissioner.

MR PRATT: When will you be making available the details of the new policing agreement?

Mr Corbell: I would imagine quite soon.

MR PRATT: Immediately after you sign it?

Mr Corbell: At the same time that I propose to issue the government's directions in

relation to policing priority.

MR PRATT: What do you think would be different under the new agreement compared with the previous one? Do you think you will have tightened-up requirements, in terms of the action plans that you want to see carried out in the purchase?

Mr Corbell: I do not follow your question. Could you use some different language around that, Mr Pratt? It is not language I am familiar with.

MR PRATT: I will clarify. There is a lot of criticism that the current agreement is far too loose. Have you negotiated tightening up the measurables, testing what you purchase?

Mr Corbell: The government generally is happy with the KPIs, the performance indicators and outcomes in the agreement. The issue is making sure that the resourcing is at a level where we can reasonably expect those performance indicators to be met. The government and the territory are in a strong position to say that the level of resourcing we are providing is of a strong level, and we would expect the KPIs to be met. Certainly, as Ms Fagan has previously indicated, there are a range of areas where currently, for example in response times for certain types of incidents and certain levels of incidents, they are not where we want them to be. That is why we have provided additional resourcing to allow those response times to be better achieved. As I have already flagged publicly, I intend to use my direction powers under the agreement to highlight specific priorities on top of the range of KPIs that we want to see particular regard given to by ACT Policing. So my intention is to give general directions to the Chief Police Officer on priorities the territory has.

MR PRATT: Are you happy to continue with the traditional outcomes-based agreement that we have had in the past, or are you trying to tighten that aspect of the way the agreement is written?

Mr Corbell: No the outcomes are what we are looking for. At the end of the day that is what the community is looking for. It is looking for response within particular periods of time and for decreases in levels of crime. Those are the outcomes the community are looking for from their police force and from their government, and that is what we are seeking to provide. So the agreement reflects that approach.

MR PRATT: What do you think about the AFPA's criticism that these so-called outcomes are just too loosely written, making it much more difficult to purchase the service that you need to purchase?

Mr Corbell: It is not a matter the AFPA have raised with me since I have been minister.

MR PRATT: I am sure they will.

Mr Corbell: Well, they have not since I have been minister.

MR PRATT: I will leave it at that for now. I might come back to that.

MR GENTLEMAN: The other day, the Minister for the Territory and Municipal

Services announced an increase in traffic cameras and CCTV cameras in the ACT. Can you tell me how much input AFP had in that, and also how much input it has in the location of those cameras?

Mr Corbell: ACT Policing is closely involved in identifying where traffic cameras, speed cameras, should be located. I understand there is a consultative body with the territory and municipal services to identify that. Recently the range of sites for mobile traffic cameras and speed cameras has been significantly increased. My predecessor, Mr Hargreaves, authorised that earlier this year, if I recall correctly. In relation to CCTV, following the national meeting of Australian heads of government last year in response to the terrorist bombings in London, we agreed here in the ACT that we would do an analysis of need for additional security cameras, closed-circuit TV camera surveillance in areas of public or mass gathering. That is something the government has agreed to fund in this budget, to provide for cameras at a range of locations where they previously were not provided. There is also agreement for funding to allow the CCTV monitoring facility to be relocated from the city police station to the Winchester Police Centre. The physical transfer of that facility will be funded. So that is what we have agreed to. I think Ms Fagan might be able to give you a bit more detail on how the speed cameras work, how ACT Policing is involved and where they are located.

Ms Fagan: Thank you, minister. There were a couple of meetings. I certainly was consulted by the head of the former Department of Urban Services, and we have liaison meetings on a quarterly basis with his executive team. Also, Mr Hargreaves sought our input as well. That was similarly the case for the Chief Minister's review of closed-circuit TV. We had significant input into the thinking around that, drawing on our experiences and knowledge from, particularly, the metropolitan police and other state and territory services. At a lower level, the traffic area within the municipal and territory department liaises in constant effort with our traffic area. Our input is sought and we often wrap support around where they are and work in conjunction with them. So there is a particular focus. For example, after a camera there may be a speed camera there from the police as well, just to reinforce good behaviour, or on the opposite side of the road. So we work very closely with them in getting that road safety message out.

