



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2007-2008

(Reference: Appropriation Bill 2007-2008)

Members:

MR M GENTLEMAN (The Chair)
MR B STEFANIAK (The Deputy Chair)
MS M PORTER
DR D FOSKEY
MRS J BURKE

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 20 JUNE 2007

Secretary to the committee:
Ms G Concannon (Ph: 6205 0129)

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).

APPEARANCES

ACT Policing	303
Department of Education and Training	250
Department of Justice and Community Safety	303

The committee met at 9.30 am.

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Planning,
Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation, Minister for Industrial Relations

Department of Education and Training

Bruniges, Dr Michele, Chief Executive

Davy, Ms Janet, Deputy Chief Executive

Curry, Mr Craig, Executive Director

Donnelly, Mr Rob, Director, Finance and Facilities

Hardy, Mr Matthew, Director, Measurement, Monitoring and Reporting

Hare, Mr John, Director, Governance, Regulation and Risk

Chandler, Mr Wayne, Director, Schools Northern Canberra

Howard, Ms Joanne, Director, Schools Central Canberra

Harris, Ms Carol, Director, Schools Southern Canberra

Melsom, Ms Kathy, Director, Student Services

Wilks, Mrs Trish, Director, Curriculum Support and Professional Learning

Bateman, Mr Michael, Director, Human Resources

Vasey, Ms Jocelyn, Acting Director, Training and Tertiary Education

THE CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to the 2007 estimates committee. This morning we have before us the minister for education, Mr Andrew Barr, and Dr Michele Bruniges, Mr Craig Curry and Ms Janet Davy from the department. Thanks very much for coming along this morning.

I ask those witnesses called to the table to take their name plates from the side table and bring them to the table. I remind people to switch off their mobile phones when they are here. When first giving evidence, remind the committee and Hansard of your name and position with the department.

I will read the privilege card to you. The committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and rebroadcasting of these proceedings in accordance with the rules contained in the resolution agreed by the Assembly on 7 March 2002 concerning the broadcasting of Assembly and committee proceedings. Before the committee commences taking evidence, let me place on record that all witnesses are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to submissions made to the committee in evidence given before it. Parliamentary privilege means special rights and immunities attach to parliament, its members and others, necessary to the discharge of functions of the Assembly without obstruction and without fear of prosecution.

While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, if the committee accedes to such a request, the committee will take evidence in camera and record that evidence. Should the committee take evidence in this manner, I remind the committee and those present that it is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly. I should add that any decision regarding publication of in camera evidence or confidential submissions will not be taken by the committee without prior reference to the person whose evidence the committee may

consider publishing. Welcome. Would you like to make any opening comments?

Mr Barr: I would, thank you, chair, and good morning to you and the other committee members. Can I state from the outset that the 2007-08 education budget continues the government's strong commitment to education and represents the single largest investment in education ever made in the history of the Australian Capital Territory. Through this budget we have now increased funding to public schools in the ACT to a record \$390.7 million, which represents an increase of over 30 per cent from when the Stanhope government took office. I believe this record investment will ensure that we will maintain and improve our current very high standards of performance. In addition to the increased levels of recurrent funding, this budget continues and extends the record levels of capital investment announced in last year's budget.

Between July 2006 and the 2010-11 financial year, the government will be investing more than \$350 million in our schools, which will give every public school student access to the kind of quality learning environment that has been shown to have a very positive impact on student performance. This \$350 million investment includes funding of more than \$110 million that has been allocated for two new schools. I am very pleased that it includes funding of \$60.7 million for the construction of a new senior secondary college in Gungahlin. This college is scheduled to open in 2010. There is an additional \$50 million to construct a new preschool to year 10 school in Tuggeranong, which is scheduled to open in 2011.

In relation to the Gungahlin college, it will be a state-of-the-art education institution as well as a terrific community facility. The college is anticipated to accommodate 900 years 11 and 12 students and will include facilities for CIT students as well as a flexible learning centre. The college design will focus on sustainability, energy efficiency and other enhancements that will provide a modern and stimulating education environment for students, teachers and the community. The college will offer courses that have an explicit orientation to vocational education and will foster active partnerships between colleges, employers, industry and other agencies.

The new P to 10 school in Tuggeranong will embrace the same high-quality design as the Amaroo school, the west Belconnen P to 10 school and the new Harrison school which will open in 2008. The preschool will be closely linked to the primary school to form an early childhood school integrated within the school complex. The school design will provide flexible, modern, high quality and environmentally sustainable education facilities that will be accessible to the Tuggeranong community. The facility will provide Tuggeranong students with state-of-the-art learning environments and quality learning pathways.

Other highlights of the 2007-08 budget include the doubling of eligibility for grants in the secondary bursary scheme to make it possible for more young students to access that scheme. The scheme currently provides support for financially disadvantaged families by providing \$500 a year for students aged 14 and 15, so usually in years 8 and 9. The budget initiative widens the availability to students in years 7 and 10 and is, of course, available for students in both public and private schools. For year 7 students, the extension of the bursary will assist in easing the transition from primary school to high school for families in need. Extending the bursary through to

the end of year 10 provides an incentive for students from financially disadvantaged families to stay in school through to the completion of year 10.

There is also in the budget an initiative to support students with disabilities at Canberra's non-government schools with a \$1 million investment to provide accessibility aids such as ramps and large screen computer monitors. The government remains committed to ensuring that students have equality of access to high-quality learning opportunities no matter what their background or life circumstances.

Finally, I would seek to highlight the additional \$6.2 million over four years for vocational education and training, again responding to continuing high demand for vocational training, particularly in skill shortage areas such as building and construction, community services and information technology. This additional funding will allow the ACT government, in partnership with employers, registered training providers and students, to fill jobs and improve the competitiveness, profitability and growth of business in the ACT region.

In conclusion, the 2007-08 budget provides investments that will ensure public schools are places where students and teachers can rightly feel proud and where students will want to come to learn and teachers will look forward to teaching. Thank you, chair. I look forward to taking questions from the committee.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We will begin with overview questions and then move into the output classes after that. I should indicate, too, that we are looking to have a break between 10.30 and 10.50. Minister, there has been discussion over the last couple of months about a drift from public education to the private sector. What are you doing to promote public education in the ACT?

Mr Barr: That is a very good question on a very topical issue. We have seen over the last decade a correlation in enrolment drifts with significant additional funding from the commonwealth government to non-government schools. The ACT government felt that it was time to match that funding and more into public schools in the ACT; hence the record levels of investment. We undertook through 2006 the most significant restructure of public education in the history of the ACT, and have sought to put the public education system back on the front foot in terms of providing a massive increase in resources, the largest ever education budget in the history of the ACT and the largest ever capital funding investment in the ACT, to strengthen the quality of public education.

We have also sought to address a range of other issues that all of the research identifies as factors in the drift from public to private schools. Key to that are issues around discipline and policies to address bullying and harassment. I was very pleased after an extensive period of work over the last 12 months to announce new policies within the public system last month tightening a range of procedures and practices around the reporting of critical incidents within public schools, providing a new framework and a greater level of accountability within the public system to address those issues which are identified by parents as a major concern.

However, in seeking to address that issue, we need to recognise, of course, that similar issues occur in private schools in the ACT. As I announced in the Assembly a

couple of weeks ago, I have written to the Non-Government Schools Education Council seeking their advice on their ability to implement policies that the ACT government has put in place for public schools to ensure that there is consistency for non-government schools, so that all parents can be satisfied that, no matter which school a student attends in the ACT, there are proper guidelines in place. I think it is right to expect, and taxpayers have a right to expect as they fund non-government schools in the ACT, that the same principles are in place for all students, for all schools, in the ACT. I think that is very important.

Secondly, the government has embarked on a major campaign to promote public education through a new branding: "ACT public schools—so much more to offer". We have engaged in a series of promotional activities on the ground, particularly Public Education Week but through a series of other events. We have also sought through electronic media advertising, press advertising and a series of education seminars that have been held through 2006 and will continue through 2007 to promote public education under the themes of quality, excellence and diversity.

We have had very good attendance at a variety of the seminars that have been held—I think we are up to nine now, with three or four more to go through 2007—with a very strong focus on quality teaching, quality learning environments. We also seek to highlight the diversity that exists within the ACT public education system. It is something that the government will continue to engage in in the years ahead. I look forward for the 2008 school year to a consistency in branding for all ACT public schools and a continuation of the campaign, working with key stakeholders such as the P&C council, the Australian Education Union and others who have been very supportive and engaged in this process of raising the profile of the fantastic work that occurs in ACT public schools every day of the year.

DR FOSKEY: Thank you and hello, Mr Barr, Dr Bruniges, Mr Davy, Mr Donnelly, Mr Curry and everybody else, and thank you for the really good work you do. I want to follow up on that question. I think it is well known that most of the leakage from the public system occurs at the high school level. The Labor Party seemed to know that when it prepared its 2004 election manifesto. So what I want to know is: why has the government reneged on its election commitment to put an additional \$12 million into pastoral care, student support and student welfare in government high schools, as it did indeed promise in the 2004 election campaign?

Mr Barr: Thank you for the question, Dr Foskey. I draw your attention to page 7 of the ACT ALP election commitments for the 2004 election, which reads, "ACT Labor will create a new student support program for high schools to support student needs. Every government high school in the ACT will, on average, benefit from additional resources of at least two full time professional staff". Dr Foskey, that was a commitment that we would deliver in this term of government. We are still in the middle of this term of government and we will deliver on that commitment in this term of government.

DR FOSKEY: In next year's budget.

Mr Barr: We will deliver that commitment in this term of government, Dr Foskey.

MRS DUNNE: I have a supplementary specifically on that, chair. Does that mean, minister, that you will be able to put a net four teachers into every school next year, because you have already taken two out through the EBA?

Mr Barr: Thank you for raising this question, Mrs Dunne. I do need to address that. Firstly, no, it will not mean a net four teachers, because two teachers have not been removed from each high school. That is an incorrect claim, just not backed up by the facts. As a result of the productivity offsets in the EBA, there was a change in the number of teachers in high schools, but it wasn't two for each high school.

MRS DUNNE: In that case, minister, could you take on notice and provide for the committee the staffing establishment at the beginning of the last calendar year?

Mr Barr: I can do better than that; I can provide that for you right now.

MRS DUNNE: You can provide it now. Good.

Mr Barr: I can tell you that as a result of the EBA there was a decrease of 43 teachers in colleges and high schools—22 in high schools and 21 in colleges as a result of the productivity offsets, as arbitrated by the private arbiter through the last EBA round—and that the practical effect in terms of staffing in schools as a result of the EBA was a decrease of 21 positions in colleges and 22 in high schools. So we have 17 high schools and 22 fewer positions, not two for each high school. I refer back to the policy statement that we made in 2004 that related to the student support program. It was not teachers; it was to provide increased focus on pastoral care, student support and student welfare. I will also draw to the committee's attention the commitment that was delivered in relation to youth workers in high schools. The policy position that was put here was not additional teachers but additional support for pastoral care, student support and student welfare.

MRS DUNNE: I think you might have misheard me, minister. I actually asked: would you put a net four staff back into schools?

Mr Barr: And the answer is no, we won't put a net four staff back into schools because we haven't taken a net four staff away from schools.

MRS DUNNE: Could I just—

THE CHAIR: I call Mr Stefaniak. You will get an opportunity to ask more questions later, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, I actually asked a question on notice and I want to clarify that question on notice because the minister has not answered the question.-

THE CHAIR: You will be able to put the question on notice.

Mr Barr: Chair, I do need to again address this misnomer that is there that we have taken two staff out of each high school as a result of the EBA. That is not true—manifestly not true—equally, the misinterpretation of the policy commitment that we made in the 2004 election campaign. It was not for two additional teachers in each

high school. It was to create a student support program for high schools to support student needs, and the statement was: “Every government high school in the ACT will, on average, benefit from the additional resources of at least two full-time professional staff to address pastoral care, student support and student welfare.” Not necessarily teachers.

MRS DUNNE: You have already taken more than one professional staff member out of every high school by your own admission. Are you going to put in a net three professional staff by the next election?

Mr Barr: By increasing the number of contact hours from 18 to 19 in high schools as part of the arbitration process that delivered an outcome for the teachers’ EBA. There has been no diminution at all in the number of contact hours between staff and students. All of the statements that were made by a variety of stakeholders, with no basis, that that equated to two teachers in each high school have proven not to be the case.

Mrs Dunne: By your own admission, it is more than one per high school.

Mr Barr: It is more than one, yes. I have indicated there are 22 fewer positions in high schools as a result of teachers increasing their face-to-face workload from 18 hours a week to 19 hours a week.

Mrs Dunne: So that one and a bit is slightly better than two.

Mr Barr: As a result, as you would expect, Mrs Dunne, with an increase in productivity, we required fewer teachers.

MR STEFANIAK: I have a question on something quite different. I have one question on a supplementary issue as well, which I will ask. Minister, you talked about research in relation to bullying and discipline and you have come out with some policies. Can the committee have a copy of that research you have alluded to?

Mr Barr: I am happy to provide a full list to the committee. Examples include a paper by Jennifer Buckingham in August 2000, an Australian Council of Education research paper from 2004, information published by Professor Brian Caldwell in 2006, and a paper from the Australian National University Centre for Economic Policy Research, *The drift to private schools in Australia—understanding its features*, by Dr Chris Ryan and Louise Watson, September 2004. We have a paper entitled *What parents want from their children’s education in independent schools*, a National Council of Independent Schools Association paper. I will get a date on that, but I have got a full list and I am very happy to provide that list to the committee.

MR STEFANIAK: That would be helpful, thank you, minister.

MRS DUNNE: I have a supplementary question that relates directly to that, chair, and then we can move on. You spoke about research, minister, and you said that you will provide us with a comprehensive list. The other thing that I am interested in is that last year in estimates we had a discussion about the move from government to non-government schools and whether or not there was any research that the school system

in the ACT was doing.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: At that stage the answer was, “We have an instrument but it is not reliably administered.” Has that changed in the last year?

Mr Barr: Indeed, yes. We have a school movement survey and, of course, that is something on which we survey, I think, a third of schools each year. It is a rolling survey. But we have also taken stock of issues that were raised in last year’s estimates and undertaken a more comprehensive survey process. I am happy to get Dr Bruniges to outline that process for you, Mrs Dunne.

Dr Bruniges: You are correct, Mrs Dunne. Last year we talked about the data that were collected at each school level. I have done an analysis of that data. During 2006 we had nearly 35 per cent of students move to another ACT government school; around 10 per cent moved to a non-government school; 31 per cent moved to another school outside the ACT; and about seven per cent left the school for employment reasons. That is for the school-based data.

Because that was school based, and everyone had their own survey and we were able to collate some of that data, we have developed a short survey in consultation with key stakeholders to understand the reasons why students moved from a government school. That survey will capture information on the sector that the child has moved to, the reasons for moving, the basis on which that decision was made by the parent or carer and suggestions and improvements to government school education that they see from a parental perspective.

What we are aiming to do is this. The scope of that survey will cover all students who have left an ACT government school, excluding those that left a school that was closed at the end of 2006 or proposed to be closed in 2007-08. Year 12 students will be excluded as well, of course. We expect that the survey will take parents about five minutes to complete. We will use a mail-based approach, with a personalised letter explaining our reasons for doing that survey. The mail-out will occur in the last week of June and close in the third week of July. We are hoping to have those results available for August—based on that centralised survey.

MRS DUNNE: Can I just follow up? How are you collecting the information about who to direct that survey to? Is it for everyone who leaves a government school, even if they are going to another government school?

Dr Bruniges: That is correct.

MRS DUNNE: And how are you going to—

Dr Bruniges: From the school. From the school level.

MRS DUNNE: It is anticipated that you are going to collect in that group the people who left one government school at the end of 2006 and moved to another school—irrespective of sector—in 2007? Is that right?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, that is correct.

MRS DUNNE: Why are we waiting until June to do that?

Dr Bruniges: Because it has taken us time to put the survey instrument together and to trial it. Last year we went and we collected the data. Making sure you have got a valid and reliable instrument is incredibly important so that we have got reliable data. That will give us a bench line. The first time that we do surveys the aim is to get bench line data—to have a look at the reasons people have, to be able to inform our future planning.

MRS DUNNE: Would you envisage that next year—

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, can I remind you—

MRS DUNNE: you would administer that survey a little earlier—

Dr Bruniges: We can—

MRS DUNNE: to get more reliable—

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne! I am addressing you at the moment. I remind you that you have gone well over your allotted time. Other members want to ask questions as well.

MRS DUNNE: There is a quota, is there, Mr Chair?

THE CHAIR: You can put a question on notice if you need to. Other people want to ask questions of the minister and the officials as well. Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: Thank you—

MR STEFANIAK: With respect, Mr Chairman, this is a supplementary—

THE CHAIR: If you want to rule that my—

MRS BURKE: We have got to keep on with the theme, chair, surely.

Mr Barr: How many supplementaries constitute a trail here?

THE CHAIR: We have now gone into—

MR STEFANIAK: We are in a supplementary—

THE CHAIR: We have now gone into eight questions by Mrs Dunne, and the rest have had one.

Mr Barr: I am always happy to take Mrs Dunne's questions. She has not asked me any this year at all on education. She has shown no interest in the subject for six months—

MR STEFANIAK: That is all right.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

MR STEFANIAK: It is in relation to supplementaries. Now, have we finished the supplementaries? I have also got some questions on—not what he has done actually in terms of his introductory remarks, which I assumed were concluded—

THE CHAIR: If you are not happy with my ruling, Mr Stefaniak, you can motion to—

MR STEFANIAK: We might just do that, Mr Chair, if you keep going like this.

MS PORTER: Shall I go?

THE CHAIR: I am willing to go to a private meeting and seek that motion if you need to.

MR STEFANIAK: We might just do that. I think we need a bit more order in terms of how we do things—

DR FOSKEY: Don't waste time, please.

MR STEFANIAK: I am quite happy for Ms Porter to ask her question, but I think everyone needs a fair go and—

THE CHAIR: Absolutely.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

MR STEFANIAK: The whole idea is to actually extract questions from the minister—

MRS BURKE: I am sure the minister does not mind.

MR STEFANIAK: As deputy chair, I certainly would like a fair go, and I think the shadows need a fair go.

Mr Barr: Mrs Dunne has not seen fit to ask, I think, more than one question in six months on education; I am always happy to hear from Mrs Dunne.

DR FOSKEY: Let's not go there, please, minister.

MS PORTER: Okay, I think I will—

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: address my question to you, minister.

Mr Barr: Thank you, Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: On page 357 of budget paper 4 there is a list of priorities. I note that there is planning, obviously. You referred to these in your introductory remarks, minister. You mentioned the construction of the new schools in east Gungahlin, west Belconnen, Gungahlin, Tuggeranong et cetera. Here it mentions “a particular focus on environmental sustainability”. I was wondering if you could tell me how that is going to be maximised for the students—in terms of actually making the school environmentally friendly and sustainable, but also—

MRS DUNNE: The minister has given that speech about 15 times—you know, thermal mass, cross-ventilation—

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, if you are not happy to be here, that is fine; you can leave.

MS PORTER: And also because—

THE CHAIR: In the meantime—

MS PORTER: as you know, I have a particular interest in how this is going to be facilitated for the students to enable that to happen. I am particularly concerned about that. I have had some conversations with you about that before, so you know of my interest in this area, minister.

Mr Barr: Indeed, yes, thank you. We have—through the capital funding in this year’s budget, a continuation of the programs that were announced last year—the opportunity, not only in the establishment of the four new schools but in looking across our education system at the sustainability of schools in the ACT.

When you are delivering a new school from scratch, it is obviously easier to incorporate all of what are now—I mean, I hope to be—the bench line or benchmark design features for all new buildings and all new school buildings—to ensure the highest possible quality in terms of environmental sustainability. That incorporates many aspects of sustainability into the design, in terms of water, energy and also, I think, an opportunity, as we have witnessed at the Amaroo school, to see solar panels and other opportunities for the schools to generate some of their own power and, where possible—such as, I think, is the case at Campbell high at the moment—actually return some power to the grid.

There are opportunities, through the development of these new schools, to achieve those outcomes. I am particularly conscious of the water situation and seek to recycle water on the school sites to ensure that, as much as possible, the school grounds are able to be maintained through water that is recycled through the school.

With the co-location of sporting facilities and ovals near the schools, there are again opportunities to utilise tank and pump systems so that we are able to water school ovals. A particular example of use here would be Harrison, where we have not only a neighbourhood oval but also district playing fields associated with the broader development that includes the new school.

In addition to those four new schools, the 2007-08 budget provided a \$4 million school infrastructure fund devoted specifically to improving the environmental efficiency of our existing schools. This funding will initially support a range of sustainability initiatives across 10 secondary schools. They are Alfred Deakin high, Belconnen high, Telopea Park, Canberra high, Wanniasa high, Dickson college, Copland college, the Canberra college campus in Phillip, Hawker college and Lake Tuggeranong college. These schools are the largest energy users in the ACT public education system. The initiatives that this \$4 million fund will fund are designed to reduce energy usage, greenhouse gas emissions and water usage on those sites. I am very pleased to advise the committee that the savings from these projects will be reinvested into other infrastructure projects in future years to continue to improve the sustainability of ACT schools.

As we look forward in the construction of the four new schools, as I mentioned, things like solar passive design, water tanks and solar heating will be a feature of those schools. And, as part of the broader program of refurbishment of all ACT public schools, environmental efficiency measures such as replacement of single-flush toilets throughout the ACT public education system will be a priority. Timed taps will be installed, where appropriate, throughout our school system.