MR GENTLEMAN: With the relocation of the monitoring for CCTV, are extra staff allocated to that or will they be moving across?

Mr Corbell: No, no additional staff are allocated to that. ACT Policing will continue with their current approach, which is to balance the need to have officers out on the beat with officers available to monitor CCTV cameras in real time. At the moment a mix of approaches is adopted. Occasionally real time monitoring is undertaken and that can assist with, as I understand it, the prioritisation of city beat police, in particular. But obviously it is also an important back-up in obtaining evidence and reviewing incidents after they have occurred and trying to identify people involved in those incidents.

MR GENTLEMAN: Has technology in the recording from those been upgraded as well?

Ms Fagan: We have been provided, administered through the Department of Justice and Community Safety, \$95,000 in the budget papers. This is key in relocating them to the police operations centre. In a major event we will have all those cameras—there will be

30—with the back-up systems available there. We see that as a particularly important point if we have a major incident that we need to manage. We will have all that intelligence before us and be able to respond in a very joined-up way.

MR PRATT: Will all cameras be monitored 24 hours, seven days?

Mr Corbell: They are not monitored in that way now, Mr Pratt, and it is not proposed.

MR PRATT: No, I know they are not.

Mr Corbell: ACT Policing do not have the resources to sit an officer in front of screens 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That is not the way it works, no.

MR PRATT: You are now developing a central system. Surely even with a central system you must be able to man that console more frequently than you have in the past. Are you able to improve the level of physical monitoring on those cameras?

Mr Corbell: As I indicated, it will be a matter for the Chief Police Officer and her team to work out what is the appropriate allocations of resources and to balance the priorities against having officers out doing response, doing patrol and having officers sitting at the console.

MR PRATT: What use is a circuit, for example in Civic, if it's not being monitored on a Friday night to allow local police to be able to respond quickly before trouble develops beyond the point of control?

Ms Fagan: Certainly where we have intelligence and we have in the past used the monitoring facility, the vast majority of calls on those cameras have been for evidentiary purposes, so that is a key way that we can get coverage of an incident. I thank the Canberra community as well where they have cameras. It is a way that we can retrace or look at a particular crime post the event. This is exactly what occurred in the London bombings. They were able to use them and retrace the steps of those who perpetrated that crime. Experience tells us that CCTV is key in helping investigate and bring perpetrators to justice. If we have an intelligence there, say, for example on New Year's Eve or a major event at one of the new sites, we can, as part of a resourcing judgment, allocate a resource. It needs to be a judgment whether they are better on patrol, visible to the community and how the intelligence supports that, and those are all incorporated into our operational order and our risk management treatments for various decisions.

MR PRATT: I am not sure whether you indicated new technology in the recording system, but whether we are using existing or new, do you intend to review the tapes regularly? Will you have that capability, in manpower, if I can use that generic term?

Ms Fagan: The capability will be there but it will be based on an intelligence to do that.

MR PRATT: To pick a particular tape?

Ms Fagan: Yes. I would not envisage that we would sit and then at another point review them unless we have a particular need to do that.

MR PRATT: So what you are saying is that the preventative capability that cameras can bring is very much restricted by the availability of manpower to monitor them and to constantly review tapes?

Ms Fagan: Prevention is one aspect of a CCTV network.

MR PRATT: Before and after, yes?

Ms Fagan: Yes.

MR SMYTH: I noticed that over the past four years the number of RBTs conducted has slipped by about 60,000 annually. Given last year was such a horrible year on our roads and the road toll was practically doubled, and half of those incidents involved either drink or drug affected drivers, is there any justification, minister, for keeping the RBT levels so low, or will you be restoring them?