Water audits have been conducted at 16 schools, and that program will continue over the next three years. These audits provide an interesting snapshot of schools' performances and highlight some areas for improvement. The recommendations that have arisen from the first 16 audits include improved reporting of out-of-hours leakage—live water use monitoring, if you like—the need to upgrade toilet and urinal systems to reduce flow; an auto shut off for taps; replacing taps beyond repair; and upgrading irrigation system controls. This is particularly the case in a range of older schools, in central Canberra in particular. There is another \$430,000 within the school infrastructure funding that is dedicated to those audits and the follow-up work from that; that has commenced this year.

I am just looking at my notes here. We have 64 schools committed to the ACT's sustainable schools initiative, which is a very useful program and one that I am very pleased to see has had a very high take-up rate across the territory.

Through the initiatives that we have funded in this year's budget, we can continue what is a very good program. As I say, I think the key thing here is to return the savings that are clearly there in terms of school-based management funds—in terms of reinvesting the money that is saved from reduced energy usage and reduced water usage back into further projects to roll out across the entire public school system in the ACT.

MS PORTER: Minister, you mentioned quite a lot about recycling water and saving of energy. Will it also include facilities for the recycling of other products on site for the students?

Mr Barr: Yes. Schools are very active in their recycling programs and take the issues very seriously. If you want a sign of just how seriously the next generation takes these issues, you need only visit any of Canberra's public primary schools to see the level of enthusiasm that the students bring to reducing the amount that they are consuming

within the schools and then maximising the amount that they are recycling. There are countless examples of programs across the territory that are delivering fantastic results.

MS PORTER: So the construction of these new sites is on track—all the sites you have mentioned?

Mr Barr: Indeed, yes. Yes, that work is progressing very well. We look forward to the official opening of the new Harrison school for the 2008 school year, the west Belconnen school for the 2009 school year, Gungahlin college in 2010 and Tuggeranong—the new P-10—in 2011. It is a fantastic program of investment and reinvestment in new school infrastructure in areas where there is growing demand, particularly Gungahlin, where we have seen massive increases in enrolments and where we have invested in world-class facilities. The Amaroo school is an example where that investment in a quality education facility in the public sector has seen what was an enrolment drift away from public education in that region of the city turned around as a result of the quality of public education institutions.

DR FOSKEY: Minister, given that you are—

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey, just before you go—

DR FOSKEY: Sorry, it is just that—

THE CHAIR: on with your supplementary—

MRS BURKE: Chair, can I take a point of order?

THE CHAIR: I just need to read to you—

MRS BURKE: If you going to raise the issue of equity in the committee, please—

THE CHAIR: Yes. I am going to raise the supplementary issue.

MRS BURKE: I just raise with you a point: Ms Porter just asked four questions—

THE CHAIR: Standing order 119—

MRS BURKE: and yet you bring up Mrs Dunne's point of asking the same amount.

THE CHAIR: I am going to address that right now, Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: Thank you. We need some consistency. It has to be fair to both sides.

THE CHAIR: Standing order 119 says:

Immediately following the oral answer to a question, one supplementary question may be asked by the Member who asked the original question: Provided that the supplementary question is relevant to the original question or arises out of the answer given, contains no preamble, introduces no new matter and is put in precise and direct terms.

MRS BURKE: But this is estimates.

THE CHAIR: The estimates committee agreement on the conduct of hearings under time allocations said:

As far as possible, Committee Members will be given priority in asking questions at each hearing. Time will also be allocated to non-member MLAs who attend the hearings. Supplementary questions from all MLAs present will be allowed following a lead question. The effectiveness of this approach will be reviewed early in the Hearing schedule.

MRS BURKE: And that is the punchline.

THE CHAIR: So the standing orders—

MRS BURKE: You have reviewed it within the—

THE CHAIR: The standing orders say—

MRS BURKE: three days of the hearings, Mr Chair.

THE CHAIR: that there will be one supplementary question—

MRS BURKE: Give us a break here.

MRS DUNNE: I think this is a matter for a private meeting rather than taking up time.

THE CHAIR: but other MLAs are allowed to ask it. So—

MRS BURKE: Yes. Certainly. Let us carry on.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey indicated that she had a supplementary question to this.

DR FOSKEY: Yes, it is a follow-up—

MR STEFANIAK: I would actually like to ask a question.

MRS DUNNE: Ms Porter had four supplementary questions.

DR FOSKEY: It is a follow-up—

MR STEFANIAK: As deputy chair, I would like to ask a main question. Can I please ask a question after she has finished? Have a look at your sheet.

DR FOSKEY: Can I—

THE CHAIR: You certainly can.

MR STEFANIAK: Otherwise we are going to have a very strange estimates committee—

DR FOSKEY: “She” with a capital “S”, I hope, Mr Stefaniak.

Mr Barr: Children, children; please!

MR STEFANIAK: Let us have a little bit of fairness.

DR FOSKEY: Mr Barr, I am really glad that you have noticed how much children are interested in the environment. I am hoping that the sustainability measures will be an educational opportunity. In that case, why has one of the essential learning achievements from the curriculum framework—human impact on the planet—been dropped? How, in this day and age, when you have already stated how concerned children are about environmental issues, can this not qualify as one of the 26 essential learning achievements?

Mr Barr: Thank you for the question, Dr Foskey. We have, through the curriculum renewal process, engaged in an extensive consultation process with the public school system, the private school system and a range of stakeholders who have been involved in developing this framework. More than 500 teachers from across the sectors have been involved in the development over, I think, two years—heading into our third year now in terms of this process. There is a trial going on now in 22 schools, I think—14 in the public system and eight in the non-government system—whereby the curriculum framework is being trialled with a view to beginning implementation for the 2008 school year.

As part of that process, there has been a refinement in a number of essential learning areas. Because a particular line that was there at the start is not there now does not mean that those issues have been dropped and are off the agenda. I might get Janet Davy, who has been involved in this process from the beginning, to give you a bit of an insight into the process of the curriculum development.

Ms Davy: The essential learning achievement about environmental sustainability, Dr Foskey, has not been dropped. Land use issues are dealt with in one of the 26 essential learning achievements called “the student acts for an environmentally sustainable future”. The essential content in that particular essential learning achievement includes students looking at the effects of changes to natural environments, land use issues, population growth impacts, environmental effects et cetera. I can give you a copy of that essential learning achievement as it is currently written in the phase 2 draft framework.

As the minister indicated, the draft framework is currently being trialled and undergoing an external validation study. The results of that so far are indicating huge support for retaining that particular essential learning achievement. So we do not envisage that there will be any dropping or weakening of content around learning about environmental sustainability in the final framework.

DR FOSKEY: Good news.

THE CHAIR: Mr Stefaniak?

MR STEFANIAK: Thank you chair.

Mr Barr: Mr Stefaniak, good morning.

MR STEFANIAK: Good morning, minister. At the end of last year you closed a number of schools, and most of those schools are now vacant. At that time there were a number of groups interested in using the closed school buildings for non government schools, specifically Hall and Tharwa. At the time you indicated that that would not occur; you would not allow that. A number of people approached us saying they thought that was churlish in the extreme. Why did you make that decision when, quite clearly, some of those school buildings, several of which are on heritage listings, could at least continue to be used for some form of education?

Mr Barr: Thank you, Mr Stefaniak, for the question. In relation to the two specific examples that you have raised, there was a proposal floated, I understand, for a southside campus of a particular non-government school seeking perhaps to utilise the Tharwa building. The government, at the conclusion of the consultation process, determined to keep an education facility in Tharwa, so that building is being used as a pre-school and will remain a government asset. If you have visited Tharwa you will know that there are just two buildings and that the—

MRS BURKE: If you can get there.

Mr Barr: Indeed.

MRS BURKE: I am glad you acknowledge it, minister.

Mr Barr: Yes. I took the opportunity to go to Tharwa on a number of occasions in 2006. If you are familiar with that particular building, you would know that the arrangements in relation to the preschool were less than satisfactory. When you are sharing with—

MR STEFANIAK: I am talking about your blanket refusal, though, to allow any of those closed buildings to be used.

Mr Barr: Indeed, yes. That is right and—

MR STEFANIAK: Some of which have now—

Mr Barr that is consistent with a government policy position for some time.

MR STEFANIAK: Why was that?

Mr Barr: As the buildings are government assets, if they are no longer required for a school, we will make a determination of appropriate use. That process is being handled by the Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Mr Hargreaves. As the properties are surplus to the education department's requirements, they are transferred to the property group within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, and Minister Hargreaves has announced a consultation process around the future use of those sites.

MR STEFANIAK: Does that include an educational purpose, minister, for a non-government body or are you ruling that out?

Mr Barr: Well, that is a matter that you can raise with Minister Hargreaves. But it remains my view that there are a number of other priorities for those sites and I would have thought that alternate use by a non-government school would be well down the list of priorities for those sites. There are a variety of other uses, as have been identified—

DR FOSKEY: Including public schools?

Mr Barr: that would be of better use in terms of an overall community outcome, for example, aged care facilities.

MR STEFANIAK: Finally and further on that, minister, as well as the school closures you announced a number of changes to schools, for example, that some schools would be P-2 only when, in the past, they had gone up to year 6. One of those schools, which is struggling now, is Narrabundah primary which has a lot of indigenous kids. What problems have arisen as a result in those schools which are not yet closed but which are experiencing significant problems as a result of your changed policies, and what are you going to do about it? A school like Narrabundah has a special place in our school system and I understand it is in grave danger of not existing for much longer as a result of the changed model that you are now introducing.

Mr Barr: I am not sure where you have garnered that perception from, Mr Stefaniak, but I do not believe that to be correct. I think there is a degree of—

MRS DUNNE: Is there not a leak of enrolments?

Mr Barr: drift from some of the schools identified to become P-2 schools in 2009. We did anticipate that that would be the case. I am pleased to advise the committee, though, that a reference group has been established to drive the commencement of the P-2 schools and that that involves a variety of key stakeholders who are very enthused about the prospect of those sites becoming an integrated service delivery point for children from nought to eight. All of the research backs investment in early childhood education.

In fact, I am going to throw to Dr Bruniges in a moment to give you a little bit of an outline of the thinking behind the P-2 schools. I know Mrs Dunne is very critical. She seems to stand alone from all education research in Australia and in the world in terms of the importance of investment in early childhood. The government intends—

MRS DUNNE: What about all the kids who go to P-6 schools or P-10 schools?

Mr Barr: to back these—

MRS DUNNE: Do they not need it as well?

Mr Barr: new facilities in terms of making them an integrated service delivery point,

one that we believe will be very attractive, as is evidenced by the success of the O'Connor Cooperative School as a school in that format, ending at the end of year 2. That is always fully subscribed and has a waiting list.

There is no reason to believe that, following a successful model and a successful implementation and the availability of a variety of services on the one side, rolling out that model to four other locations in the ACT will not prove to be a very positive addition to the diversity of our public education system. It will provide, for those parents who have a concern about larger schools, a small school environment in the early years. We have provided that choice and provided it across the ACT. It is one that is strongly supported where it already operates. But I will get Dr Bruniges now to outline some of the thinking and research behind the investment in early childhood education.

Dr Bruniges: Thank you, minister. There is no doubt from OECD literature and from international material that the emphasis on the early years of childhood from nought to eight is becoming a really important area in terms of focus of education departments. There is a lot of debate that you may be well aware of about the education-care divide and what actually happens in preschool and where that line is actually traditionally drawn and how we need to actually think about it as a whole educative process.

I think one of the key researchers in Australia at the moment is Professor Fraser Mustard from Canada who is based in South Australia as their thinker of residence. He has recently held a forum with all states and territories about the latest research emerging from some of the experiences in Canada with early childhood and the importance of schooling and early learning becoming a key focus for educational institutions.

As a result, we have done a stocktake of all of the research around the early years. We formed a reference group comprising academics and a range of people with particular expertise in the area of early childhood education who are developing a conceptual framework which should be completed within the month which picks up the notion that each of these sites will act as regional hubs providing integrated services for children nought to eight. They are underpinned by a great wealth of evidence and research evidence about building the foundation for the future. They look at improving transitions for children and families between home and settings in those early years. They help to build strong families and communities. They support vulnerable children and families and use a whole-of-government approach to link and deliver services to children and families.

I was fortunate enough to visit CAFE Enfield in South Australia. It is the model that the South Australian government is starting to put in place. The facility has looked at some of the outcomes of parenting programs for parents, as well as the integration of education and early learning facilities. So there are actual models working in Australia already. In the ACT we need to remember that each setting is going to be unique. As the minister has outlined, the O'Connor cooperative is a particular setting. We need to ensure that each school will be unique and provide a mix of services that is responsive to the local community and setting.

We will also employ a strategy, once the conceptual framework is developed, of focus groups in the areas and involve all community members in each of those areas in the development of the actual model to be put in place in each of those areas. I think that the focus on quality learning is really important when we go into the nought to eight area. Student wellbeing and family participation in those early years are critical, and our research is no doubt telling us all of that. That one-stop shop approach to integrated service from a number of government and community sectors I think is something that is worth pursuing as we look at making connections for family about those things that matter in the early years of schooling. So we will work through that.

Mr Curry currently convenes that reference group of different academics. We are ready to get the conceptual model and we will then take it out to each of those communities to have focus groups and consultation so that we develop an understanding and take from each community the great ideas that many of those communities have about what services they need in those particular settings to make sure that we have high quality learning environments that deliver quality learning outcomes for students.

MRS BURKE: Thank you for that. Just to clarify your ruling, chair, I make it clear that I have a main question and a supplementary.

Mr Barr: Wonderful. Thank you.

MRS BURKE: Good morning, minister, and department officials. Thank you for coming. There has been much talk regarding bullying in schools. This happened, obviously, well before the budget was released. I am probably a little aghast, to say the least, to see no mention outrightly—you can obviously put me right if I am wrong—of attention to bullying in schools and how we are going to address it. Minister, there are many inconsistencies, in particular about when police are involved, and that has been raised in the media and in the Assembly at length over the last few months. What statistics are collected, what statistics are reported and where are they reported?

Mr Barr: Thank you, Mrs Burke, for the question. As a result of the changes that I implemented within the public education system as of 15 May 2007, there is a requirement for principals within schools to telephone the school director immediately when a critical incident occurs within an ACT school, to report that incident and to follow that up with a written report to the education department within 24 hours. We have had in place a process where incidents have been recorded, and someone I am sure in a moment will pass me a note telling me the exact number of incidents that have occurred. They are doing that right now. Thank you. There were 59 incidents in ACT government schools.

MRS BURKE: In what period, sorry?

Mr Barr: In the 12-month period from 1 June 2006 to 31 May 2007. I can provide the committee with some further detailed breakdown of that. Just under half involved some form of physical assault or violence; about 10 per cent involved a parent or an adult in some way and a proportion, five per cent or thereabouts of those incidents involved cyber bullying. So we do record that data in the public school system. I have

sought to strengthen those reporting frameworks—

MRS BURKE: How have you done that, minister?

Mr Barr: by requiring principals to consult with the directors of schools in relation to the reporting of those incidents and whether or not they are ones that should be reported to the police. It is a greater level of accountability. We have instituted a process of auditing all ACT public schools in relation to their compliance with those policies. Those audits will continue through the 2007 school year.

Perhaps most important is the introduction of five new key policy documents that I have tabled in the Assembly previously. Those relate to the safe school framework P-12; the policy countering bullying, harassment and violence in ACT public schools; the policy countering sexual harassment in ACT public schools; the policy countering racism in ACT public schools and the policy around suspension, exclusion and transfer of students within ACT public schools.

As you may be aware, in response to a question I was asked in the Assembly a couple of weeks ago, I undertook to seek further information and clarity as regards the policies that apply in the 44 private schools in the ACT. As private schools educate around 40 per cent of students I felt that, as education minister, I needed further information in terms of how the non-government sector and the policies respond to these sorts of critical incidents.

MRS BURKE: I hope that is not a diversion from the main game, minister.

Mr Barr: The main game, Mrs Burke, is that I, as education minister, ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are in place for all students, no matter which school and which sector they attend, whether they are at a public or a private school, and I cannot say that about non-government schools at this time. I have sought to consult with the Non-Government Schools Education Council, my peak advisory body on non-government education. I have written to the chair seeking information on the policies and procedures that are in place. We do not have any data out of the non government school system at all in relation to critical incidents.

I would like to begin the 2008 school year with agreement from non-government schools to provide the ACT education department with the same level of data and reporting that public schools provide. My view, however, is that we achieve that through a cooperative approach. I have written to the Non-Government Schools Education Council seeking their views on the practicality of implementing the policy framework that we have put in place for public schools. I have provided them with copies of our new policy framework and sought their views on its implementation.

I could, by way of contrast, look at how another government approaches seeking data and broad consistency, and that would be to tie ACT government funding to compliance in the non-government sector in the same way that the commonwealth government seeks to get compliance from the states and territories in relation to funding agreements. I do not believe that is the appropriate way to go, Mrs Burke. I am seeking to consult and to contrast how we approach addressing this crucial issue that affects 59,000 students in the ACT, 24,000 of whom are enrolled in

non-government schools. I would be abrogating my responsibility as education minister if I did not seek to address this issue within non-government schools. I have commenced that process and I intend to follow through with it, in consultation with those schools.

But my overall goal would be that, for the beginning of the 2008 school year, we have consistency across all schools in the ACT regarding approaches to bullying, harassment and reporting incidents to police, as you have identified. I think it is important that we have that consistency across the board.

We have put in place measures for the public system. They have been in place since 15 May. The next challenge is to work with the non-government schools to achieve consistency across the board. I look forward to their cooperation. We have had some preliminary discussions and I am sure that they understand the importance of these issues. I think there is a lot that the two sectors can learn from each other's responses and I hope that this process will be one that will be positive for both public schools and private schools.

MRS BURKE: Thank you, minister. We focused totally, though, on the students. I am also very concerned about the impact this is having upon staff and morale. Firstly, how many staff are on stress leave? You may want to come back to the committee with that. What measures are you taking to improve staff morale in our public education system? Where is it identified in the budget?

Mr Barr: Thank you. We have a number of programs in relation to professional development opportunities for staff. One of the key focuses for the 2007-08 financial year is particular professional development courses around dealing with bullying and bystander behaviour, and cyber bullying in particular. I think we would all be alarmed at some of the more recent incidents that have made it into the media where people have seemingly set up their mobile phone cameras to film what seem to be premeditated assaults.

MRS BURKE: Are you considering banning mobile phones in schools?

Mr Barr: Well, I am not sure that that is a practical solution.

MRS BURKE: During school time? I did not have one. I am sure you did not.

Mr Barr: No. Certainly mobile phones were not so mobile when I was at school. It is a feature. We do have a policy for appropriate use of mobile phones within ACT public schools.

MRS BURKE: It is obviously not working, is it, at this stage?

Mr Barr: I am not entirely sure, with the particular incidents that we are talking about, Mrs Burke, who actually filmed the incidents on their mobile phone cameras. It may well be that they were people outside the school. A number of the incidents that have made the *Canberra Times* and other media outlets have involved outsiders coming onto school grounds. It is very difficult to have a mobile phone policy for people outside the school community.

We are hosting a conference on bullying on 27 July at the Centre for Teaching and Learning. I have a flyer for that that we can make available to the committee. But it is an issue that I take very seriously. Through the measures I have introduced in the public school system last month in terms of strengthening the reporting processes and seeking a higher level involvement from directors of schools in dealing with critical incidents, I believe the public system has addressed, in large part, these issues.

That is not to say that there will never be bullying or incidents that occur in schools. Nearly 60,000 students go to schools every day in the ACT. There is always going to be some friction in the interaction of that many people. It is unrealistic to suggest that there will never be an incident in a school. But what is important is that we have in place the correct procedures and policies to deal with those incidents when they arise and that we provide support to address the core issues that are at the heart of some of these disputes. But then that is also a broader societal issue.

MRS BURKE: So how many staff—

Mr Barr: We cannot expect schools to be able to address all of the issues that confront our society. I think that is an unrealistic expectation. It is unfair to place the burden entirely on schools when a lot of the issues that they are forced to deal with relate to broader societal issues or neighbourhood disputes that are brought into the school.

MRS BURKE: You do not have an argument from me there. I just want to get the number of staff on stress leave.

Mr Barr: I can get that information for you.

MRS BURKE: You are going to get that. Thank you. I have a supplementary question.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne has one supplementary and then we will go to the break.

MRS DUNNE: On this specific issue, minister, you tabled these documents on 30 May and they came into effect on 5 May. On successive days both you and Dr Bruniges were on, I think, 2CN 666 at various stages talking about these guidelines. There seemed to be a little inconsistency in the message there about what involvement the departmental authorities would have in relation to calling the police.

I also draw your attention to a letter that you wrote to me about a specific incident, which I do not want to discuss here. You wrote a letter to me, which I received on 15 June. In part in this letter you say:

Police can be called to a school or involved at any time deemed necessary by the principal to ensure the safety of students and staff.

That is fine. I do not have a problem with that, but there seems to be an inconsistent message. In the Assembly you were saying that when there were acts of violence the police should be involved. The guidelines say that essentially, and both you and

Dr Bruniges said that in slightly different ways on radio. There seems to be an inconsistent message. I do not have a problem with calling police to guarantee the safety of staff, but there are acts of violence which you have not addressed.

What are the circumstances in which police would be called? Ms Melsom gave public evidence to another committee here, which seems to have been overtaken, that it was policy that schools should do this if a child was over 10. So what is the situation? Can you clear up the apparent inconsistencies because they are there and I think they are grave?

Mr Barr: There are obviously, under the criminal law, a variety of situations whereby police are required to be involved, and schools will comply with the law as regards those issues. I suppose the point you are homing in on, and this is a difficult aspect, is that at some point someone has to make a judgment call about what constitutes a level of violence. It could well be that people's interpretations will differ on that, and there is a human element in this. That is why I think it is important that the processes involve an elevation to the directors of schools to involve the department in a higher level way than was previously the case.

The previous policy essentially left it entirely in the hands of principals and/or deputy principals to make a judgement call. I think it is important that we have in place a process now that requires the immediate contacting of the director of schools by telephone to advise of an incident. It then provides, as I say, a higher level of departmental involvement in determining. But ultimately there is not going to be an absolute black and white answer to this. There is a level of judgement that is brought to bear in determining the seriousness of an issue. I do not want to appear facetious, but if someone pulls someone's hair, that could be deemed violent. You then have to make a judgement call about the extent of that particular act. This is the difference. That is where there is a human element.

I think it is important, as I say, that we have in place the policies and procedures that enable a higher level of departmental involvement to ensure a greater consistency in response. One of the things that have been identified throughout this process is that, by leaving matters to individual schools, we were getting inconsistent responses. I am always wary that there are two sides to every story and the sorts of things that you might hear in relation to a particular incident and what actually happened vary from side to side.

But it is important that there is that higher level involvement. This policy addresses that particular issue and requires principals to raise the issue immediately with the director of schools—we have three: southern, central and northern—and then to provide a written report within 24 hours. That puts in place a greater degree of accountability than was there previously.

MRS DUNNE: I have one very brief matter.

THE CHAIR: One very brief supplementary on the supplementary.

MRS DUNNE: This might be something that you do take on notice. How do these guidelines relate to the responsibilities of teachers in particular in relation to

mandatory reporting? What are the triggers that would involve the child protection areas? Are those triggers outlined both to your staff and to the directors of schools?

Dr Bruniges: For mandatory reporting there is set training for all our teachers that it is very important that they go through. Individual teachers, as mandatory reporters, need to act individually. They will not consult with directors of schools. If they are in doubt in any shape or form about certain behaviour and criteria or evidence that is given to them by children, they ring the mandatory reporting line automatically.

MRS DUNNE: Does that extend to acts of violence that might be considered criminal violence at that school?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, and if I can go back to Mrs Burke's question, the 10 is where criminal charges are actually placed by the police. So the age of 10 is the trigger point for the laying of criminal charges. When it is physical violence, under the Child Protection Act—and the change is there—the teacher would do the same thing. They would report to the mandatory reporting line. If that is critical, they then take in what they need to do from there.

If it is physical assault and police have been called, we entrust the police processes to go on. We have been working very closely with the AFP. I have been working with the department of health, particularly mental health, to look at some of the issues. We have established a safe schools task force with key stakeholder groups and we are working through all of those issues to make sure that we can get a good combination of things happening across those critical fields.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will go to the break and return at 10.55.

Meeting adjourned from 10.33 to 10.54 am.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, members. We have about an hour and a half left and I propose that we examine output classes 1.1 through to 1.4 and then 2.1. Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: A table of accountability indicators is set out on page 369 of BP4. I am concerned that five indicators in literacy and numeracy that refer to indigenous students have been reduced. Going back and looking at the previous budget, these accountability indicators are new in 2006-07. We did not meet those targets in 2006-07 and they now appear to be being reduced. These are fairly highly academic competencies. I want to know: were the targets lower because they were considered to be too high, or for what other reason; is it common practice to lower targets for literacy and numeracy across the board; and has there been any research to justify these changes in the targets?

Mr Barr: Thank you, Mrs Dunne. I can say that, when looking through all of those performance indicators, in fact some targets have been increased. I think the underlying basis for the methodology, if you like, for the changes of targets is around looking at a five-year analysis of trends in each of those performance indicators. For example, in respect of indigenous students in year 5 who meet and exceed national benchmarks for writing, the target of 75 per cent has been increased to 80 per cent.

MRS DUNNE: I am actually asking about the ones specifically relating to indigenous students that have been lowered.

Mr Barr: Sure. But the point I am making is that not all targets for indigenous students have been lowered. Some have been raised.

MRS DUNNE: I didn't say that.

Mr Barr: And the basis of the methodology behind the changes that are incorporated in this year's budget papers relates to a five-year analysis of trend results in each of those indicators.

MRS DUNNE: And what has the five-year analysis of trend results shown you that has justified your lowering of those targets?

Mr Barr: Dr Bruniges can provide you with some information.

Dr Bruniges: Mrs Dunne, we need to think about the way we used to do it. We used to look at where they were at, and put it a bit higher, frankly. Last year I asked the team to have a look at a more rigorous approach to target setting and to underpin it with a data analysis. What they did was look at a three to five-year trend, look at the error around the data and then predict forward. As a result, there is a methodology for the figure. We have a way of setting targets, not just someone's best guess at what it might be, or raising it by two or three. We run a rolling five-year trend analysis, we look at the standard error around those results and then we predict forward what it should be. That becomes an aspirational target—achievable but aspirational.

MRS DUNNE: Is it possible for the committee to see that methodology?

Dr Bruniges: Certainly, we can give you the five-year trend and show you how we have calculated that.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. Just a supplementary, Mr Chair. These targets are about the rate at which we exceed national benchmarks. What discussions have there been, minister, about reviewing those benchmarks to see whether those are better than a sort of wet finger in the wind approach?

Mr Barr: National testing has been an ongoing process with jurisdictions in the commonwealth. These issues are debated at some length, both at a ministerial level and also at officer level. Dr Bruniges in fact chairs the officials group in relation to national testing, and she will be in a very good position in a moment to provide an additional level of detail to what I am able to provide.

It has been a tortuous process to get agreement from the commonwealth and some funding. Minister Bishop walked away from the MCEETYA meeting in April with no agreement, and subsequently scurried back in with her officials to provide the money that she refused to provide in April. So at least we now have the basis for some national testing. The states and territories were prepared to do the work ourselves without the commonwealth, but fortunately, right at the end when it was crucial, someone from DEST came in with the money that was necessary. I have to say that

this was pleasing and will enable some further development of work in this area.

MRS DUNNE: Further development of work on what the benchmarks should be?

Mr Barr: Yes, indeed. But the whole process is going to involve changes for a number of jurisdictions. The ACT is, I think, one of the few in the country that tests 3, 5, 7 and 9. Other jurisdictions do not do that. But as Dr Bruniges chairs this committee, she will be in a position to give you some further information.

Dr Bruniges: Mrs Dunne, I think there has been a long-recognised need for every state and territory to carry out their own testing program. Then we have a massive equating exercise, a psychometric exercise, that tells us where the benchmark is for our jurisdiction. As we move towards 2008, the committee that I chair is indeed putting together the first national test at 3, 5, 7 and 9 in literacy and numeracy, and we are going through that process this year. Every child in every jurisdiction and every sector will sit the same test and we will look at the reporting scale from that. So for the very first time, as we move towards that, we will be able to have a common scale that runs from years 3, 5, 7 and 9 on one ribbon.

At the moment, you just cannot come up with statements about whether or not literacy and numeracy are more difficult or less difficult in year 7 because each of these tests is on a separate reporting scale. As we move to a common reporting scale we will be in a better position to establish the new benchmark and to also look at charting the range of achievement. At the moment what you have got in these statistics across the country is the percentage of students who exceed the national benchmark, and that, indeed, is a minimum line in the sand. What we are going to do is put several of those lines on a recording scale—it might be “minimum”, it might be “proficient”, it might be “excellent”, depending on what the committee decides in terms of the reporting scale—and then we will be able to chart the range of student achievement and not just look at the minimum level.

The other important point there is that we will be able to look at how student growth has changed over time. So when we look at a year 3 student and then look at the same student in year 5, we will be able to calculate the difference in terms of achievement. So how much value do we add in respect of literacy and numeracy as students progress through schooling, and again in year 7 and year 9? That is our long-term goal. Over the next decade we will have the results as students go through schooling. That will give us much more powerful evidence in respect of the impact of intervention strategies in the early years of schooling and rate of growth.

I have done some preliminary work here in the ACT where we were able to have a close look at our indigenous students in particular. Our indigenous students in the ACT, on average, have the same rate of progress. So the rate of growth in reading, writing and numeracy across 3, 5, 7 and 9 is the same as their non-indigenous counterparts. That is a very powerful statement for us to make in terms of the progress of indigenous students here in the ACT. We are in a position to do that after analysing the data and we are hoping to do that nationally as we move down that path next year.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Dr Foskey, do you have a question on 1.1?

DR FOSKEY: It is overview, it is primary—it relates to everything, really. I am trying to put everything in the one question because this might be my only chance to ask for this information.

Mr Barr: I look forward to this “many things in one question” question.

DR FOSKEY: I will ask a question, then a supplementary and, if I can, I will squeeze in a second supplementary. Given that the program for international student assessment shows that the ACT has amongst the largest achievement gaps between high and low achieving students and between students from high and low socioeconomic status backgrounds, both in Australia and amongst other high-income countries, could you please explain to me how a bricks-and-mortar approach is going to narrow that gap, or do you think the gap is not a problem?

MRS DUNNE: Can I second that question?

Mr Barr: Dr Foskey, there is no doubting that investment in quality infrastructure and quality learning environments has a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. It is simply the case that if we invest in quality teaching and learning environments and if we seek to invest significantly, as we have done through the 2006-07 and 2007-08 budgets and into the outyears, in improving the quality of our infrastructure, then that will have a positive impact.

DR FOSKEY: Could you table your strategy for overcoming that gap?

Mr Barr: I haven't even finished—

DR FOSKEY: Then I could see whether bricks and mortar fits into it, along with all the other measures—

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey, would you let the minister finish his answer, please.

DR FOSKEY: I am just trying to direct his answer a little better.

Mr Barr: If you would let me finish. I was able to get four sentences out before you—

DR FOSKEY: I know. I am very interested—I am all agog.

Mr Barr: Dr Foskey, I will determine how I answer the question, not you.

DR FOSKEY: I just want to make sure that you understand the question, Mr Barr.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey!

Mr Barr: You have put a question to me. I am endeavouring to answer it, and you keep on interrupting. Do you want to hear the answer?

DR FOSKEY: Desperately.

Mr Barr: Good, thank you. Thank you kindly. A number of researchers—for example, Professor Brian Caldwell and Greg Whitby from the Catholic Education Office—have called for greater investment in school infrastructure. Professor Caldwell went so far as to say that there are hundreds of schools that simply need to be bulldozed and replaced by schools that are suitable for teaching and learning in the 21st century. Greg Whitby from the Catholic Education Office has called for greater investment in and use of information and communication technology in schools, and he has described digital literacy as essential for fully functioning citizenship in the 21st century.

We had the great pleasure of observing a presentation by Mr Whitby at one of our education seminars that was held earlier this year. He and a number of other leading researchers, both in Australia and overseas, have identified that the physical environment is crucial to both the academic success of children and their overall safety and wellbeing in the school environment.

Are you suggesting, Dr Foskey, that we should not do anything about the state of infrastructure in our public schools—

DR FOSKEY: No.

Mr Barr: that we should simply let our schools age and decay at the rate that they were—

DR FOSKEY: No.

Mr Barr: that we did not have too many schools with too few students, and that there was not a need to invest significantly in restoring the infrastructure and the quality of our public education system? I think it is also important to note that you cannot take one budget in isolation and seek to accuse the government of not having a response over a term of government to not only address the capital infrastructure needs but also a program of recurrent funding.

I return to my opening remarks and point out that this budget contains the largest ever amount of recurrent funding for public schools in the history of the ACT—the largest ever. Are you denying, Dr Foskey, the impact of a range of initiatives that were introduced in terms of reducing class sizes in the early years, the additional preschool hours and a range of early interventions that go to the heart of the issues that you are raising?

It is important to note also that, as the ABS statistics revealed yesterday, the ACT has the highest school retention rate of any jurisdiction in Australia. Mrs Dunne alluded in a media release earlier in the year that parents would be surprised to learn that 30 per cent of the students who start year 11 drop out, and we have a completion rate of 70 per cent. Yes, they would be surprised to learn that, because it is not true. The ABS found, in fact, that the completion rate is 89 per cent—that we retain students to year 12 at a level of 89 per cent.

A lot of people have decided to put their own spin on these particular issues. There is clear evidence that backs investment in the quality of infrastructure within our public

schools. For example, I would like to highlight the announcement in this year's budget of a new performing arts centre for Lyneham high school.

DR FOSKEY: Bricks and mortar.

Mr Barr: Well, it will provide, Dr Foskey, a facility that will enable the continued growth of what is an outstanding music program at that school. I hope you had the opportunity to watch *Stateline* last Friday night and to read the *Canberra Times* to see the level of excitement that there is in that school community. That was something that they asked for, and the government has delivered.

Equally, in other areas of the curriculum, in other schools, Belconnen high school asked for a new gymnasium. There is a lot of evidence that links the quality of physical education programs with improved academic performance, and particularly in engaging students, boys in particular, at the high school level who might be prone to underachievement. Quality physical education programs—and there is significant evidence of this both in Australia and overseas—have a very positive impact in terms of improving academic performance.

I recently hosted a national forum at which Sue Campbell from UK Sport talked about the experience in the United Kingdom and the particular benefits of quality physical education. The government is backing that by providing quality physical education facilities. I would like to see by the end of this funding round—and we will see—each government high school have a purpose-built gymnasium. This will enable improved quality physical education programs to be undertaken, which will lead to improved academic achievement. A clear link has been demonstrated in the United Kingdom and here in Australia in respect of quality education programs. It is not necessarily a matter of increasing time—and we have mandated time in our curriculum for physical activity—but of improving the quality of the programs we offer. If we improve the quality of physical education we will get better outcomes.

So, yes, the government is always concerned to address these issues. A range of initiatives have been put in place over the last five years, and there will be more. As I indicated in an answer to an earlier question, we made a series of commitments in the 2004 election that we would deliver in this term of government, and it is my intention to do that. But, as I observed, we still have another budget and other opportunities to implement those programs, and I intend to deliver them.

DR FOSKEY: Mr Barr, given that the initiatives you have described are good and useful initiatives, I would like to see the strategy to overcome the gap between students achieving high and low results in relation to their socioeconomic status backgrounds so that I can be sure, and the parents of Canberra can be sure, that all the measures that you have described, all of which are commendable, are part of an overall strategy which goes beyond bricks and mortar to address what is an increasing inequity in outcomes of education between students, depending on where their families are placed on the socioeconomic scale.

Mr Barr: Thank you, Dr Foskey. I neglected to refer to another budget initiative that I mentioned at the beginning of this hearing. That initiative relates to the extension of the secondary bursaries scheme, to expand into years 7 and 10. So it is not true to say

that there have not been initiatives, that there have not been initiatives in the past and that there will not be any in the future. They do form part of a broader strategy to address these issues. The government will continue to invest strategically in a range of responses to address the issues you raise.

I am very disappointed in the commentary from some individuals, who seem to entirely dismiss an investment in bricks and mortar. If the government had done nothing and walked away from its responsibilities to ensure quality learning environments, the same individuals would be criticising us for not doing anything. We are prepared to take a multifaceted approach to this that means investment both in bricks and mortar and in quality teaching and learning. We are backing that up with a record amount of investment in public education—30 per cent more than when we came to office and a record amount in 2007-08. But, yes, there is a range of initiatives that we undertook to deliver in this term of government that we are yet to do, but we will deliver on those within this term of government.

DR FOSKEY: How much will we spend on the strategy to advertise and publicise our public system in the next, let's say, 18 months or so?

Mr Barr: How much in terms of promotion of public education?

DR FOSKEY: Yes, indeed.

Mr Barr: Are you after an answer in terms of a direct spend on, say, print and electronic media? There is a range of in-kind promotions.

DR FOSKEY: No, more the advertising budget, I think.

Mr Barr: I think the program I announced for the 2006-07 year was in the order of \$100,000, of which I think \$70,000 was spent in 2006 on television and radio commercials. We have provided some additional funding in the 2007-08 financial year and we will increase that promotional budget from \$70,000 to \$85,000. So a total of \$155,000 over the school years 2006 and 2007.

THE CHAIR: Mr Stefaniak, do you have any questions on 1.1?

MR STEFANIAK: Thank you. You mentioned physical education programs and how crucially important it was to teach kids healthy habits. How are you assessing the mandatory 150 minutes of PE and 30 minutes of health education? Is that actually being carried out? Have you done anything in relation to calls to have some dedicated physical education teachers attached to primary schools? Would you indicate, minister, whether you have taken any additional initiatives.

Mr Barr: I am very pleased that you have asked this question, because you have identified an issue. I understand that you, as minister, may have been responsible for mandating time.

MR STEFANIAK: I certainly was.

Mr Barr: I welcome that as an initiative that has provided space within the

curriculum. The issue has been—and this was particularly the case last year—that primary schools that had 28 students, 60 students, 67 students, 70 students, simply did not have a specialist PE teacher. There is no way that schools of that size with their staffing allocation could possibly have specialist PE teachers. One of the advantages of consolidation of resources is that larger primary schools are able to provide specialist physical education teachers.

MR STEFANIAK: How many have them?

Mr Barr: Well, a large number do.

MR STEFANIAK: Could you supply a figure?

Mr Barr: We can get that information. What we also do is, in a clustering arrangement, share PE teachers across a number of primary schools which, because of their staffing allocation, do not have such a teacher. Primary schools range in size. I think, at its peak, O'Connor cooperative catered for about 60 students. We still have some primary schools that are around 100, but in order to have a specialist PE teacher you need the schools to be 300 to 400. That is the advantage of having schools of that size. That is why all of the educational research says you can offer a wider curriculum.

MR STEFANIAK: A lot of people like small schools, minister.

Mr Barr: A lot of people do. But national and international small schools are considerably larger than schools in the ACT.

MR STEFANIAK: Anyway, could you tell me what you are doing.

Mr Barr: You have made a very good point. As part of my responsibilities as the sports minister and education minister I took the opportunity to host a national forum. I am the only sports and education minister in the country. There has been a huge amount of resistance within the education sector to initiatives from the sport sector around physical education in schools. We got some very good advice and practical examples from Sue Campbell and Steve Granger from UK Sport on how we can do better in terms of improving the quality of our physical education in schools. That means pulling in outside organisations such as Blue Earth and others who are already delivering programs within ACT government schools, and we will continue to work with outside organisations.

I am particularly pleased with the Hawker college initiative which, through their VET in schools program, enables students to undertake sports-type courses. Part of their practical assessment involves the delivery of programs in primary schools within that education region.

MR STEFANIAK: That has occurred before.

Mr Barr: Indeed. I think that is a very valuable model, and one that we can look to roll out. I think there are some great examples already within the system.

MR STEFANIAK: Could you get me those numbers of PE teachers?

Mr Barr: Certainly. But it is important, Mr Stefaniak, to continue to invest in those areas, and that means taking a critical look at the amount of resources that we currently apply. My approach in looking at these issues is not immediately to say that we need to throw more money at them. It is to look at: are we currently utilising effectively the resources we have? I think a degree of professional development is needed, certainly in primary schools, and that is where we will seek to devote the existing professional development funds. We have a large amount of money that is available there.

There are competing priorities, of course. We discussed bullying earlier as one area that is a priority. But equally, I would say that improving the quality of physical education through professional development of staff is another key area, and one that I intend to pursue.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: Thank you. I want to focus on something not dissimilar to that sort of health-type question. I refer to page 359 of budget paper 4. Under government primary school education you list a raft of things in regard to what your focus will be on. A couple of things I picked up there were health and motor development, and social development. Minister, what impact has the closure of the schools had on students in terms of truancy, absenteeism or violence? I am concerned to know and understand the mental health of these students who, I think we would all agree, are at a very vulnerable age. In turn, that then puts a burden on the families who already have to deal with things like transport. This is a bit of a compound question but perhaps we can work through it. So it is truancy, absenteeism, violence, mental health, students' age and burdens on families such as transport costs.

Mr Barr: In the broader context of 35,000 students within the government system, we need to recognise that about 600 students were affected by school closure in 2006. So we are talking about a very small percentage of the overall school population.

MRS BURKE: Nonetheless, very important to the individual child.

Mr Barr: Indeed, yes. I am not seeking to downplay that but, if you ask me a broad question in the context of primary schools, I need to stress that this is a small percentage of people that we are talking about in terms of the effect of a school closure.

I have been very pleased to hear of some quite outstanding reports of how students have integrated into their new school environments. I have had a number of letters from parents who have indicated that, whilst they were initially opposed to school closures, the school that their children are now attending is a considerable improvement on where they were at previously. A key example is in the Weston Creek region, where there is an improvement in special needs education at Duffy primary over what was available at Rivett. There are a number of other examples around the city. I am not going to suggest that every student has had a vastly improved experience.

MRS BURKE: How many would you say haven't?

Mr Barr: Well, it is difficult to gauge.

MRS BURKE: What is your feedback?

Mr Barr: I have not had that many pieces of correspondence from—

MRS BURKE: Are you following these people? Are you tracking them?

Mr Barr: Yes, we have. The department has individual transition plans and has been closely following the progress. It is obviously difficult for me, given time constraints, to follow all 600 individuals personally.

MRS BURKE: You have a big department, have you?

Mr Barr: I have, indeed. But I have taken a keen interest in ensuring that schools that were receiving students from closed schools were provided with adequate resources to deal with the transition. There have been some outstanding examples. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the principals of a number of the receiving schools for the outstanding work that they have done. I also pay tribute to the entire teaching staffs and school communities. It has been a process that I think has exceeded everyone's expectations in terms of how receiving schools have welcomed new students. The influx of new students into some schools that were struggling for enrolments has in fact reinvigorated entire school communities. It has been very positive for some schools that were struggling. Now, with additional enrolments, they are back to a critical mass and that has enabled them to expand the level of education programs that they can offer.

I will not deny that there have been some people who, as part of the change process, have experienced difficulty in transition. We sought to address that in a financial sense by providing \$750 for each individual student affected by closure in the transition process, in order to provide assistance—for example, in the purchase of new school uniforms, bus passes et cetera.