Mr Corbell: We have seen in the past 12 months a very significant increase in the number of RBTs conducted in the ACT.

MR SMYTH: In the past 12 months?

Mr Corbell: Yes, very significant.

MR SMYTH: Can you give me the numbers to verify that?

Mr Corbell: I have already given them, I think, to Mr Pratt in answer to a question on notice.

MR GENTLEMAN: 75,000.

MR PRATT: 75,000, up from 48,000.

MR SMYTH: It is still down.

Mr Corbell: During the first half of 2005-06, 20,686 people were stopped for breath testing; 529 were over the blood alcohol limit. During the second half of this financial year, that went up to 48,263 compared to 20,686 for the previous six months, resulting in 413 people being detected as over the limit. So, almost a doubling of the level of RBT in the second six months of this financial year.

MR SMYTH: But still significantly lower.

Mr Corbell: I am really pleased that ACT Policing have responded on this issue. Obviously they have had regard to the very bad figures in the previous calendar year for deaths on our roads and have responded very proactively to that.

MR SMYTH: Will it continue to increase in the coming year to get it back up to the levels it was three or four years ago?

Ms Fagan: My intention now is—and I mentioned earlier that this was certainly an area

where I asked for our strategy to be refreshed—to at least maintain a 75,000 target, but I have sought advice on, particularly with additional resources, the capacity to increase that. I want to get the maximum effort from that and set that number at the right level for visibility and doing other roles. So for me, achieving 75,000 or over that, which we are now at, is very pleasing and it will be set at at least that for this next financial year, potentially higher.

MR SMYTH: Visibility is something people often talk about. Will the amount of radar gun testing that the police have done be increased, or is that all now being left to the speed cameras?

Mr Corbell: While you look to see whether you have those figures, can I just say that the government considers that the issue of high-visibility policing is an important element in giving the community an assurance that police are out and about and are available. That helps address perceptions of crime and community safety. So, the government's very strong preference—and this is a matter that I will be addressing in the directions process I am about to undertake with the Chief Police Officer—will be to say we want to see an emphasis on high profile policing, particularly traffic policing because that is often the highest. That is where everyone sees the police, everyone sees the police out and about doing the RBT, doing the random speed camera and so on. That can really assist in addressing perceptions of police presence, and therefore perceptions of safety, as well as achievements and real results on the ground. That is certainly an issue that I have already discussed with Ms Fagan and we agree it is a priority for the coming financial year.

Ms Fagan: In relation to the other efforts that we set up, we measure them generally through traffic infringement notices, much like we measure random breath testing. If you go back a step to when I was explaining to Mr Gentleman that they can be a combined effort where we will have the rapid registration and are looking at the vehicles, sometimes we do that with other departments, inspectors as well, and the random breath testing. We have seen an increase, but I do not have the year-to-date total in traffic infringement notices. That has been an area of effort as well. Again, we do not allocate that just to traffic; we apportion part of that out to our patrols as well. So we ask them to do random breath testing and also to focus on an effort in traffic infringement as well.

MR SMYTH: Are the police the only people able to issue a TIN, or if you get a speed camera infringement is that a TIN as well?

Ms Fagan: They ultimately get issued by me from the speed camera as well.

MR SMYTH: Can you give us a breakdown, then, of how many are attributable to the existing urban services efforts and the police efforts, and what the total is.

Ms Fagan: We had that in the annual report last year, and I have an aggregate of this year, so we are very close to having that answer. Again, we can get that ahead of the annual report if you wish, to tell you those numbers.

MR SMYTH: If you can give us what the year to date is that is fine. What have you there?

Ms Fagan: In saying an aggregate, I have January, February, March, April and May figures for traffic infringement notices. So from January 1,222, February 788, March 1,242, April 1,364, May 1,035. At the same time as they were issued cautions were also given and we count those where people are warned. So if I go back to January on cautions: 280 cautions were issued in January, 155 in February, 244, 260 and 200.