MRS BURKE: It doesn't help with their mental health, but I get the drift. We have heard a lot on this in the chamber. Finally, are you reassuring this committee that, unlike after the 2003 bushfires, you are not just going to say, "Come on, community, you've got to get on with it"? There are 600 students involved. We need to track them. We need to make them the focus, because they are at a very difficult age and we can't assume that all will be well. I just want some reassurance from you, as minister, that we are not going to push it into a corner.

Mr Barr: Yes, certainly, I understand, and yes, we will—

MRS BURKE: I can see lots of heads nodding at the back.

Mr Barr: From individual principals and individual schools and right through the education department there is a very clear focus on providing the appropriate levels of support services through this transition period. It is important to note that, whilst the

largest number of school closures occurred at the end of 2006, two primary schools and a high school will close at the end of 2007. A new school will be built on the site of the closing Kambah high.

MRS BURKE: For how long will you carry it on?

Mr Barr: There is funding into the outyears for transitional support. We did bring forward an amount as a result of changes to and the final process of 2020. We did make changes to what was the original proposal and so we did bring forward transitional support, but that was provided not only to individuals but also to individual schools, individual principals. There was additional counselling support made available. We will continue that process through 2007-08 and 2008-09 as we move through.

The closures that will occur at the end of the 2008 school year relate largely to the Holt and Higgins primary schools, and there will be the opening of the new west Belconnen school. That process has been a three or four year one, so there has been continual support provided and a great deal of community excitement about the new facility that will be on offer at west Belconnen. Again, whenever you make change, it is difficult; there is no doubting that. But the product at the end is vastly improved quality in our public education system.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne has a supplementary, then Ms Porter, and then we will move on to 1.2.

MRS DUNNE: You are saying, minister, that these 600 children will be monitored. What mechanism is being used to ensure that you are keeping track of these students? The reports that came to me after the closure of Ginninderra district high school from students themselves was that they felt that once they had gone from Ginninderra there was not the follow-up that they needed. These are children in years 8 and 9 and those sorts of areas. What is actually happening so that you keep track of these children, and is there some sort of survey or whatever?

Mr Barr: I can advise the committee that at the end of term 1 the directors of schools made contact with each of the receiving schools, as principals were monitoring individual families, to find out how that transition process was going. The feedback I had was that parents were essentially happy with the children settling into a new school. Some minor issues were raised, and where they were raised they have been addressed with the directors of schools and the principal of the individual school concerned at a school-based level.

MRS DUNNE: What sorts of minor issues? What sorts of things do you consider minor issues?

Mr Barr: I will have to get Dr Bruniges to give you that level of detail.

Dr Bruniges: This is a really important issue around pastoral care of our students. What we have done is we have been able to track students of schools closed at the end of 2006 and, in the February census, we have got individual principals following up. I would have to say from the feedback that I have received that I have received more

positives than negatives from individual parents, and normally it is the other way around. If there is something adrift, normally you receive more negatives.

We were able to identify exactly where those students were from and where they were going to. The principals have the individual transition plans. At the end of each term, the directors will check with the principals about how the transition plans are going to be able to follow those students. For any issues that either students or the parents become aware of, the first point of call is the principal of the school, and some of those issues that have been raised by parents have been dealt with at the local level.

I have not, as chief executive, had any issue escalate to me. I have had a lot of positives from parents and encouraged them to make contact if indeed there are any problems. Schools will take the major running because they are seeing the students every day, and teachers are very perceptive and use their judgement to identify if students are having problems. We need to continue doing that. I think our teaching workforce and principals in schools have done an extraordinary job of that monitoring and will continue to do so. I don't think it is going to be over this year. I think they are going to monitor them through in the primary setting as they move through the primary setting, and they know how special these students are and how important it is to monitor them.

We provided additional counselling support at the commencement of the process. We provided information packs to students. In fact, we also provided funding to the receiving schools to ensure that we could release teachers to be able to get to know students and files better; so not only money for transition but also money for the release of teachers in the receiving schools so that they could take quality time to monitor where those students were up to.

MS PORTER: Minister, my question is around children with disabilities who are transitioning from one school to another in this process. You mentioned the Rivett and Duffy example. Obviously, schools within my area have closed and I am concerned about the children transitioning from those schools. I was wondering if you could give the committee some information about the additional supports that those children obviously would need and how that is going.

Mr Barr: To give the committee some context, a number of special education units were relocated for the commencement of the 2007 school year. That included one learning support unit from Mount Neighbour to Urambi, two learning support units—autism units, as I mentioned—from Rivett to Duffy, one learning support unit focusing on autism from Melrose to Hughes, one autistic intervention unit from Rivett preschool to Village Creek preschool, one communication and social awareness unit from Rivett to Village Creek preschool, and one language intervention unit from Rivett to South Curtin preschool.

I can advise the committee that all of these special units were successfully relocated and commenced operation for the 2007 school year. Departmental staff have focused on identifying the needs of students and their families in developing transition arrangements and ensuring suitable facilities. A high level of service has been provided for the relocation of special education students, and that does demonstrate the care and commitment that the education department and the government have

provided to those students.

A number of other units will need to move in the years ahead. The learning support unit at Kambah high school will move to Melrose high school and the learning support centre at Kambah high will also move to Melrose high. There is one support class language, SCL, from Village Creek that will move to Taylor within Kambah, and two learning support centres, a senior and a junior, will move from Village Creek to Wanniasa Hills. That will be the completion then of the relocation of special education units.

It has been a process that has been very carefully and sensitively handled. The environment in terms of the physical infrastructure and the quality of facilities from old to new has seen a significant upgrade. That is particularly the case from Rivett to Duffy, where the facilities at Rivett, that school building, were in a very ordinary state. As I think Mr Hargreaves has indicated, it needs to be demolished. That, if you like, typified the issues confronting the public education system in terms of how infrastructure had been run down over a 30 to 35-year period.

I have said in this committee and in the Assembly that if there has been a collective failure of ACT governments of all political persuasions, be they Liberal-Alliance, Labor, Liberal Carnell with Mr Osborne, and others over the entire period of self-government, it is the failure to properly invest in public school infrastructure. That issue has been addressed, and addressed significantly, in this budget and in the previous budget. Not only have we injected record amounts into upgrading facilities, but also we have increased the recurrent maintenance budget for schools and we have increased the ongoing capital upgrades, money that is available each year. All of that is important in investing in our public education system, particularly in providing quality environments for special education units.

I would say that the vast majority of correspondence that I have received in relation to the relocation particularly from Rivett to Duffy has been overwhelmingly positive in that the environment at Duffy is so far in advance of what was on offer at Rivett that parents are so pleased and the students have adapted very well and are loving their new environment. That is, I think, a key and very successful outcome of that transition process, and it is due in no small part to the quality of Duffy primary school as the receiving school and the hard work of the staff there and of all of the staff within the department of education who have been involved in this process. I thank you, Ms Porter, for raising this issue, because it does provide me with the opportunity again to put on the public record the outstanding work that was done by the department of education, particularly by Duffy primary school but by all of the receiving schools, in relation to the changes that occurred at the end of 2006.

MRS BURKE: I have a supplementary question, but I will put it on notice.

THE CHAIR: We will move on to output class—

MS PORTER: I need some clarification, chair. I want clarification about the children who were not necessarily in the unit itself but just in the mainstream classrooms. Are they getting additional support?

Mr Barr: Indeed, yes; all students in terms of transition support.

MS PORTER: My question was about all children with disabilities. Thank you very much for that.

MRS BURKE: I will put my question on notice. It is about the capacity of the receiving schools.

THE CHAIR: We will move on to output class 1.2. Minister, you talked about the replacement school for Kambah. I have had representations to my office and, indeed, as close as last Sunday at a doorknock about whether the community and students will have some input to the design of that school. Can you highlight that?

Mr Barr: We will follow the same model in terms of development of the new facility in Tuggeranong as we have with development of the west Belconnen school, the Harrison school and the Gungahlin college in terms of community involvement. There have been a number of public meetings, consultations and displays through the development of these new facilities. There was a meeting, for example, on Monday night in Gungahlin around the design of the new Gungahlin college. The process will commence later, as the new facility in Kambah is due to open in the 2011 school year. We are not yet at a stage to go to full community consultation on that, but the processes that we followed for the establishment of the other schools will form the broad principles of the consultation process for the new facility at Kambah.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

MRS DUNNE: Can I follow up on the Tuggeranong school? Can I ask a supplementary question?

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey has the call for her question first.

DR FOSKEY: The PISA study that I mentioned before shows that 50 per cent of 15-year-olds from low SES backgrounds in the ACT are below the OECD mean of 30 per cent of all students in literacy and science. It's a very large gap. I am sure the minister is very concerned. What is the government doing to reduce this large achievement gap between students from high and low socioeconomic status families, apart from providing a number of facilities, as you have already outlined a number of times?

Mr Barr: There has been a range of initiatives that the government has put forward over a number of years. For the sake of time, I won't go through and list all of those again because, as you have mentioned, I have extensively talked about the wide range of policy initiatives the government has in place. In terms of the PISA data, Dr Bruniges will in a moment be able to give you some further information in relation to that. There are a number of key commitments that the government has put in place in terms of improved services, particularly for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Key to that is investment in new school facilities; for example, the replacement of Ginninderra district high school, which was a school that was struggling, with a brand new education facility in that area, and extension of the secondary bursary scheme to provide for students from year 7 all the way through to

year 10, to provide additional direct financial assistance for families from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

MRS DUNNE: Is \$500 enough?

Mr Barr: Well, \$500 is better than nothing, Mrs Dunne, and I am sure that those 800 families which, we expect, will receive that \$500 bursary will appreciate that additional money from the government.

Through the process of curriculum renewal, Dr Foskey, we are seeking to address those particular issues at a high school level. There is a focus in those bands within the new curriculum framework. There is a variety of other measures. I will get Dr Bruniges to talk a little bit about that PISA data now. But I do need to stress that you cannot look at it in isolation and simply dismiss one budget because everything that you wanted in it wasn't there. This is an ongoing process and you can't address in a single budget an issue as significant as this.

DR FOSKEY: I would love to see the forward strategy, then.

Dr Bruniges: In terms of OECD PISA data, we are talking about the long tail here, Dr Foskey. That is what you are referring to in terms of SES. Looking at the data, I guess everyone is aware that Finland is, indeed, the beholder of all in terms of the results and is doing very well. The ACT has about the same sized tail in the area of reading/literacy as Finland, but we have a greater proportion in the top end of the scale, at the highest band, level 5. We are actually coming out at 25 per cent at level 6, whereas Finland comes out at 19 per cent. There is no doubt Australia has a tail, like every other jurisdiction. Professor Barry McGaw has done significant work in identifying some of that.

I have looked at the strategy that Finland has put in place to come up with the results that it does. Among the elements that we see in terms of Finland's leading position in that PISA testing is that they have things like clear curriculum standards that are supported by a common understanding around the teaching profession. Quality teaching—I think I have spoken before about quality teaching—accounts for about 30 per cent of the in-school variance. If you get high-quality teachers in learning environments where the morale is really high, we are able to know that that accounts for a bigger difference in the achievements score.

The other thing that Finland does is have individual learning plans. As you would be aware, we have individual learning plans for indigenous students who fall below the benchmark and are looking at our individual learning plans in senior secondary. Certainly that seems to be an element in Finland; they are very keen to pursue individual learning plans.

The other significant difference is the funding model used in Finland. In our system—in Australia and in many Western countries—we put in less money in the early years and then increase per capita funding as the students get older. What happens in Finland is they don't actually do that. They have more in the early years and then they actually drop it off in the senior years. So the funding model per capita of Finland and their results on that show that they are actually looking at funding models that support

the adolescent years where the PISA testing is carried out.

So, while we have the tail, as to what we might do to address the low socioeconomic results of students in the ACT, firstly, I see individual learning plans; our new curriculum framework that is coming up that has clear standards for certain bands of schooling; the professional learning of our teachers and the professional learning fund, because we do know that quality teaching does account for 30 per cent of the in-class variance, and it is extremely important that we actually do that; and that we do look at mechanisms that I spoke with Mrs Dunne about earlier about really knowing.

PISA/TIMSS is snapshot data at one point in time. The bigger issue for looking at the effectiveness of intervention strategies and what we are doing for groups of students or, indeed, individual students is our capacity to track and monitor students over time, so that we are able to identify individual learning growth for students, what changes as a result of time that they have spent in schools between 3, 5, 7 and 9, and the work that we are working on nationally, and not just taking snapshot or cohort data which paints a picture at one point in time. This year we will have the second round of the PISA data. It's only done on a triennial basis, every three years, so it will be interesting to have a look at whether or not that trend both in Australia and in our own jurisdiction is any different to what it was three years ago when we had the PISA results.

That is probably a very complex answer, Dr Foskey, to the question about what we do, but I think we need to look to other countries to see what they have done to effect and have that short tail, and we do see things like their curriculum standards, but they do allow teachers to exercise teacher professional judgement, once you've got a standard of curriculum there, to best meet the needs of the students in their care, and the way in which they do that is through individual learning plans.

MR STEFANIAK: Page 365 of BP 4 shows the percentage of students achieving the national benchmarks. Over the years since these started, we were always in front of the national average. For writing in year 7 the national average would appear to be very slightly, probably a fraction of a percentage point, above the ACT.

MRS DUNNE: And writing in year 5.

MR STEFANIAK: My colleague Mrs Dunne points out that it is in relation to writing in year 5. Why is that, and what steps are being taken to improve our students' ability to write at the level at least, preferably higher, of the national benchmarks for year 5 and year 7?

Dr Bruniges: I have done an analysis of 2003, 2004 and 2005 trend data, because I think we need to have a look at the pattern of achievement about that, and when you take into account the standard error in the ACT compared to the standard error nationally for 2003, 2004 and 2005, we were about ballpark. We know that it is an area that is different to the others. We actually outperform in those other constructs in reading. But when you actually look down at the data and look at the standard error on the mean score around that, the buffer zone that sits around that score compared with the national one is about the same, and so we are in the ballpark.

In terms of the strategies, in terms of our curricular framework and focusing teachers on writing, there is no doubt, as I have visited schools this term, that people are focusing on issues around text type, making sure that we are able to edit writing, having a look at, I guess, the diagnostic capacity of these, to say not only this score and where this graph shows, but what it is that the data is telling us that students are having difficulty with. Is it repeated in year 5 and year 7? It is really that curriculum information that teachers use to determine what they do.

MR STEFANIAK: Do you have an answer to that?

Dr Bruniges: I think part of it is in text types in the schools that I am visiting. We have got an evidence-based approach that we are taking in all our schools now, where we are getting them to analyse the data at a much lower level of detail to determine what it is in curriculum terms that students are finding difficulty at. In some schools, that has been in the area of text types and audiences. In other schools, they are still going through that analysis. I just think we need to have, and many of them have, writing as the focus in their school plans.

At a system level, we need to look across the whole system, both government and non-government, to see if that is evident, or is it the same in sectors, or is it a particular group of students? One of the issues in this area is that there may sometimes be a gender difference—is it boys, is it girls, is it indigenous girls and boys?—and really having a close look and not painting a generalisation that says everyone is weak, because that is not the case. This is an average score.

MRS DUNNE: As a quick supplementary, are the standard error issues the same in all of those categories, or are there particular ones in relation to years 5 and 7 writing?

Dr Bruniges: The standard error is different around each one of those graphs because you are measuring a different construct, so the standard error will be larger or smaller.

MR STEFANIAK: My other question relates, again, to the issue of bullying, and it is not just students who feel bullied. In terms of bullying, how much compensation was paid to teachers last year? Has any allowance been made in this year's budget for it? Similarly, how much compensation was paid to students last year and is there any allowance in the budget for that? You will probably have to take that on notice.

Mr Barr: Yes, we probably will.

Mr Donnelly: We would need to take on notice the figures in relation to compensation, but I can advise that there is no amount specifically allocated in the budget for it. Those amounts will be covered by various forms of insurance, either through Comcare or through the ACT Insurance Authority.

MR STEFANIAK: Okay. If you could get me those figures, it would be good.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke, Ms Porter, and then we will need to move on to 1.3.

MRS BURKE: I refer to the output description on page 360 for output 1.2. I'm very keen, as a former school to industry liaison officer, on focusing students on outside

world connectivity. Minister, can you direct me to the funding allocation being made to address this significant issue, because it is at the high schools that we want to capture students for the workplace. Is the school to industry program still going? I presume that it is in some form. What funding is there? That is the first part of that question. Along with that, what skill sets are no longer supported in our high schools, and what subjects were taught last year but perhaps are not going to be taught this year? I am trying to say that we need to be moving with industry and business, the outside world, which is what you say here.

Mr Barr: It will take a moment to get that level of detail in front of me, but there are a number of initiatives and there is ongoing financial support. In the first instance, there is the initiative in the budget in relation to user choice funding, the \$1.5 million indexed into the outyears. That forms a package of, I think, \$6.2 million over the next four years which directly addresses those issues. But that is not the only amount of funding that is available.

MRS BURKE: Is that additional funding, minister?

Mr Barr: The previous program was a four-year program that expired. Had there not been this budget allocation, there would be no money in that area. So yes, this is new money into the outyears.

MRS BURKE: I don't think we have quite finished with that. Funding was the first part. If you want to table the information for the sake of time, fine, with the chair's permission.

Dr Bruniges: I could probably do it briefly. The student to industry program is still running. We have also introduced school-based apprenticeships and our breakthrough 500 program. We have links with CIT, trying to get pathways for students and identify particular skill sets in skill shortage areas. It is about what students want to do. Just as we have done with the ANU secondary college, our next step is really to set up a pathways system with CIT to ensure that we are accommodating those students in terms of vocational education and training. Apprenticeships and trainees, we've seen an increase in those, a terrific result in terms of the number of apprenticeships and trainees. The other data source that I would refer you to, Mrs Burke, is at the end of year 12 the number of students who come out with dual qualifications.

MRS BURKE: I will be asking about that later.

Dr Bruniges: They are broadening their skill set and coming out with dual qualifications.

MS PORTER: Minister, on page 364 of budget paper 4, there is a note, note 5, which relates to 15, 16 and 17-year-old full-time students in the ACT and gives rates of 110.4 per cent and 105.8 per cent. The note says that some rates exceed 100 per cent largely due to the fact that New South Wales students from surrounding areas are enrolling in the ACT schools. I was just wondering if you could explain to the committee how the ACT is compensated, reimbursed—or whatever language you use—for their students by the New South Wales government and whether that covers the full cost of educating these students in the ACT. If it doesn't, what are we doing

about being compensated adequately?

Mr Barr: It is interesting to look at the trend figures here. This percentage continues to rise. In 2005, for 15-year-olds, it was about 107 per cent and it is now up to 110 per cent, so we are seeing an increase in the number of New South Wales students seeking to access the ACT education system, which we will take as a vote of confidence in the quality of our system. Unfortunately, there has been difficulty in establishing with New South Wales a cross-border funding agreement for education in the same way as we have been able to succeed within the health portfolio. A Commonwealth Grants Commission adjustment is provided to the ACT, but it covers about 60 to 65 per cent of the average cost of educating a student.

If you look further into the papers, there is an average cost for the education of a government primary school student of \$10,272. The grants commission amount is in the order of \$6,000 to \$6,500 per student. We are left to meet that funding shortfall in terms of average cost. This is an issue that we take up with New South Wales. I have written to the New South Wales education minister specifically on this point. She referred my correspondence to the premier and undertook, as part of a first ministers' negotiation around a variety of cross-border issues between the ACT and New South Wales, that this conversation should be had at that level.

There has been some progress in addressing this issue, but we need to face the fact that this is a direct subsidy from ACT taxpayers to New South Wales residents. We want to be good neighbours and we have an enrolment policy that does allow New South Wales students to enrol in ACT schools. We have clear criteria around in-area ACT students having first priority and out-of-area ACT students having second priority, but New South Wales students are then able, if there are available spaces in ACT government schools, to enrol.

There were certainly examples last year whereby the level of subsidy provided by ACT taxpayers was well in advance of even the average level in certain education facilities. We have identified somewhere between a 40 and 80 per cent increase or additional cost around particular smaller schools from the system-wide average. There were a couple of examples—I think Tharwa was one—that were more up in the vicinity of \$18,000 to \$20,000 per student compared to the territory average of about just over \$10,000. On average, a smaller school was about 40 per cent, about \$14,000 per head, as opposed to \$10,000.

That was taking resources away from some of the important issues that we need to address in terms of equity, but it wasn't a subsidy that was there to address a socioeconomic disadvantage. It was simply there around the size of a school. If you are fair dinkum about addressing these issues, then allowing that subsidy to continue for no educational reason and no socioeconomic reason is a failure of public policy. We moved to address that through last year's process that has freed up resources within the education system to redirect to priority areas.

I think that is the key part of this debate that has been overlooked by some. It is not always just about throwing more money at the problem; it is about how you are using your existing resources and whether you are using them appropriately. When you are deliberately providing subsidies by way of policy decision, are you doing it for

educational reasons? Are you doing it to address socioeconomic disadvantage? Clearly, through 2006, we were not. We had allowed a situation to occur where we were providing massive subsidies to students who did not require them on socioeconomic grounds or on education grounds. That was particularly the case with a particular school on the edge of the ACT and NSW students.

THE CHAIR: I call Mrs Dunne for one last question on 1.2 and then we will move on.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. This one probably spans 1.1 and 1.2. It relates to the Tuggeranong P-10 school and, in addition, the \$90 million refurbishment fund.

Mr Barr: The good money after bad.

MRS DUNNE: On page 375 of BP4—quite possibly, minister—the footnote says that \$4 million from the school refurbishment fund—that is, the \$90 million—will be used to build the new P-10 school at Tuggeranong. On page 109 of BP3, we are further told that the cost of the new school will actually be \$54 million, as opposed to the \$50 million in BP4. Is it expected that the new P-10 school will need refurbishment immediately after it has been built? Has the \$4 million been included in both the \$50 million figure and the \$90 million figure? If so, why? And is this the new definition of double-entry bookkeeping?

Mr Barr: No. The project is a \$54 million project: \$50 million in new funding is provided in this budget; \$4 million from the \$90 million school renewal fund has been allocated—

MRS DUNNE: But that is for refurbishment of the existing schools?

Mr Barr: towards the commencement of the design work for that school. So the total project is \$54 million. Four million of that 54 comes from the 90. The remaining 50 has been funded through this budget.

MRS DUNNE: So that means that it is actually \$86 million for refurbishment of existing schools?

Mr Barr: Kambah high is an existing school in 2007, and we are redeveloping that school, Mrs Dunne—significantly.

MRS DUNNE: That's cute.

THE CHAIR: We will move onto output class 1.3.

MRS DUNNE: So there is only \$86 million. Right.

THE CHAIR: I might just begin—

Mr Barr: There is a new school in Kambah. That is \$54 million, \$4 million of which is part of the school renewal—\$50 million funded in this budget.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, minister. We will move onto output class 1.3. I will just begin. On the priorities list on page 357 of budget paper 4, there is discussion about the partnership with ANU to provide advanced senior secondary studies for year 11 and year 12. Can you give us an update on that and tell us how this might add to students' learning?

Mr Barr: Thank you, chair. This particular development is an outstanding initiative of the Stanhope government, and one that we are very pleased to be collaborating with the Australian National University on. The program was launched in 2006. I am pleased to say that, from the commencement of the 2007 school year, the ANU and the government have reached agreement that the program would be offered to both government and non-government students in an amalgamated form, taught by teachers employed by the department of education, and students from non-government schools providing financial contribution for their attendance at the program. That amount is in the order of \$850 per student for non-government schools. Sixty per cent of the places within the program are identified for eligible public school students. I understand that there are 76 year 11 students and 74 year 12 students engaged in the program. There has been very positive feedback around the amalgamation of the government and non-government sectors into the one stream.

I can advise that, at the end of semester 1 this year, the ANU will be making early enrolment offers to the current year 12 students who are in the program who have successfully met their criteria. This is an example of an innovative approach to working collaboratively with the higher education providers—one that delivers great outcomes for senior secondary students within our system. But also—and the ANU are quite up-front about it—the ANU are very interested in attracting those students into their institution. It is a very competitive market now for students, particularly as the number of the students, via demographic change, continues to decline. Education institutions are having to compete to attract a reduced number of students. This is a very good partnership between the ACT government and the ANU and is an example of where a little bit of innovation can vastly improve the quality of education in the territory.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: Minister, you might have to take this on notice. How does the average cost per student—budget paper 4, page 370—in ACT government primary schools, high schools and senior secondary colleges compare with that for other government schools across Australia and also with non-government schools in the ACT?

Mr Barr: In terms of the exact figures, I will have to take that on notice. But as a general rule, the ACT expends between 15 and 20 per cent more on education than other jurisdictions do. It is certainly above the national average in that regard. We have always invested more—as a conscious policy decision of the ACT government. Through various initiatives in this budget—be they the additional \$54 million, I think it is, into the outyears around additional salaries for our public school teachers or the range of recurrent initiatives—we continue to invest more in public education. So it would be fair to say that our costs will be higher than other jurisdictions. But that is—

MR STEFANIAK: And with non-government schools here?

Mr Barr: Again, we will need to have a look. It depends on the snapshot and also what level of commonwealth funding is forthcoming. The commonwealth provides projections into the outyears that are not always necessarily—when you go back and do your audit on how much money was actually provided. There has been a massive inflow of commonwealth government funds into non-government schools that would clearly increase their average costs, but it would be a very interesting analysis to have a look across all—

MR STEFANIAK: Do the best you can.

Mr Barr: All of the jurisdictions, or just non-govs in the ACT compared to govts?

MR STEFANIAK: Probably just non-govs in the ACT. You should have that information readily to hand. I do not want to make it an impossible task. You certainly should have the information that relates to other government systems, but you should have the information in relation to non-govs in the ACT at least. I assume you still have a non-gov officer.

Mr Barr: I understand that that information is available in the national report on schooling. We can get hold of a copy of that for you.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: The indicators show, on page 370, that you expect 85 per cent of year 10 government school students to go on to secondary college and 85 per cent of college students to get year 12 certificates. What strategies has the government got in place for students who do not end up with a certificate, and do you have any strategies to improve the retention rate from the end of year 10—that is a pretty disturbing statistic, I think—and ensure that a greater percentage of the students who do go on do get a year 12 certificate?

Mr Barr: Thank you for highlighting an important issue. The Canberra Institute of Technology was enabled to initiate an enrolment guarantee for students in secondary schools who complete an approved VET qualification within our school system. They will get automatic entry into the CIT to continue their studies. We are very pleased with that. It is a very important initiative. We have been able to work collaboratively with the CIT to achieve a very positive outcome. This is an area that is hotly contested at a federal level. Two policy approaches have been put forward. The federal government have thrown a huge amount of money into Australian technical colleges to address what they perceive to be—

MRS DUNNE: Is this the answer to your question?

Mr Barr: failings of—

DR FOSKEY: I must have asked another question.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. I think we are all in parallel universes.

Mr Barr: the TAFE system in terms of dealing with students who do not go on from year 10 into year 11 and 12. Of course, we have not received any funding from the commonwealth in relation to that issue. What we seek to do within—

MR STEFANIAK: Is he going to answer your question?

DR FOSKEY: I don't know.

MRS BURKE: He is getting there.

Mr Barr: Hang on. If you let me finish—

MR STEFANIAK: Yes. If you get there, Mr Barr, that would be helpful.

Mr Barr: Well! You ask questions—

MR STEFANIAK: No; she was asking a question.

DR FOSKEY: Let me—I will do the talking here.

Mr Barr: and then you won't even listen to my answers.

DR FOSKEY: I am asking the questions.

Mr Barr: Thank you, Dr Foskey. What I am seeking to address here is a significant issue. There are a multitude of policy responses that overlap—state and territory responsibilities with the commonwealth ones. Different policy approaches are being put forward. This is an issue that is going to be reasonably fiercely contested at the federal election at the end of the year. Federal Labor has a policy around lifting retention rates across all jurisdictions; it has invested or put forward policy proposals to provide significant additional commonwealth funding.

In this area we need to have a range of policy responses. A key one for us is that partnered transition pathway through our senior secondary schools into the CIT; that guaranteed enrolment is a key policy solution to this issue. We need to address the transition from year 10 into the college sector. A particularly innovative model that we are adopting in Melba—with the Melba-Copland amalgamation from 2008—is to provide a continuity of learning from 7 to 12 through the amalgamation of those schools from 2008. Through the college review, we have devoted considerable resources to addressing the issue of transition from year 10 into year 11 and into the college years.

As we all acknowledge, we are great supporters of the college model, but it has not necessarily addressed the needs of students who do not wish to pursue tertiary education. If there has been a problem and it was identified in the college review, it was the transition arrangements and the support in place for students as they move from a more structured education environment in a high school into a college environment where greater freedoms are provided to students. In the past, a number of students have struggled with that transition, and they continue to do so.

There is a need to address year 10 to 11 and support through the college years. There is a need to look at the VET courses that are on offer within our college sector. As I was attempting to explain in terms of federal policy, this is where there are two different proposals on the table, one relating to a significant investment in every government and non-government high school and college, from Kevin Rudd, and one—the federal government’s current response—which seeks to duplicate the existing TAFE system for year 11 and 12 students by investing in Australian technical colleges.

There has not been an Australian technical college established in the ACT. We have missed out on somewhere between \$10 million and \$20 million worth of commonwealth funding in this key area of addressing retention rates and providing educational pathways—

DR FOSKEY: Mr Chair—

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: for students to continue their studies through year 11 and year 12, and then providing those educational pathways that we need into the future. It means governments working together, not working against each other. It means providing that course variety and additional funding for VET programs. But that requires a consistency of approach from the ACT and the commonwealth government. At the moment, we are struggling to get the commonwealth to engage on these issues in the ACT.

This very question came up at the Ministerial Council for Vocational Education and Training in Brisbane only two weeks ago. I took the opportunity to remind the new commonwealth minister that the commonwealth had done nothing in the ACT. They promised a technical college for Queanbeyan—it has yet to materialise—but there was nothing on offer for the ACT. I said that I would gratefully take the \$10 million to \$20 million that they are pouring into each of the institutions elsewhere in the country and utilise that money within the ACT school system and the CIT to provide policy solutions to the very question you have raised.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

DR FOSKEY: Thank you, I have a supp to that.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey, you have asked three questions on 1.3 already. Other people want to ask—

DR FOSKEY: I have asked one question, and I have not had a response.

THE CHAIR: I have you down as three, Dr Foskey.

MRS DUNNE: She has actually asked one.

DR FOSKEY: I have asked one, thanks. I wanted to focus on the fact that a lot of

students are not going on from year 10. Given that I have now seen two cohorts of students go through high school, I am wondering if you have given any thought to the experience that they have at high school that puts them off at that crucial stage and whether there has been any assessment done as to why students in year 10 lose interest in high school. That is where I suspect—I am sure you have studies that could confirm my suspicions—that the problem may arise. We might have to get back a little bit earlier. What have you got in process there?

Mr Barr: In terms of the particular indicator there, you need to look closely at the percentage of year 10 students who proceed to government secondary college education. There is a proportion of those students in the 15 per cent who may well go on to non-government secondary college education.

DR FOSKEY: Good. Stats, please?

Mr Barr: There are also, obviously, a proportion of students who take up an apprenticeship—who leave the education system at that point and seek to pursue a career through another form of education or another form of training. They drop out at that point, but that is a conscious decision that they make—to perhaps pursue a trade. We can get some more information on that 15 per cent—

DR FOSKEY: Thank you.

Mr Barr: if that would assist in getting to what is the nub of your question. But again you need to actually look at the data and see what information is being provided there before leaping to conclusions about failures within the system.

DR FOSKEY: I am looking at the data that you have given me.

Mr Barr: It doesn't matter; it is not worth pursuing.

DR FOSKEY: No.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, do you have some questions on 1.3?

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I do have some questions on 1.3. This morning, minister, you said—correct me if I am wrong—that 21 staff left the senior secondary system as a result of the EBA.

Mr Barr: Twenty-one in the colleges, 22 in high schools.

MRS DUNNE: So it was 21. Okay. Can I, on notice, have a run-down on where those positions disappeared from—from which schools they have gone and what the impact has been? Also, are any subjects not being taught in the senior secondary colleges as a result of the reduction in staff as a result of the EBA?

Mr Barr: No. What I can provide in terms of an answer, Mrs Dunne, is this. There are a variety of factors that influence the staffing point allocation of a particular school, enrolments being the key driver. The direct impact of the increase in face-to-face teaching hours from 18 to 19 has been a requirement for 21 fewer teachers in

colleges and 22 fewer in high school.

MRS DUNNE: Is that close to three teachers per college?

Mr Barr: What you have to understand conceptually—and I will try and get this through to you—is that we have the same number of contact hours being delivered. There is no reduction in contact hours with students; it is simply that individual teachers, rather than having 18 face-to-face hours, have 19. There is no diminution at all in the number of hours spent teaching students.

MRS DUNNE: Has there been a diminution in the number of courses being taught?

Mr Barr: Not as a result of the EBA, no.

MRS DUNNE: Are there problems with supervision? For instance, an incident has come to my attention and to your attention where there was an act of violence because one teacher was supervising two classes in two separate rooms. When you put them together, they were supervising the right number of children, but there were two separate rooms where two classes were going on simultaneously. How often does that happen apart from the—

Mr Barr: As a result of the EBA, no change.

MRS DUNNE: No change. So this was happening before then—where you have people running two classes simultaneously?

Mr Barr: No. In terms of the individual circumstances, it may well be that a teacher was called away to answer a phone call or was—

MRS DUNNE: No, no. This teacher was teaching two classes at once, by your own admission.

Mr Barr: I will have to investigate. It is not a standard practice within the system for teachers to teach two classes in separate rooms.

MRS DUNNE: That is what was happening.

Mr Barr: Incorrect, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: So the letter you wrote to me the other day is wrong?

Mr Barr: No. You have made an incorrect statement. I am advised that there was one teacher supervising a class that involved two year levels.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, in separate rooms.

Mr Barr: So there were year 11 students and year 12 students involved.

MRS DUNNE: In separate rooms.

Mr Barr: In separate rooms? All right, in separate rooms, but two year levels. Let us not suggest that we have one teacher ducking between—taking two different classes. They were two separate year levels, as often occurs in college, where particular courses are taught to both year 11 and year 12 students.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, but these students were in two separate rooms. That is what you said in the letter to me the other day. And that is what you have just said. Is that a very common occurrence—that you have one person in this room for half a lesson and one in the other room for half a lesson?

Mr Barr: No, it is not a common occurrence, and no, it is not related to the EBA.

MRS DUNNE: Can you tell me how often that happens in schools?

Mr Barr: Obviously not. I will have to get some information on that.

MRS DUNNE: On notice. Good.

Mr Barr: Seriously, I am not sitting there monitoring—

MRS DUNNE: No. On notice, minister.

Mr Barr: All right. You would like me to spend my time doing that, would you?

MRS DUNNE: No. This is what you have. This is what questions on notice are for.

Mr Barr: Certainly. We will get that information.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We will move onto output class 1.4. We have 10 minutes left, so we may need to deal with output class 2 when you return.

Mr Barr: On Friday. I had that expectation.

MRS BURKE: That is good. You can expect a barrow load of questions on notice. I have just given up.

MS PORTER: My question is around SCANs. That's on this one, isn't it?

MRS DUNNE: Yes. I have questions on SCANs.

MS PORTER: Page 361 refers to the SCAN appraisal system being used to identify the resourcing required by students in order for them to access and participate—blah, blah, blah. Is this process used for children in the government sector and the non-government sector? Am I correct in that?

Mr Barr: That is correct, yes.

MS PORTER: Constituents have reported to me that, when they are enrolling a child

in a non-government school, parents are told that, if they enrol their child in the non-government school and they go through the SCAN process, they are given less support in that process than they would be if they went to a government school. Why would they be told that—

MRS DUNNE: Because it is true.

MS PORTER: if they get exactly the same amount of support?

Mr Barr: You need to look at the funding sources for non-government schools. The ACT government is a minority funding provider for non-government schools; the principal government funding source for non-government schools is the commonwealth government. This is not to be taken to be the case for every individual non-government school, but in broad terms 40 per cent of non-government school funding comes from the commonwealth; 20 per cent from the ACT; and 40 per cent from parents, from fees.

We provide a proportion of funding for non-government schools consistent with our funding practices for the sector as a whole. A consistent approach is taken in terms of funding students with a disability. The commonwealth is the major provider of government funds for students with a disability in non-government schools. We have, however, through this budget, provided—as we said we would, as an election commitment—\$1 million in capital assistance for non-government schools, specifically to address the issue of students with a disability in private schools. That money is in this year's budget.

MS PORTER: Can I clarify this? Is this SCAN money attached to the student? Is this student money?

Mr Barr: The need is attached to the student, so the student is assessed. But let me come back to the fundamental point: the ACT government is a minority funding provider. We get no money from parents within the public system, effectively, and very little from the commonwealth—a tiny amount for government schools. There has been an abject failure of commonwealth government policy over a decade in terms of funding for public schools in the ACT. As to our core responsibility, 93 per cent or thereabouts of funding for public schools comes from the ACT government, so that is where we direct our resources.

MS PORTER: But it is the same for both students?

Mr Barr: We certainly do provide support, but it is proportionate—in proportion with our minority funding partner status for non-government schools.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Chairman, I would like to ask questions about SCAN and its operation in government schools. This is essentially government; this is what the output class is. There seem to have been some changes this year in the SCAN process and the putting together of ILPs. Some parents have reported that they have seen significant reductions in teacher aide assistance—that whereas in the past students had

often received assistance from a teacher's aide for 100 per cent of the time they were at school, that has been reduced to 50 per cent. Is there an underlying policy that has resulted in this? How often does it happen? And does this policy come about because of a shortfall of funding in the area?

Mr Barr: There has not been a policy change. We are not aware of the issue.

MRS DUNNE: Are you aware of any situations where individual students have lost substantial amounts of support?

Dr Bruniges: I am aware of one case where we have a review on at the moment. A parent has written to me to say that her child was assessed at a particular level which would indeed have a change in the level of support, and that parent has requested a review of the process. We are going through our normal review processes. That is the only case that I am aware of.

MRS DUNNE: We may be talking about the same case or we may not be, but I have been told by parents that they have been told that 50 per cent teacher's aide is the maximum that they can expect to see in the future.

Dr Bruniges: No, not that I am aware of at all.

MRS DUNNE: That is not a policy?

Dr Bruniges: There has been no policy change. It is basically on the student's need. If parents feel as though the SCAN process has not delivered on the needs, they have the right of review and appeal. I would be very interested—if there are particular cases, I would be more than happy to follow those individuals up.

MRS DUNNE: So there is no policy to have—

Mr Barr: No policy.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey, your name tag is still vertical. Do you have a question you want to ask?

MRS DUNNE: What does that mean? Are you in distress?

DR FOSKEY: What does it mean? Are we on 1.5?

MRS DUNNE: No, we are on 1.4. I would like to continue on this issue.

DR FOSKEY: I will let Mrs Dunne have my question.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry—

DR FOSKEY: I actually do not have one, and I am giving it to you.

MRS DUNNE: This goes back to the management of children with particularly acute needs, mainly in special needs environments and mainly in special needs environments in schools. Have there been instances where children's behaviour—and I do not mean that in a judgemental way; I just mean because of their condition—has resulted in the need to call, say, the police or other authorities to restrain children at school?

Dr Bruniges: Mr Curry has just reminded me that we had one occasion.

MRS DUNNE: One occasion?

Dr Bruniges: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: One occasion this year?

Mr Curry: I am only aware of one occasion where that has happened this year in one of our special schools. I think it was an unfortunate incident and not an outcome we would have hoped for. But I think at the time it was the only option available to the school. It is not something that we would want to see happen.

MRS DUNNE: What sort of procedures would the school have been following to trigger a call to the police?

Mr Curry: Given the circumstances of the day and the time in terms of managing the particular student—it is probably not an issue I should go into, because it really referred to what was happening in the general environment of the child and what the school was unable to do in terms of accessing other support at the time.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. Are there occasions when the mental health crisis team would be involved?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, there would be. That would happen on the judgement call of the principal or with a proper assessment done. We are working through part of that work in the task force. I think that earlier I mentioned liaising with mental health to determine when they come in and when they do not—and how they might support individual students who require additional support. It may require mental health coming in.

MRS DUNNE: If other people do not have questions, I will continue. I want to ask a question in relation to one of the relationship issues with Therapy ACT, which is always a difficult area. When individual learning plans identify that a child might need special therapy, what is the relationship between the school or the education department and Therapy ACT to obtain those therapies? Is it to some extent accepted that parents might have to go to other sources to obtain those therapies?

Dr Bruniges: I would hope that, at the school level, with the individual, if that was the case, we would be able to act in a brokerage role with other government agencies to fulfil the needs of that individual learning plan.

MRS DUNNE: Would individual learning plans necessarily highlight that a child

might be in need of speech therapy or might have dyspraxia or something like this?

Dr Bruniges: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: And those things are identified in the individual learning plans?

Dr Bruniges: Yes, they are.

MRS DUNNE: And as a matter of course, there is funding for those?

Mr Curry: Are you referring to the SCAN funding at this point?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Curry: The SCAN funding is used by the school for staffing support or professional learning support within the school; it will not buy in people from other departments. That would be on a negotiated basis. The therapy services are quite strong in the early years in our early intervention programs, but, as Dr Bruniges has said, we take a slightly different role in terms of negotiating with the disability department around services.

MRS DUNNE: If a child is identified as needing a particular therapy and it is not forthcoming—they cannot get it—who do they go to? Do they go to the principal, do they go to Therapy ACT or how is their need and outcome negotiated?

Mr Curry: We have department representatives at each of the SCAN meetings and we have special education consultants who work with schools. They have a role in helping to facilitate and negotiate these issues with other government departments.

THE CHAIR: I thank the minister and the officials from education. We will return at 2 pm today for police.

Meeting adjourned from to 12.30 to 2.05 pm.

Appearances:

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

Department of Justice and Community Safety

Manson, Mr Gregor, Commissioner, Emergency Services Agency
Foot, Mr David, Deputy Commissioner, Emergency Services Agency
Leon, Ms Renee, Chief Executive
Carter, Mr Robert, Deputy Chief Executive
Crowhurst, Ms Moira, Chief Finance Officer, Strategic Finance
Kennedy, Ms Sandra, Finance Manager, Strategic Finance
Barr, Mr Conrad, Acting Chief Officer, ACT Fire Brigade

ACT Policing

Hughes, Mr Andy, Chief Police Officer
Close, Ms Leanne, Deputy Chief Police Officer
McDonald, Mr Brian, Acting Deputy Chief Police Officer
Issa, Mr Eddie, Acting Director Corporate Services
Funnell, Mr Lachlan, Coordinator Finance

THE CHAIR: I welcome the minister and emergency services officials. This afternoon we will begin by dealing with the Emergency Services Agency, Department of Justice and Community Safety in output class 4, and then 4.1, 4.2. Then we will move on to ACT Policing. Before we begin, I will read out the card for you.

The committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings in accordance with the rules contained in the resolution agreed by the Assembly on 7 March 2002 concerning the broadcasting of Assembly and committee proceedings.

Before the committee commences taking evidence, let me place on the record that all witnesses are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to submissions made to the committee in evidence given before it. Parliamentary privilege means special rights and immunities attach to parliament, its members and others necessary to the discharge of functions of the Assembly without obstruction and without fear of prosecution.