MR GENTLEMAN: You touched on a couple of things there I wanted to ask you about. When you are doing those large visible exercises for RBT and perhaps urban services you touched on cautions there, but what other sorts of infringements or crimes are investigated off the back of what happens with those operations?

Ms Fagan: Well, I can speak from experience recently. A random breath test resulted in the arrest of an offender in the past 10 days with illicit drugs in his possession in his car. So the add-on benefits of this sort of work are very beneficial because you are doing a registration check, you are checking the person and the sergeant who was conducting it had suspicions raised and, as a result of some observations, brought that person to court for possession of illicit drugs. So it can roll into some very positive outcomes.

THE CHAIR: Ms Fagan, earlier the minister and you were talking about high visibility and you referred earlier to the way that your having officers adopt an area.

Ms Fagan: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Did you say a suburb or a part of suburb? I was not quite sure.

Ms Fagan: The traffic area currently adopts a suburb. So an officer is allocated a suburb. The patrols are currently looking at a way they can copy that approach. Tuggeranong station is currently looking at dividing its zones, so there are five zones. I want this to occur and I want to be in a position where we can say teams have a focal point for the safety houses and Neighbourhood Watch in the area and that patrol team has a relationship with that community. This is something that I see as a priority for this year along with the drug testing that we just spoke about. So, it is not formulated in complete detail at this stage. It is an intention to get that copied, because the traffic initiative that they developed is a terrific one.

THE CHAIR: This is your last question, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Thanks. I think the increase in numbers and the synergies of outline showing an increase in presence is welcome. What proportion of new police is going to be allocated as beat police or community police, if we can now start looking at the other issue of police visibility in shopping centres and out in the community, as well as on the roads, as we have just discussed?

Mr Corbell: As I previously indicated, right at the beginning of this session, Mr Pratt, the additional 27 police that will be made available this financial year will go towards both the north and the south district. Obviously as new recruits they will go into a range of activities that are suitable for them, but it is all about boosting the patrol presence for both of those regions. Therefore, it is boosting response capacity in those regions. But Ms Fagan could probably give you a bit more detail on how that is going to work.

Ms Fagan: I will be happy to add to that, if that helps. A patrol vehicle is a beat vehicle as well and you will see our officers get out of the car and walk around. You will see them do random breath testing, you will see them support traffic. So it is not about an entity and being fixed, and I think it is a real disadvantage to do that. We need to be able to say, as we did recently with proactive patrols through Red Hill where we attended a very serious incident because our officers were just there on the spot, they step out of the car and then walk around, and that again is another thrust of effort that we want to see and want to make happen. I think this suburban ownership program or zone can really drive some of that. Again, that alone will not be the answer. It is about making sure that we feel we are out there in the community and the community will test us and let us know if that is working.

Mr Corbell: Yes, the advice I had is that it means an additional patrol for 24 hours, for the whole 24-hour period for the north side. I think that is correct.

Ms Fagan: Yes.

Mr Corbell: And an enhancement to the existing patrol strength in the south side, because for each patrol vehicle there are three teams of people for a patrol over a 24-hour period. There are three shifts during that time, so it is not just a car with two people, it is much more than that.

MR GENTLEMAN: And a relief shift that is off duty as well?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR PRATT: Therefore how long do you think it will take to see the improvement? For example, if I refer back to the 2 March 2006 incident at Erindale shops where, after a series of burglaries covering about half a dozen shops, the police informed the person calling in the task that there was only one car in the valley, therefore they had about a four-hour wait before police could get there. When will you see that sort of problem and that rather worrying trend beginning to improve?

Ms Fagan: With 845 FTE today we have an additional capacity out there with increased patrols. They are new people that we are working up and who are learning, but I think it is in place and beginning to action right now.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much all the witnesses. Any other questions need to be placed on notice.

The committee adjourned at 4.01 pm.