While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, if the committee accedes to such a request the committee will take evidence in camera and record that evidence. Should the committee take evidence in this manner, I remind the committee and those present that it is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of that evidence to the Assembly. I should add that any decision regarding publication of in camera evidence or confidential submissions will not be taken by the committee without prior reference to the person whose evidence the committee may consider publishing.

Minister, would you like to make any opening comments?

Mr Corbell: Yes, thank you. I apologise for my lateness this afternoon. I would like

to make a couple of brief comments outlining the key elements of the emergency services and police budget for the coming financial year.

This is a very good budget for police and emergency services. We will see this coming financial year the implementation of the second tranche of funding for additional police officers in the ACT. That was funded in last year's budget but comes through into realisation this coming financial year, with an additional 44-odd officers hitting the streets of Canberra for this financial year. That will bring to a total of 107 the full number of additional police funded by this government since approximately 2004.

It is also a very strong budget for the emergency services. Overall, there is capital funding of over \$9 million in this year's budget for the emergency services agency. That is aimed at providing greater resources and improved capability for our emergency services personnel. There is also approximately \$3 million to \$4 million for ongoing operational funding.

The key elements I want to highlight first and foremost are the \$6.5 million which has been dedicated to a major vehicle replacement program for the ESA fleet. The key focus there is on a replacement and upgrade of vehicles in the RFS fleet, which has the largest component of the ESA fleet overall. That will provide for the replacement of a large number of heavy tankers and light units for the RFS. It also involves the replacement of a number of vehicles, including a pumper, for the ACT Fire Brigade.

There is also a significant investment of money to increase our ambulance capacity. We have seen the ACT Ambulance Service facing major pressures on demand for its services; the government has responded with funding for an additional two intensive-care ambulances and the staff to run those ambulances as well as some additional specialist capacity for morbidly obese patients.

There is also a very important investment for community fire protection. We have just under a quarter of a million dollars to see an additional 10 community fire units rolled out across the ACT; we also have significant funding to provide greater and improved capability for the ACT Fire Brigade.

The ACT Fire Brigade will receive just over half a million dollars to upgrade all of its road rescue equipment. Members would be aware that the fire brigade is responsible for road rescue here in the ACT—traffic accidents and so on—as well as other types of rescue in the metro area. The funding for that will give our fire brigade the latest state-of-the-art equipment to allow them to access people trapped in vehicles as a result of an accident or in other circumstances and to extricate them as quickly as possible so that they can get the care they need. That is a major investment in improving the chances of people surviving a vehicle accident here in the ACT.

Finally, there is significant funding to deal with a range of issues arising from the coroner's inquiry and the government's responses to the agreed recommendations of the coroner's inquiry. That includes money to fund the independent assessment of the government's implementation of our agreed recommendations—our responses to those recommendations—and to see that oversight by the ACT Bushfire Council. There was funding to support them in that role. There is also significant funding to

improve the capability of our RFS volunteers when it comes to the training of remote area firefighting teams, incident control, vehicle driving and a range of other skills that it is important to maintain and update at all times.

So this is a very significant budget for emergency services. I have sought to highlight a number of the measures, but there are others as well. I am very pleased that the government is in a position to respond to the needs of our RFS, SES, fire brigade and ambulance officers and to give them greater support to do their work.

I and my officials are happy to answer any questions you may have.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Just before we go to questions, I remind people that we are looking at a break from 3.30 to 3.50. Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: My question is about the additional community fire units that you mentioned in your introductory remarks, minister. I note that they are listed amongst the priorities for 2007-08 on page 231. I am a member of the Hawker unit. I was wondering if you could let us know where those extra units will be located and how they will be supported in those locations by the paid officials that will need to support them, how the equipment that they will need will be funded et cetera.

Mr Corbell: The final location of those is yet to be decided. It will be based on the same criteria that the ACT Fire Brigade have used to date in determining the location of the existing community fire units. It is based on a risk assessment, and their identification of the areas along the urban interface which face particular risks and their ranking of those in terms of priority. The decisions will be made shortly by the ACT Fire Brigade.

Of the money that has been provided for the community fire units, approximately \$226,000 will fund the capital investment, which involves the personal protective equipment and other clothing for the volunteers in the CFUs. It also involves the purchase of the community fire unit itself, which is usually a trailer with the various kinds of equipment needed—hoses, standpipes, radios and so on. The recurrent cost is \$0.193 million over a four-year period; that provides for initial volunteer training, maintenance and refresher training by fire brigade staff.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Minister, just on ambulance services, I understand that the ACT Ambulance Service is going through an enterprise bargaining program at the moment. Ambulance officers have indicated to me that they are looking for a restructure into the health professional class. Is there money allocated in this budget for the EBA and the restructure?

Mr Corbell: There is a provision made in all budgets for bargaining rounds. It is not the government's practice to disclose up-front in the budget papers the exact amount—for obvious reasons: you do not do that ahead of bargaining. But we are engaging in those discussions with the ambulance officers in good faith. They have put a number of claims on the table. We will engage in good faith negotiation with them on all of those issues.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: I have a supp to the first question that was asked in relation to the CFUs. I am wondering if you are thinking of expanding that program in line with the Victorian fire ready community fire preparedness program, which takes a community development approach and employs coordinators across Victoria to work with communities so that they are ready and they know exactly what to do. It would seem to me that the CFU is a perfect unit to organise around. Are ACT officials looking at that program to see what components and approaches can be usefully transferred to the ACT?

Mr Corbell: I might refer this to Commissioner Manson in a moment, but I will briefly outline what has occurred to date in this area. The ESA has previously run a program called FireWise, which is a community education program that involves volunteers from fire services, people from the ACT Fire Brigade and others holding community information sessions in the streets of neighbourhoods which have particular fire risks and have been identified as such. It involves providing information on preparing your home in advance of the fire season, what to do if a fire approaches your property, what to expect and what decisions you should be making around readiness, preparedness, stay or go—those types of decisions.

There is also a program called Farm FireWise, which is delivered to rural leaseholders. It is a similar approach. It is education to individual rural property owners—providing them with advice and assistance on how they can make sure their properties are properly prepared for the fire season and giving them advice on what steps they need to take to improve their readiness.

So we have run these programs previously. I think the Farm FireWise program is ongoing. The FireWise program occurred for a number of years post 2003. I am not sure whether it has occurred in the last 12 months, but there has been fairly significant process since 2003, and it is a process that I know the ESA intends to continue into the future.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Looking at BP4, page 253, under “Capital Works Program”, towards the bottom of the page it refers to “Works in Progress”, the new ESA headquarters and the “Joint Emergency Services Training Centre”. The \$18 million there is broken up into \$13 million this financial year and then \$4.5 million in the outyears. Given that the relocation from Curtin to Fairbairn has been on the books—and a stated objective of you and your predecessors—for something like two years now, how much of the ESA headquarters and its training associated agencies have now been relocated?

Mr Corbell: I have answered that question before in answer to a question on notice from you. The answer I give you today is the same as the answer I have given to you in response to your question on notice.

MR PRATT: Has it changed since then?

Mr Corbell: No.

MR PRATT: Does that therefore fundamentally amount to the RFS headquarters and some training elements at this point being the only ones which have been transferred across?

Mr Corbell: I refer you to my previous answer to your question on notice. That, I think, is still the case.

MR PRATT: In other words, there are still quite a number of agencies to be relocated.

Mr Corbell: That is correct.

MR PRATT: What has been the reason for the delay thus far? Has it been funding or has it been other issues around command and control?

Mr Corbell: Neither. It is not about funding. The budgeted amount is still sitting in the budget, and that amount is sufficient to relocate the headquarters. So it is not an issue of funding. The issues relate primarily to the detailed negotiations that ESA have to undertake with the Capital Airport Group, who are the owners of the land and the buildings proposed to be relocated to. The government is looking closely at the costs associated with that relocation—what will be our obligations in relation to the fit- out, repair and maintenance of what are extremely old buildings.

We also need to secure appropriate and sufficient information from the Capital Airport Group about the state of those buildings, in particular issues around some substances in the buildings that may have been a cause of concern, such as asbestos. As you would appreciate, some of these are very old ex-defence department buildings. Those issues have been revisited in some detail with the Capital Airport Group. The ESA has undertaken a comprehensive look at all of the basing options for the headquarters. That will be the subject of final consideration by government in the next couple of months to allow the project to proceed.

MR PRATT: How much money has been spent so far since the relocation from Curtin commenced with the first agencies? How much leasing has been spent on that zone of buildings at Fairbairn?

Mr Corbell: I could not tell you off the top of my head, but we can certainly take that on notice and provide that to you.

MR PRATT: Great. Is it satisfactory that for something like two years now the ESA headquarters and the senior headquarters of the service units have been split between Curtin and Fairbairn?

Mr Corbell: This has been an inevitable process as part of the relocation. It is preferable to have all of our activities in a single location, but the opportunity emerged to relocate the RFS to Fairbairn at an earlier point, and that opportunity was taken—remembering that the RFS really did not have any significant dedicated facility, if you like, within the existing Curtin headquarters. They basically had an

office, as far as I understand, and that was clearly not sufficient.

The opportunity was taken to move to the new facility at Fairbairn. That has given the RFS a much greater capacity to manage incidents and to do its day-to-day work in good conditions. It has also aided the integration of the work of the RFS day to day and the air support operations centre for when helicopters are based here during the fire season. It has those advantages as well. That opportunity was taken, but ultimately, yes, we do want to see all of the agencies sitting in one location.

MR PRATT: Are any of the senior service headquarters dragging the chain? Do they have a problem in moving to Fairbairn? Has there been a problem?

Mr Corbell: I do not think—

MR PRATT: And by when do you expect the relocation to be fully completed?

Mr Corbell: No, none of the services are dragging the chain. These are issues around the details of what the relocation means in terms of cost, what it means in terms of building condition and what the optimal outcome is for the territory.

MR PRATT: Are you coming close to resolving the issues between you and the airport group? They have now been dragging on for almost two years. What is the time frame for having those issues and these fit-out questions resolved?

Mr Corbell: Yes, we are close to resolving those matters. As I indicated to you in my previous answer, I would anticipate that within the next couple of months.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions in this output class?

DR FOSKEY: Yes. I am not sure where the figures for rollovers and budget allocations for fire trail construction ended up; I could not find them. Perhaps you could save me the effort and tell me what the state of play is currently for funding of the various proposed fire trails in Namadgi, including the Orroral ridge and Stockyard Spur fire trails.

Mr Corbell: That funding does not sit with the ESA; it sits with the appropriate land manager. The land manager receives the funding for land management, including fire trail preparation and development. In the case of Namadgi, you would need to ask the question of Territory and Municipal Services. They have funding for that function.

DR FOSKEY: I will, but I do remember you putting out a media release recently saying that you would look again at those.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: That is why I thought it was appropriate to direct the question to you.

Mr Corbell: My responsibility is in relation to the overall settings in the strategic bushfire management plan. The ESA is responsible for that document; that is why I am involved. The strategic bushfire management plan specifies requirements that land

managers need to meet in relation to fire suppression, fuel management and so on. The issue of the Namadgi trails was raised with me about a month ago by the National Parks Association.

I had a very constructive meeting with representatives of the NPA, along with the commissioner and a representative from Parks, Conservation and Lands. At that meeting it was agreed that we would look again at the requirements for those trails in the strategic bushfire management plan and that the ESA and TAMS, through Parks, Conservation and Lands, would do that as the first cab off the rank in the review of the strategic bushfire management plan. So, Dr Foskey, I am responsible for the policy settings, if you like, but the ESA does not actually do the work; the land managers do the work.

DR FOSKEY: I have a quickie in terms of preparedness. Was any consideration given to increasing funding to expedite the construction of the Tharwa bridge from the emergency services budget, considering, it would seem to me, that, if the bridge was fixed, it would not take quite so long to get to Namadgi to fight a fire?

Mr Corbell: No. It is important to remember that there is a bushfire brigade stationed in Hall and another bushfire brigade stationed at Tidbinbilla. There are also firefighting units already present in Namadgi as part of the parks brigade. Given those circumstances, no, it is not a matter that is needed to be addressed.

MR STEFANIAK: I have another question which flows from the new ESA headquarters at Fairbairn. How do you compare the radio relay capacity at Mount Ainslie for Fairbairn base radio use? I have heard that there are some problems with that and that it is not nearly as good as what you had at Curtin.

Mr Corbell: Which radio network?

MR STEFANIAK: The radio relay capacity from Fairbairn to Mount Ainslie.

Mr Corbell: For which radio network?

MR PRATT: The TRN.

MR STEFANIAK: I think it is the DTRN.

Mr Manson: The TRN, as you know, is almost completed now. In relation to Fairbairn, there will be some technical issues in ensuring that the network as proposed in the original contracts performs at the appropriate level. We do not see any major difficulty in providing that service from the airport, although there will be technical issues about the way that that is done, in terms of transferring repeater signals to the other repeater stations. Until we get to the detail of exactly where the tower is going to be located and resolve that technical issue we do not wish to interfere with any of the air traffic control or those sorts of issues around the airport.

MR STEFANIAK: When is that likely to happen and what have you got in the interim to ensure that there is not a gap?

Mr Manson: There will not be any interim gap. When we commission the site to take command and control functions from Fairbairn, that will be done in advance of us actually occupying Fairbairn. They are really just technical issues; there is no significant issue in resolving the problem. It is just the mechanism of exactly what the technical experts believe is the best way to do it.

MR STEFANIAK: Can you assure us that, once that is resolved, there will not be any drop in capability and capacity compared with what you have now?

Mr Manson: No. There are technical solutions. We do not envisage any drop in capacity from being at Fairbairn or anywhere else.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: The target for the percentage of non-emergency ambulance service bookings requiring patient transport service resource responded to within 20 minutes of booked time was 90 per cent in 2006-07—you probably do not have those papers in front of you. The estimated outcome is 15 per cent, less than this target of 75 per cent. I am asking why there is the shortfall.

Mr Corbell: Which page are you referring to?

DR FOSKEY: I think it is 249.

Mr Corbell: The advice to me is that there has been a significant increase in demand for patient transport services, which has led to a slower response.

MRS BURKE: Why is that?

Mr Corbell: Because they are busy.

MRS BURKE: I thank you for the flippant answer, but why aren't we meeting the demand?

Mr Corbell: It is a resourcing matter—

MRS BURKE: Quite clearly.

Mr Corbell: and that is exactly why the government funded the additional patient transport vehicle and additional staff as part of a boost to ambulance services in this year's budget. The allocation for the two additional intensive-care ambulances also includes a specialist transport vehicle for people who are morbidly obese—an ambulance for people who are morbidly obese—and an additional patient transport vehicle with staff. We are increasing resources to provide for additional patient transport services to meet that increase in demand. You will see that the target for 2007-08 is again 90 per cent.

MRS BURKE: Yes.

Mr Corbell: With those additional resources, we would be hopeful that—

MRS BURKE: You would be hopeful. I would hope too.

Mr Corbell: I cannot predict the future, but the government has responded with additional resources to the ambulance service to assist them in meeting that target.

MRS BURKE: You are talking about resources in terms of vehicles and staff?

Mr Corbell: That is correct.

MRS BURKE: In terms of the vehicles, how many of the ambulances will reach the end of their life of type this year, next year and in 2009?

Mr Manson: The answer to that question is that we have a business plan for all our motor vehicles, and a turnover of ambulances is the first priority. When they reach a certain figure—I think it is 200,000 kilometres; I may be corrected there, but it is a nominal figure—we replace those ambulances on that schedule. We can predict reasonably when an ambulance will reach that target; the current budget initially provided by the government will allow us to replace ambulances on time and on schedule.

MRS BURKE: How many are you forecasting will need replacing then? If you have got the money allocated, obviously you have a clear indication.

Mr Manson: I do not have the ambulance replacement figures with me today, but I can provide them very easily from our master schedule of replacements.

MRS BURKE: So with the predicted forecasted outyears budget, you are talking about money allocated replacing all the vehicles that you believe, on your business plan, will run out of life of type?

Mr Manson: Yes. By the end of the current four-year budget cycle, our entire fleet will be on a sustainable replacement basis.

MRS BURKE: Would you be so kind as to provide the committee with that information?

Mr Manson: Yes.

MRS BURKE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

MRS BURKE: Sorry, chair, I have one very last question. I have raised this before. In terms of the serviceability status of the ambulance fleet, I understand that the brake problems—the TWU were not able to answer this question, so I direct it to you. What is the problem? It sounds to be a very serious matter if we have got brake problems with some of our fleet. What are we doing to rectify that?

Mr Manson: I am not aware of any brake problems being raised with me. I might

defer to Deputy Commissioner Foot for a moment.

Mr Foot: The brake problem you are referring to was actually experienced with a previous vehicle, which was the GMC 250 series vehicle. Those vehicles were decommissioned, I believe, at the beginning of last year and the service moved to put the Mercedes 316 Sprinter into service instead. So the GMC vehicle which we previously had braking issues with has been withdrawn from service.

MRS BURKE: They are all withdrawn?

Mr Foot: All of them.

MRS BURKE: Okay.

DR FOSKEY: That is good news.

MRS BURKE: Yes, it is good news.

DR FOSKEY: The targeted response times for emergency services attendance is based on national response times, but is there not a strong argument that with Canberra's good road system and generally less dense traffic than in other capital cities the response time should be set somewhat higher than the 50th percentile?

Mr Corbell: I do not believe so. I think it is appropriate to use the methodology that is used to report on services nationally that provides, in this instance, for comparability or a greater level of comparability between jurisdictions. I think you will see that you can determine for yourself whether or not the target is appropriate by seeing the estimated outcome for the current financial year.

For example, in relation to ambulance response within the 50th percentile and the 90th percentile, you can see how we perform in practice against those targets. Equally, for other measures, such as structure fires confined to room of origin, you can see how the ACT compares against those targets. It gives a good indicator to the community not just of what the targets are but whether we are exceeding them or not and it gives a good indicator of the level of service that is being provided.

DR FOSKEY: It does, but if we could reach a higher target without too much difficulty it seems sensible to give that a go. Can I ask my last question about this?

THE CHAIR: Most certainly.

DR FOSKEY: It is about ambulances. Mr Corbell, you will be aware that I have asked about this issue before, but that was before we had the budget. It is related to the responsibility of ambulance officers on the occasion of an emergency birth situation and with ambulance crews becoming default midwives in these situations. Given this potential occurrence, do all ACT ambulances now carry childbirth and infant-specific equipment, including Syntocinon drips and oxygen tubes small enough for newborn babies? If not, are they in the budget? Is there anywhere recognition that ambulance paramedics in the ACT need a higher level of training in order to be prepared to undertake childbirth procedures?

Mr Corbell: I will defer to Deputy Commissioner Foot in just a moment. I do not know whether you heard, but you asked me this question in question time—

DR FOSKEY: Yes—

Mr Corbell: a short while ago. I did provide an answer—

DR FOSKEY: but before the budget.

Mr Corbell: in the Assembly. I am not sure whether you—

DR FOSKEY: Yes, I remember that—

Mr Corbell: heard that.

DR FOSKEY: but that was prior to the budget.

Mr Corbell: One of your questions, which you have repeated today, was: do ambulances carry necessary breathing equipment for infants?

DR FOSKEY: And you said they did.

Mr Corbell: The answer is yes, they do.

DR FOSKEY: I did not write that question.

Mr Corbell: I just wanted to clarify that. In relation to the other matters you raise, I will ask Mr Foot to respond.

Mr Foot: Certainly. As the minister has indicated, all intensive care ambulances within the ACT carry all necessary oxygen and resuscitation equipment for neonatal resuscitation. As you have articulated, we are certainly not midwives, but the officers are trained to an extremely high standard to deal with a home birth if it occurs. It is certainly not the preferred situation.

In regard to the question that was put previously, the equipment is certainly suitable. The officers do undertake training during their advanced diploma in obstetrics to deal with this. If we arrive on a scene where a child has been delivered at home we are able to provide appropriate care to the mother and the child.

DR FOSKEY: How many instances have there been where that has been necessary?

Mr Foot: I could not tell you that.

DR FOSKEY: Could you take that on notice?

Mr Foot: I will.

DR FOSKEY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Any other questions? Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Thank you, chair. Minister, I want to return to the Fairbairn relocation question. Given that in the last two years of the relocation program you will have paid rent on four more quite expensive buildings in that area, you would have to agree that the amount of rent paid thus far for buildings which are uninhabited will be quite significant. Is that acceptable?

Mr Corbell: Mr Pratt, I am advised that we have not been paying rent on that number of buildings for that period of time. Obviously we are paying rent for the RFS building because that has been occupied. Rental on other buildings has only commenced in the last number of months, not years.

MR PRATT: Why would you have entered into a contractual agreement to relocate to Fairbairn if you have not been able to identify the bill from the refurbishment and upgrade of those buildings? Did that come to your realisation after the decision to relocate to Fairbairn?

Mr Corbell: These matters were determined by the previous independent ESA and the previous commissioner. They are not matters about which I or, as far as I am aware, my predecessors were made aware.

MR PRATT: If you finally relocate all agencies and units, training, operational, administrative et cetera by December 2008, surely that will have been almost a 3½ to four-year relocation since the first decision was taken. Do you not think you have been duded by the airport group in terms of this decision to relocate there? It has been a very expensive time and a very long time to have a headquarters split.

Mr Corbell: No, I do not believe we have been duded by the airport group. The matters, as I have indicated, are technical matters around conditions of buildings, total level of rentals to be paid and a range of other considerations. Following my appointment as minister and as a consequence of budget decisions made last year, I asked the department and the ESA to do a complete re-examination of the conditions of the contractual arrangements that were entered into to provide government with the best possible advice on basing options for the ESA headquarters. It is for that reason that it has taken that period of time.

MR PRATT: You are talking about by December 2008. Do you have a program now in your mind by which—

Mr Corbell: I have not said December 2008 at any point today.

MR PRATT: I am sorry. I am looking at that number in the budget papers. I thought you were confirming that as the relocation deadline.

Mr Corbell: Can you refer me to that, Mr Pratt?

MR PRATT: Yes. Where did I see it? Under the line item dealing with works in progress, the line item states:

Emergency Services Agency—New Headquarters and Joint Emergency Services Training Centre.

The estimated total cost is \$18 million.

Mr Corbell: I am sorry. Which page are you on, Mr Pratt?

MR PRATT: I am sorry. It is page 253 of budget paper No 4.

Mr Corbell: Yes, I see it.

MR PRATT: You have got an expected completion date in the final column there of December 2008.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR PRATT: Is that an expected completion date simply for fitouts and ancillary works or is that the completion date by which the entire headquarters and its associated agencies will be relocated?

Mr Corbell: Completion of the project as a whole, including relocation of agencies.

MR PRATT: Right. So it is going to be almost four years since the first decision taken?

Mr Corbell: That is correct.

MR PRATT: That is a very, very long time—

Mr Corbell: Yes, it is.

MR PRATT: to have had a transition with a split headquarters and to have been paying rents and leases.

Mr Corbell: As I have indicated, we have not been paying rent since the commencement—

MR PRATT: Not for all buildings. Yes, I accept that.

Mr Corbell: of this contract.

MR PRATT: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, you had some questions.

MS PORTER: Yes. Minister, in your introductory remarks I think you mentioned additional training for all fire volunteers. I was just wondering if you could give us some information about that additional training, please.

Mr Corbell: Yes. The ESA is receiving a range of funding to provide for training and also to provide for a range of other things that need to be done in terms of preparedness for fire. The money overall is approximately \$640,000 for this range of training and this involves training of remote area firefighting teams. These are teams of firefighters who are helicoptered in usually or driven in to remote locations and then have to walk into remote locations to access fires and to try and contain those fires before they grow into a larger size.

This is a very important capacity, particularly in mountainous areas where you will not always have access by road. The ESA has now, for about 12 to 18 months, been training remote area fire teams, and we have a number of volunteer brigades who participate in this program and provide remote area firefighting teams. This will provide additional training for them, particularly in the skill of exiting from helicopters while they are still in the air, so rappelling from helicopters. Obviously, it will not always be possible for helicopters to land in heavily wooded areas, and this provides the capacity for those remote area firefighting teams to rappel from the helicopter to the ground and then access the fire. So a very important skill that will be provided for there.

There is also money for driver training in the order of \$60,000, and that will provide for an increased level of support for the RFS in particular but also some SES activity in skilling up their crews in driver training. Particular skills are needed not only for four-wheel driving but also for heavy vehicle driving where a different class of licence is required for the tankers, and this provides additional capacity in that regard.

The other level of training is in terms of incident control system training. It is very important that we have a sufficient number of people trained to various levels in incident control. That is using, as I understand it, the AIM system. The AIM system has different levels of qualification in terms of managing different sized incidents. So this provides the RFS with capacity to train more people in the quite specific skills of incident control.

There is also, then, outside the training some other money associated with that \$640,000. That includes work around reprinting the operational atlas, which is an atlas of various maps that are placed in all vehicles to allow vehicles to properly find their way around, particularly in more remote locations. It is the most accurate mapping possible. Associated with that is field survey verification work, all hazard risk planning map products, the review of the strategic bushfire management plan itself, as well as the money for the bushfire council to monitor and review the implementation of recommendations of the coroner's report agreed to by the government.

MR STEFANIAK: I have a supplementary—

MS PORTER: I am sorry, Mr Stefaniak. To clarify, who would be involved with the plan that you have just mentioned?

Mr Corbell: That will be a comprehensive process. We will need to engage all land managers and landowners, so public and private. We will also need to engage other stakeholders, so residents directly and citizens generally. But other interested groups, such as the national parks association, other conservation and environment groups and

a range of other stakeholders will be involved in that work.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

MR STEFANIAK: Thanks, chair, and thanks, Ms Porter. Ms Porter has asked and you have comprehensively responded to questions about what the money that is being thrown at the ESA is going to, but how well does that translate when you have no captains to captain the volunteer brigades? Can you tell us what face-to-face meetings have taken place between the commissioner and you and those senior officers who have resigned, and of the volunteer units? Can you also tell us how much progress, if any, has been made since March to resolve this impasse?

Mr Corbell: Mr Stefaniak, I can advise that the commissioner has been working very diligently on this matter since the demonstration outside the Assembly earlier this year. There has been quite a series of meetings between the commissioner, the bushfire council, captains of RFS brigades, the volunteer brigades association and others and I am very pleased to advise you that, as of today, agreement has been reached and the volunteer captains have indicated that they will be withdrawing their resignations.

MR STEFANIAK: And vice-captains?

Mr Corbell: All the officers who resigned, yes.

MR STEFANIAK: Minister, how is that going to affect your winter prevention program? It is now winter. Even if they come back today, what effect has this impasse and this unprecedented action taken by these people had on the winter prevention program?

Mr Corbell: Well, there is no longer an impasse, Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: I appreciate that.

Mr Corbell: So you might need to adjust your questions a little bit.

MR STEFANIAK: I appreciate that.

Mr Corbell: But also it is important to stress that, whilst those officers did make the strong statement of tendering their resignations, that did not in any way affect their day-to-day duties. Indeed, they continued to volunteer over the period that they had tendered their resignations. They continued to effectively perform all of the duties that they had been performing prior to tendering their resignations.

MRS BURKE: And what did you think about that? You call this symbolic, minister. I think you had better explain that as well to this committee.

MS PORTER: Let the minister answer the question.

MRS BURKE: I am sorry.

Mr Corbell: I have in the Assembly.

MRS BURKE: But he has. It is relevant.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke.

Mr Corbell: If you resign, it usually means you do not do the job anymore. They did not resign as firefighters.

MRS BURKE: Of course they would not.

Mr Corbell: They resigned as officers.

MR STEFANIAK: That is significant, is not it, minister?

MRS BURKE: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: It has never happened before.

THE CHAIR: Members, let the minister finish his answer.

Mr Corbell: Those resignations, first of all, were not accepted by the commissioner, and the commissioner sought to engage constructively with the volunteer officers on their concerns. I am very pleased that we have now reached the point where agreement has been reached and those resignations are being withdrawn. That is very good news. I think it highlights the importance of engaging in dialogue and working these issues through. That is what I said we would do from day one.

I am very grateful for the efforts of Commissioner Manson and his team in doing that because he has put in a lot of time to achieve that, and I thank him for that. It highlights the importance of engaging in constructive dialogue. The fact is that, however you view the resignation, those individuals continue to volunteer their services—

MRS BURKE: You relied on that, of course.

Mr Corbell: and effectively continued, in many respects, to do the jobs that they did prior to their resignations. That was how it worked in practice.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: Yes. Thank you very much. On page 238 of budget paper No 4, output 4.2, responses and recovery, the recovery description is:

Strategies and services to return the Emergency Services Agency to a state of preparedness after emergency situations and to assist with community recovery.

I understand what community recovery is, but could you explain to me what is involved in returning the ESA to a state of preparedness?

Mr Manson: Yes. The ESA, after any sort of significant event, obviously needs some time to recover in terms of getting all the financials together, preparing and repairing our equipment and so forth. This output defines that class of activity. It is clear that we are not funded to do the community recovery on a broad scale across the ACT. There are other government agencies that do that work. So this output is focused on the agency and our ability to assist other agencies that are funded to do recovery work. Should there be a significant incident again in the ACT, there may be separate approaches to government in relation to funding any significant recovery action that cannot be funded from within budgets.

Ms Leon: May I add to that, Dr Foskey? That is a reasonably standard definition of what recovery means in these circumstances. Part of the essential task of recovery is returning the services to the normal state of preparedness, replenishing supplies and returning vehicles to base and being ready to deal with the next situation that is required. That is something that the emergency service agency does every day as part of its normal operations. It replenishes its capability and continues to be ready to meet each fresh emergency as it arises.

DR FOSKEY: So this is more a contingency amount of money rather than a tightly budget amount because you cannot say what particular things will need to be done to return to preparedness?

Ms Leon: The ESA is budgeted for the normal running of emergency services, which includes, after every emergency response, replenishing its capacity. If one was to go through and isolate the ESA's budget into how much is spent on replenishing supplies and replacing staff and so on, one could allocate it to that aspect. But, as the commissioner says, the budget is intended to cover that normal state of recovery that the ESA does each time it deals with an emergency situation. For extraordinary emergencies, where the capacity of the ESA is expended, then we would ordinarily return to government to seek additional funding.

THE CHAIR: Are there any more questions on this output?

MR PRATT: Yes, thanks. Minister, can I just go back to the question raised by Mr Stefaniak about the impasse that has existed since late last year between your senior bureaucrats and emergency services. What is the nature of the negotiated settlement that you have arrived at today with the captains and deputy captains? Can you give us some insight into what that involves?

Mr Corbell: I will defer to Commissioner Manson. He has been responsible for this work.

Mr Manson: Mr Pratt, we had had a number of discussions over the last three months. Those discussions were aimed at teasing out issues and identifying issues of concern to the brigades in the structure. Recently we had discussions on individual issues in relation to the accountability and the capacity of the RFS to manage fires, and that led to agreement and consensus about the way we are going to go forward. We have been able to deal with each of the two significant issues. We have been able to accommodate those issues in those discussions.

MR PRATT: Can you perhaps tell us a little bit more about what you have agreed to? What was negotiated regarding the concerns of some of the senior service officers, and definitely the captains and deputy captains, regarding the restructure? Are you now saying they are entirely happy with the restructured ESA that you yourself, Mr Manson, put in place?

Mr Manson: I am not sure that I am aware of any senior service officers' concerns. The particular concerns expressed by the brigades and the volunteer brigades, being the RFS, have been identified and we have dealt with them. The outcome is that we will continue with the structure, as proposed. We will review the structure pre the fire season and also next June. That is the current proposal that we have agreed to make sure that the structure is actually delivering on what both parties want, and that is an operational system which is effective and which seeks to ensure that community safety is protected. So we have reached agreement on the structure going forward as it is, but we have put in place some proper review mechanisms. I have also in that proposal boosted the firefighting operation command structure within the RFS.

MR PRATT: Minister, why have you allowed a restructure to occur which puts the commissioner two steps in the chain of command removed from the services versus the direct command that previously existed? Why have you allowed a chain of command in terms of your own ministerial oversight which now puts you five steps removed from the services versus the three steps that existed in mid-2006? How is this more efficient?

Mr Corbell: I think Commissioner Manson can give you some practical demonstrations of the benefits of the new structure, and I will defer to him in a moment and ask him to do that. But I do not agree at all with the assertion that it is two extra steps; therefore it is disaster. I do not agree at all with the analogy that there are steps. The reality is that I, as minister, speak with the commissioner regularly. I pick up the phone and I talk to him directly. I meet with him regularly and he has taken advantage of the opportunity to raise issues directly with me.

It is important to draw a distinction between the administrative arrangements in the running of the department and what it means in terms of access to the minister for issues around the budget or issues around advice to government on emergencies. I can assure you that when there is an incident occurring, the commissioner's office is on the phone to my office. It is as simple as that.

On top of that I have put in place a number of mechanisms to improve and strengthen the relationships directly with volunteers, in particular, as well as meeting regularly with the heads of the services. I have put in place arrangements—I think I have detailed these before in the Assembly—to meet quarterly with the heads of the services so that they can advise me directly on issues affecting their services, and that is with the commissioner and Ms Leon as chief executive.

I have also put in place arrangements to meet regularly with volunteers on probably about a six-weekly basis to allow them to raise issues directly with me. So any suggestion that the government is remote and there is no opportunity for people in the organisation, other than the chief executive or the bureaucracy, as you describe it, to talk to me about issues and to raise concerns with me is simply not supported by the

facts. But I will ask Mr Manson to outline the benefits of the structure in terms of the day-to-day management of the organisation.

Mr Manson: I think it is important to realise that the bushfire council has an independent role in reporting to the minister in relation to bushfire matters. I think that is well recognised and it seems to work very well. We also have the emergency management committee of the ACT, which has a planning function and also provides reports to the minister, as necessary, in relation to emergency management.

In relation to the ESA as part of the JACS department, the operational command and management, as set out in the act, remains unchanged. The role of the chief officers, who in future will be called deputy commissioners, is unchanged. They have direct autonomy to manage incidents according to the legislation. The support that I give to those people is direct. Those people have instructions from me that if they are required to talk to the minister directly in my absence or if it just is sensible for them to do so, they should report directly to the minister. It is possible sometimes that I may be on an aeroplane or out of contact. They do that and they have access.

If there are any significant matters that I am going to discuss with the minister in relation to their portfolios within the services, then I take them with me to have those discussions with the minister so that they have direct access to the minister to put forward their advice to the minister on issues.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke, you had some questions.

MRS BURKE: Had you finished?

MR PRATT: I have one more supplementary.

THE CHAIR: One more?

MR PRATT: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Go on with a supplementary on a supplementary.

MR PRATT: Minister, I accept that you talk to people around the camp fire over cups of tea, and that is how it should be, but, given that you have now funnelled this line of responsibility through JACS and you have now narrowed the pipe, if you like—a model which, by the way, you have to admit is far different from other models that we have seen succeeding around this country and certainly overseas in California in terms of the length of the chain of command—don't you agree that you have now put this organisation back to where it was pre 2003, with the same elongated bureaucratized chain of command?

Mr Corbell: No.

MR PRATT: You must be concerned about the responsiveness now of this organisation, surely.

Mr Corbell: No, I am not. If you like, we could have the political debate, but we have

had that in the Assembly many times.

MR PRATT: I am just talking about the facts here, five steps versus three steps.

Mr Corbell: That's your assertion, Mr Pratt. We have had this debate in the Assembly.

MR PRATT: It is a fact; it is not an assertion.

Mr Corbell: No, it's an assertion.

MR PRATT: Five steps versus three steps is a fact.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt, let the minister answer your question.

Mr Corbell: If you like, I am happy to go hammer and tongs on the debate, Mr Pratt, but I don't know whether that would serve the time of this committee much.

MR PRATT: My colleagues probably wouldn't allow that to occur, so I guess we will have to defer it, minister. But another time, minister, at the OK Corral or somewhere else.

Mr Corbell: This debate, Mr Pratt, has been had in the Assembly. The only points I would make on this issue are these: the operational independence of the agency is unchanged. There is a commissioner; there are chief officers; they have statutory powers which are outlined in the legislation. They are exactly the same powers that were in the legislation prior to the change from an authority to an agency.

MRS BURKE: I have a couple of queries that I am sure can be easily answered. I refer to the balance sheet on page 256 and then go over to page 264 in terms of non-current assets related back to the balance sheet. The note there refers to a decrease of \$64.169 million in the 2006-07 estimated outcome. You see a 188 per cent variation, of course, but that is reflected in that \$64 million.

I do note, however, a lot of rollover happening here under non-current assets, some of which can be explained, I understand, such as the Alexander Maconochie correctional centre, but there are a couple I want some answer on: the ESA high-rise aerial emergency vehicle, \$1.35 million; rollover of the accommodation project—what is that?—of \$2,054 million; and rollover of WorkCover integration funding, \$0.108 million. I think that's about it. I am interested to learn more about the rolling over of this funding

Ms Leon: One of those matters, the rollover of WorkCover integration funding, falls under one of the outputs we considered yesterday, the Office of Regulatory Services, and that concerns a grant that was part of last year's funding for the integration of WorkCover and other agencies into the new Office of Regulatory Services. I am happy to provide further information on notice about that if you wish, but it is a matter we dealt with under output 1.7 yesterday.

MRS BURKE: Couldn't it be expended? I didn't catch that yesterday. Obviously it

wasn't able to be expended in the expected time frame.

Ms Leon: That's right.

MRS BURKE: Why? What was your answer to that?

Ms Leon: I'm sorry, it is not that you asked me the question yesterday. It is just that I didn't want to return the committee to an output that it wasn't dealing with today unless that was with the agreement of the committee.

MRS BURKE: Okay. There are others there that perhaps you can answer.

Ms Leon: In relation to the matters that deal with today's outputs, the rollovers concerning emergency services relate to the matter we have already been discussing, concerning the move to Fairbairn. The purchase of the high-rise aerial emergency vehicle, more commonly known as the Bronto, has had a longer than expected supply time from the manufacturer. That vehicle has been ordered and it is expected to be delivered this financial year, but the money simply—

MRS BURKE: Why was that? Did they give you a reason?

Mr Corbell: The vehicle has to come from overseas, I'm advised.

Ms Leon: Yes, and it has a very long lead time from order to delivery.

MRS BURKE: Did we know that before we ordered it?

Ms Leon: Yes, it has a very long lead time and I believe that the best-case scenario for the delivery of that vehicle is about 11 months, so even if all of the specifications had been entirely settled at the time of the delivery of last year's budget it still would have been tight to get it delivered in the financial year but, because there was some negotiation over the detail of the specification, that caused it to roll over into the next financial year. The vehicle replacement program more generally includes a number of vehicles that have been ordered but haven't yet been delivered in this financial year.

MRS BURKE: Why, again, is that? Why haven't they been delivered?

Ms Leon: It's to do with manufacturers' supply times. We don't control their manufacture. They are also vehicles that are manufactured overseas, and they have been ordered.

MRS BURKE: Again, it leaves some questions still unanswered in my mind. Maybe it is a simplistic view, but why would you project funding forward if you knew you weren't going to get them within the last financial year?

Ms Leon: It's not that we knew we were not going to get them. We expected to.

MRS BURKE: But the minister said that they were ordered overseas and it takes time.

Ms Leon: We don't control their supply times. We have ordered them as quickly as

possible but then it depends upon the manufacturer how quickly they can supply them. This is not an unusual occurrence in relation to the expenditure of significant capital, and rollovers in this respect are not an unusual occurrence. The other aspect of rollover relates to the communications project. There have been amounts of money that are allocated to the upgrade of communications throughout ESA and they are ongoing and we roll them over.

MRS BURKE: Does that include FireLink?

Ms Leon: FireLink is part of that money but there isn't any rollover associated with FireLink. FireLink is part of the communications project, but there is very little, if any, rollover associated with FireLink.

MRS BURKE: So that is still being implemented; we are underway with that.

Ms Leon: Fire Link has already been implemented, but there are other ICT projects that are still in development, including the full rollout of CAD and a full rollout of TRN in that rollover.

MRS BURKE: What is the rollover of the accommodation project about?

Ms Leon: That's Fairbairn.

MRS BURKE: Okay. Perhaps it would be good if it said that. Back to FireLink very quickly, is it working? Is that okay now? Are you able to answer that, minister?

Mr Corbell: When I became minister and as a consequence of decisions made by budget cabinet last year to do with the integration of ESA as part of the broader justice portfolio, the government agreed to do a complete examination of all of the ESA's ICT projects. That includes FireLink, it includes TRN, and it includes a range of other projects that are underway or have been implemented, and I am awaiting final advice on that review as to the continuing deployment of those networks.

MRS BURKE: When do you expect that advice and what are you doing to expedite it? It would be a matter of urgency, surely.

Mr Corbell: I expect to receive final advice on a range of those matters in the coming weeks.

MRS BURKE: You will be pursuing that actively after today's discussion, hopefully.

Mr Corbell: I can assure you I have been pursuing it actively before today's discussion.

Ms Leon: If I can just slightly modify an answer that I gave you a moment ago. When I said that the accommodation project related to Fairbairn, I slightly misled you. There is a separate item relating to Fairbairn: ESA new headquarters is how that is described.

MRS BURKE: At the top of page 265.

Ms Leon: Yes. The accommodation project is actually the accommodation project for the whole of the rest of the portfolio. As you may be aware, there is a significant amount of relocation going on within the ACT public service of agencies that are consolidating their footprint and occupying smaller space as a result of budget decisions last year, and capital has been allocated for that purpose for fit-out of buildings that are being moved into, not all of which has been expended in this financial year and it has been rolled over into next financial year.

MRS BURKE: Sorry, why wasn't it expended in the financial year? Is it because the move hadn't happened; is that what you're telling me?

Ms Leon: Yes.

MRS BURKE: What would that relate to? Do you have specifics on that?

Ms Leon: They are specifics that you probably would need to direct to the property group within territory and municipal services because they relate to the domino effect of all of the moves inasmuch as one department can't move in until another department moves out and those dominoes take some little time to line up.

MR PRATT: I return to the question regarding the good news from the minister that the impasse between the organisation and these captains has been resolved. The meeting was last night, I gather, Mr Manson, with the captains. I understand that the impasse will not necessarily be over until the commitment that you have made is received in writing.

Mr Corbell: That's correct.

MR PRATT: Is that true?

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR PRATT: I understand that Mr Manson was unable to say what that commitment was going to be. Can you do that now? Can you indicate here what that commitment is and will that be presented in writing?

Mr Manson: Yes, Mr Pratt. The undertaking was that we have resolved the matter and that we would confirm that in writing between the parties so that it was clear exactly what it was that we had agreed to. I anticipate completing that correspondence today or tomorrow and I don't see that there would be any departure from the agreement we had last night.

MR PRATT: Okay. Did that agreement, by the way, address the ongoing sore of volunteer unit bank accounts?

Mr Manson: Bank accounts weren't an issue raised in any of the debates or discussions in relation to the dispute which arose from—

MR PRATT: I know it's a miscellaneous issue in terms of the central issues around restructure, but was it raised with you—I know it's a longstanding issue—and what

plans do you, the minister or Ms Leon have to resolve it?

Mr Manson: The fact is that the matter hasn't been raised with me since December and, as such, there are no further matters to be resolved in relation to the bank accounts.

MR PRATT: Minister, can you answer the question about those bank accounts?

Mr Corbell: At this point, the government has no intention to change the status quo.

MR PRATT: So the severe morale problem that has emanated from the failure to resolve that issue will now continue.

Mr Corbell: I think I've just indicated to you, Mr Pratt, that I am not intending to change the status quo.

MR PRATT: So the morale problem will continue.

MRS BURKE: But we don't have a morale problem; the minister has said that.

Ms Leon: No, there is no morale problem with the status quo, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: I don't know about that.

THE CHAIR: Let the minister answer the question.

MR PRATT: I am not dreaming it, and I get a lot of other feedback and they are very upset about these bank accounts.

Mr Corbell: Let me just clarify it. Let me make it very easily understood for you, Mr Pratt.

MRS BURKE: How condescending.

MR PRATT: That is very condescending.

Mr Corbell: I would have thought my answer was pretty clear.

MRS BURKE: You didn't have to be condescending.

Mr Corbell: The status quo is the arrangements that exist for volunteer brigade accounts. I have no intention of changing the status quo.

MR PRATT: So the concerns expressed by the volunteers are all imagination, are they?

Mr Corbell: How much simpler do I have to say this to you, Mr Pratt? What I am saying to you—

MR PRATT: You're simply not willing to resolve a major issue which goes to the

heart of how the volunteer units feel about the independence of their own banking and fundraising arrangements.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt!

Mr Corbell: Yes, down, Mr Pratt. You should be putting out a press release saying you have wrung this concession out of me. That is what you should be doing today but you haven't picked up on that.

MR PRATT: I will be kinder to you than that, minister.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt!

Mr Corbell: Mr Pratt, let me make even more crystal clear what I said. At the moment the volunteer brigades have certain arrangements in relation to how they bank their moneys. What I am saying to you is that those arrangements are going to be unchanged.

MR PRATT: We will see what they have to say about that.

Mr Corbell: I hope, Mr Pratt, they will say that's good news.

MR PRATT: I very much doubt it, minister, but I applaud your confidence.

Mr Corbell: I would have thought, Mr Pratt, it is actually what you have been asking me to do for the past six months.

MR PRATT: You haven't gone back to what was in fact the position that those units held last year. You haven't reverted to that, have you?

Mr Corbell: Mr Pratt, there has been no change.

MR PRATT: Oh, come on!

Mr Corbell: Can I just clarify this? Mr Pratt, there has been no change to the banking arrangements for volunteer accounts for years. An issue was raised last year about whether or not those moneys needed to be deposited in territory accounts, and that's what caused concern from the volunteer brigades.

MR PRATT: Correct.

Mr Corbell: Despite that issue being raised, no action has been taken to change the banking arrangements. The banking arrangements are unchanged, Mr Pratt, and what I'm saying to you is that they will continue to be unchanged.

MR PRATT: Guaranteed ironclad. Let's see.

MR STEFANIAK: We will look with interest to see if, in fact, you have got an agreement. My question is on something quite different. I note the funding, which is good, for the community fire units of \$0.226 million. However, what is your

understanding of the number of CFUs required to cover our vulnerable urban edge?

Mr Corbell: The ACT Fire Brigade has done an assessment of the total urban edge and potentially how that urban edge could be covered with CFU units. The total number of CFUs if you wanted to provide for along the total urban edge, the at-risk urban edge, is in the order of 80-odd units.

MR STEFANIAK: That was my understanding. I think you are going to have 38, aren't you?

Mr Corbell: We will expand the number to 38 in this current budget funding. The point I would like to make about that is that the CFUs perform a very valuable service and certainly do provide a higher level of preparedness for those areas, and that is why we have targeted the funding at areas that are at the most significant risk first. That will continue to be the principle on which we allocate resources. But just because an area does not have a CFU does not mean it is without protection.

It is important to remember that there are eight-odd volunteer RFS brigades stationed around the ACT. I think it is about eight; is that right? There are also, of course, the very excellent services of the ACT Fire Brigade which, in any event, would be the normal first response to any fire on the urban edge. As you can see, response times for the fire brigade are extremely good. In addition, there are the services of the parks brigade and the full-time paid staff who staff vehicles during the fire season. So I think the level of coverage we are achieving for the ACT community is very good, and we will certainly continue to look at opportunities to expand the CFU program into the future.

MR STEFANIAK: You made an initial commitment of, I think, 72 or 75 when you started the program.

Mr Corbell: No, at no point has the government made a commitment to a particular number of units. An assessment has been done by the fire brigade about how many units you would need if you wanted to cover the entire urban interface, but at no point has the government said it will implement X number of units. We have always committed to rolling out the units on an ongoing basis, but we have never set ourselves a particular target.

MR STEFANIAK: And you have no shortage of volunteers for that.

Mr Corbell: No, we have a very good response to offers to participate in the CFUs and in many instances individual CFUs are effectively oversubscribed in terms of interest.

MR STEFANIAK: Good. How many fire brigade officers are fully trained chemically, biologically and radiologically and how often do they actually exercise with our police and ambulances?

Mr Corbell: I will ask Mr Barr, acting chief officer of the fire brigade, to come forward. He can provide you with detail on that.

Mr Barr: All of our permanent staff have training in Hazmat/CBR and exercise regularly in it. We have approximately 50 staff who have a higher level of training in that field to make them effectively experts, and they work in coordination with all of our other staff in delivering that service. We exercise reasonably regularly with the AFP. We obviously have the major counterterrorism exercises and things which are generally done on an annual basis. We also participate in other lower level activities with the AFP, including training exercises for AFP forensic officers who have to work in those environments and other training exercises with members of the special operations group of the AFP. We have within the last six weeks partaken of one of those exercises and we had another one planned for last week. However, for operational reasons at the time, the AFP were unable to go ahead with that exercise with us.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt, you have one final question?

MR PRATT: Thanks, chair; I appreciate that. Mr Barr, how many times this year have your fire brigade units exercised with ambulance units and police units in first response with CBR matters and how many times have you had integrated team-type first response operations at perhaps terrorist strike sites?

Mr Barr: In relation to training exercises, the primary exercise that we were involved in which involved all three was Operation August ACT in the financial year just gone. In relation to the other training exercises I've talked about, there is not always the involvement of the ambulance service in those incidents with the AFP and the fire brigade. However, in addition to that, we have a number of operational responses to those types of incidents. For instance, in the year to date we have had 14 operational responses to what we would refer to as CBR incidents, and those responses always involve police, fire and ambulance working in a coordinated way.

MR PRATT: Are all those officers in the other services CBR trained?

Mr Barr: No, they are not all, to the best of my knowledge, trained in CBR in those other services.

Ms Leon: If I could just add to that, Mr Pratt, that there is a ongoing program at the national level in which the ACT participates actively of training in a whole range of CT, counter-terrorism, incidents and that includes training that will involve all of the services of the ESA and the AFP from time to time.

Mr Corbell: I should add that the main responsibility for CBR in terms of dealing with contaminated areas is the fire brigade. They are the people who go in with the suits and so on, and obviously other services are performing a support role.

MR PRATT: But there will be integrated operations, won't there, where people need to be equipped and trained?

Mr Corbell: You don't send police officers or ambulance officers, as a rule, into an area which is contaminated. The fire brigade performs retrieval, if possible, and then other services provide their support. That is my understanding.

Ms Leon: I can add to that, Mr Pratt. There are a number of officers in the ambulance service who are trained. Because they are not the primary responders to hazmat incidents, the view has been taken that it is not necessary for all the paramedics to be trained, but there is a core of paramedics in the ambulance service who are trained up to CBR incidents, and so they would be deployed if such an incident were to occur.

MR PRATT: Capable of working alongside fire brigade officers and police.

Ms Leon: That's correct.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister and officials. We will take a break and come back with ACT Policing.

Meeting adjourned from 3.31 to 3.49 pm.

THE CHAIR: Thank you members. We are resuming with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and also members from ACT Policing. Just before we continue, police were not here earlier on when I read out the card so I will do that again. The committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings in accordance with the rules contained in the resolution agreed by the Assembly on 7 March 2002 concerning the broadcasting of Assembly and committee proceedings. Before the committee commences taking evidence, let me place on the record that all witnesses are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to submissions made to the committee in evidence given before it. Parliamentary privilege means special rights and immunities attach to parliament, its members and others necessary to the discharge of functions to the Assembly without obstruction and without fear of prosecution. While the committee prefers to hear all evidence in public, if the committee accedes to such a request, the committee will take evidence in camera and record that evidence. Should the committee take evidence in this manner, I remind the committee and those present that it is within the power of the committee at a later date to publish or present all or part of the evidence to the Assembly. I should add that any decision regarding publication of in camera evidence or confidential submissions will not be taken by the committee without prior reference to the person whose evidence the committee may consider publishing.

I would like to welcome CPO Andy Hughes. Minister, would you like to make any opening statements on policing?

Mr Corbell: No, thank you, Mr Chairman. I think the issues I wanted to comment on were dealt with before in the first session.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Questions, Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: Thanks very much. I have a question that I was about to ask when JACS were before us but I think it is more appropriate that I ask it here. I refer to page 240 of budget paper 4 for 2007-08 and also, if needed, page 234 of budget paper 4 for 2006-07. Why has the number of motor vehicle thefts increased from a target of 1,397 for the 2006 budget to 1,994 according to the 2007-08 budget? That is an increase of some 597 or 42.7 per cent. The reduction target for the 2006 year seems to have jumped. Why has the number of motor vehicle thefts increased in relation to

that particular target?

Mr Corbell: I will ask the Chief Police Officer to answer your question, Mr Stefaniak.

Mr Hughes: Mr Chairman, in respect of the reported motor vehicle thefts for the year 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2006, we had 2,173 offences reported. As at 12 June this year, from 1 July 2006 we have 1,603 motor vehicles reported stolen. So there seems to be a slight reduction compared to last financial year.

Mr Corbell: I think Mr Stefaniak's question is in relation to the change in the target number.

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, a change in the target, essentially.

Mr Corbell: Ms Leon is getting some advice for you on that. Looking at the table in last year's budget and this year's budget, I must say that I think that does appear unusual. We will get some clarification for you on that.

MR STEFANIAK: I can go on with a couple of other questions while you get clarification, minister.

Mr Corbell: I think it is very valuable to note, though, that we have seen a reduction in the actual number. It appears we are going to experience an actual reduction in the number of thefts for this year.

MR STEFANIAK: There is something wrong with that figure, then, is there?

Mr Corbell: The figure for the previous one was actually over 2,000 thefts and we are looking at around 1,600 so far to date. So that is quite encouraging and, given that we are close to the end of the financial year, it sounds to me that we can hopefully achieve a reduction compared to the previous year.

MR STEFANIAK: The previous year it was around 1,900.

Ms Leon: Mr Stefaniak, I think I can clarify the situation in relation to what appears to be a change in targets. I am advised that we put out a correction to those figures in last year's budget papers because they had been incorrectly calculated. I do not have that correction with me but I will confirm with you on notice what the basis for that was. There was a correction put out last year in relation to it. It is because the calculation of the figures was on a cumulative basis rather than on a linear basis. The figures in this year's report are the correct figures.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Thank you. Minister, I note on page 238 of budget paper 4 the significant increase in spending on ACT Policing. In your introductory remarks earlier this afternoon you talked about additional police. I was wondering if you could explain to the committee whether or not this will include an increase in police officers actually on patrol.

Mr Corbell: These are all sworn officers that the ACT is engaging, so the additional 60 police officers funded in last year's budget, 40-odd of whom will start work this coming financial year, are all sworn officers. So obviously they will be deployed to a range of tasks. I think Mr Hughes is in a better position than I am to explain what is going to occur.

Mr Hughes: Thanks, minister. In fact, they will all be front-line police officers. They will all be bolstering our general duties police officer strengths at police stations. They will be contributing to increasing our average patrol strengths from 10 officers plus a supervising sergeant to 12 plus a supervising sergeant for each station for each shift. Which means, effectively, when all that is in place, that at any one time there will be an extra four patrol cars on the streets of Canberra fully crewed.

MS PORTER: I would like to seek clarification in respect of strategic indicator 2 on page 239. It talks about the "level of crime against the person—the number of offences against the person reported or becoming known per 100,000 population". It is a rather complex thing but what it basically is saying is that they really want to reduce that quite dramatically. I am just wondering whether or not those two things are related.

Mr Hughes: In respect of the increased numbers?

MS PORTER: Increased numbers of police that you are talking about—front-line police.

Mr Hughes: Will that affect that issue? Yes.

MS PORTER: Is this strategic indicator part of that?

Mr Hughes: It is a complicated one because offences against a person include such offences as sexual assaults, which occur often behind closed doors and, therefore, increased police presence may not have any notable impact on those types of offences. Where we have offences against a person arising in public areas, which is typically after hours when bars close and there are altercations in the street, then certainly extra police officers will have a significant impact in reducing the incidence of those types of offences because they will be able to prevent them before they actually occur and we have to respond to them.

MS PORTER: Thank you. As you say, it is complicated. I was just trying to see whether there was any relationship.

THE CHAIR: Just off the back of your answer there and before we go to Mr Stefaniak's supplementary: when we were talking this morning at a different hearing we were trying to look up the definition of "assault". I wonder if you remember that?

Mr Hughes: We are going back a way to when we were doing our training.

Ms Leon: You might need to ask a lawyer.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Ms Leon: I would not say I was quoting the Criminal Code on this, but assault ranges from the lowest level, which is a threat to lay some form of physical force upon another person, right up to assaults where force is actually used upon the person. And then there is the series of assaults that are of greater severity, including causing actual bodily harm or grievous bodily harm. So an assault can be as small a matter as a touch or a threat to touch.

MR STEFANIAK: That is very good, Ms Leon.

Ms Leon: As I say, I would not swear that that is the definition in the Criminal Code because it has been a little while since I studied criminal law, but I think that is a reasonable approximation.

MR STEFANIAK: Then we could go into further definitions of what is “grievous bodily harm” and “actual”.

Ms Leon: Quite.

MR STEFANIAK: Thanks very much. My questions follow those asked by Ms Porter. Firstly I will refer to page 239 and then I will go to the figure of 43. At the bottom of page 239 you say:

This provides an indication of the level of crime against the person and may also indicate the effectiveness and strategies of those agencies involved in preventing crime. The target for this indicator is set against the average level of crime reported or becoming known to police in the preceding three years ... The future objective is to refine this indicator to establish specific targets that can continually measure a reduction in the level of crime against the person over time.

What does that last sentence mean? Is that going to change the stats? Are you actually going to drop some particular crimes out of there, or add some? Just what is proposed to occur there and how is that change supposed to alter these figures?

Ms Leon: There isn't any intention to take categories of crime out of the targets. What the last sentence is referring to is that in the medium term a desirable objective is to establish some targets that can be used to measure actual reductions in the level of crime. But as Mr Hughes has indicated, the whole business of the relationship between policing and crime prevention is not a completely straightforward one. In some areas of crime the numbers of police available won't have any impact at all on the sorts of things that Mr Hughes has referred to. In others, increasing numbers of police will sometimes increase the level of reporting of crime and so there will be an appearance that crime, at least crime that is measured by what becomes known to police, may appear to increase. But in measuring the overall effectiveness of the criminal justice system you will nevertheless have achieved outcomes that ensure that crime comes to the attention of police and is brought to the authorities in the justice system.

So the reason that indicator is at the moment set against the average level of crime reported or becoming known is because that is an indicator that we can establish with

a reasonable degree of precision. But over time we will look at whether we can refine that indicator so that it is establishing targets that are about what we think we can achieve by way of levels of reduction of crime.

MR STEFANIAK: Thank you for that. In answer to Ms Porter's question, I think the minister or CPO Hughes talked about the extra police recruited last year. You announced 60 police over three years. This year you refer to a figure of 43 as part, I understand, of that 60 and part of the rise in budget—about half, I think, is for those extra 43. Just how many to date have actually been commissioned, sworn in, are out there on the job, are actually dedicated, are sent out to their actual duties? So how many to date actually have been recruited and are actually now performing their roles within the ACT?

Why did the minister claim that 43 additional police is a feature of this year's budget when effectively it is a continuation of what you announced last year? I am particularly interested to see just how many of those extra 60 police over three years are on the books now and are actually out there as sworn officers and doing their job in the community?

Mr Corbell: I will answer the second part of your question and Mr Hughes can answer the first part. My media release on this issue made clear that provision was originally made in last year's budget. I have been quite up-front about that. But the expenditure does not occur until this year's budget. So it is important to make that point, and that is what I did. The expenditure is incurred from this financial year onwards and that is why I made the point in relation to this year's budget. Mr Hughes can answer your question about the recruitment process.

Mr Hughes: Mr Chairman, the recruiting for ACT Policing is an ongoing process because of attrition—that is, those that resign or retire—and those who move on with their careers in other arms of the AFP. So we have a constant recruiting process and often with snapshots in time it is really difficult to apportion how many of these are the new ones that government has specifically funded in terms of recruit courses and how many of them are part of this attrition.

I think it is more helpful to look at FTE in actual establishments. What I can tell you in response to your question is that in preparation for the increase of 43 plus the attrition that I have just mentioned, we currently have four recruit courses of new members for ACT Policing specifically in the police college at Barton. Their numbers total 71. We also have scheduled at this point in time a further six courses that will commence from next month progressively through till February, and we are negotiating with AFP learning and development for more courses in anticipation of making sure that by the end of the financial year we come on target to the new FTE, including the 43 that government has funded.

This is a confusing answer but it is never a linear process. We have people dropping out of the organisation. We take in in lots of 20. Often when you do a snapshot at a particular point in time you will see we are over, and at other times you will see we are under. But what we try to do is look at the average over time and come in as close as we can to the FTE.

MR STEFANIAK: You are basically saying that with retirements, people getting out of the force, people resigning, at the end of this financial year there will be a net 43 extra?

Mr Hughes: This financial year—

MR STEFANIAK: The financial year 2007-08. By 30 June 2008 you should have a net 43 extra.

Mr Hughes: This is what our work force planning is directed towards. For example, our FTE at the present time is 829 and our actual is 827 point a fraction.

MR STEFANIAK: How many of those are sworn?

Mr Hughes: 620.39.

MR STEFANIAK: Sworn?

Mr Hughes: Sworn. We are confident that—that is only two, so we are pretty close—by the end of the month we will get very close to 829.

MR STEFANIAK: Of whom about 620 are sworn.

Mr Hughes: Just over 620 are sworn police officers, yes.

MR STEFANIAK: We will come back to that in a minute.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: Thank you, chair. I have two supplementary questions, and I will deal with the last one first. Thank you for being before our committee this afternoon. In regard to recruitment, I know there was some talk a while ago of the lack of service and experience of officers within the ACT, given our other national and international commitments. Are you confident that we have sufficient numbers of senior officers in our ranks now and how is that measuring up to what it was, say, last year?

Mr Hughes: Yes. We are constantly tracking that cadre of officers in the four to seven-year experience group. What we are seeing is a slight increase in that number, which was a very positive sign last year, and it has flattened out. We believe that we are within manageable levels. We have just promoted 43 constables to senior constables, which is the two hooks, the two chevrons. We have just completed a round of promotions to band 8, which is the top band of sergeant, and there will be some consequential promotions to sergeant.

Insofar as the overall experience level in policing in the ACT is concerned, I believe—and this is my professional opinion—that it is manageable. We have a relatively young work force but I regard that as a positive because these are very enthusiastic, very committed mature people. They are not straight out of high school. The average age is well into their mid to late-20s and they have had previous life experience, which is invaluable. And that is right across the board in Australian

policing. Two weeks ago I met with the commissioner for the Northern Territory and there are exactly the same issues there in attracting and retaining experienced people into policing.

MRS BURKE: Is there a bit of a turnover, or more of a turnover than you would like, in the ACT?

Mr Hughes: We do. We have experienced in the past 12 months an attrition rate of around four per month. That is separations.

MRS BURKE: And the reasons.

Mr Hughes: We are still to get to the bottom of that but a lot of it was due to an ageing workforce, electing for early retirement and so on at 55. Some of it was lifestyle choices to go back home to Perth or wherever.

MRS BURKE: I have one more question, which follows on from Mr Stefaniak's question. The question relates to level of crime against property. When we look at the number of offences against property as set out on page 240 of budget paper 4, we find that in 2004 it was 10,741 actual, in 2005 it was 8,603 actual, in 2006 it was 8,925 actual, and the estimate for 2007 is more than 9,000. You say, minister, that the future objective is to refine this indicator to establish specific targets that can continually measure a reduction in the level of property crime. Yet you are anticipating an increase. I am just not sure. I may have that wrong but it does not read—

Mr Corbell: Well, the estimate is less than 9,000.

MRS BURKE: Yes, but why wouldn't you say less than 8,900 or 8,000? Are you saying that your objective is to refine indicators that drop the level of property crime? Do you understand what I am saying? Are you not confident that the refining of indicators is going to have the desired impact?

Mr Corbell: Currently that indicator is the one that is used, I think, for comparative reporting purposes, isn't it, with other jurisdictions?

Ms Leon: In the discussion we had earlier about the level of crime, I sought to draw the distinction between the current way the target is set and the fact that we do have a medium-term objective to refine the way in which the target is set. But at the moment the target is set with reference to the average level of crime in the preceding three years. And so the objective is always to get it lower than that average, so that it does focus one on driving crime down over time.

MRS BURKE: I appreciate that. It just seems to me the statement doesn't fit the estimated outcome. I would have hoped that, with what you are proposing to do, we would have seen a greater drop in that number, but maybe that is being over ambitious, is it?

Ms Leon: I think also it reflects the fact that the level of crime is not a kind of straightforward equation of inputs and outputs, and that the level of crime isn't influenced only by how many police one puts on the beat but also by a range of other

factors that need tackling in a broader fashion.

MRS BURKE: I realise that. But, again, is the refining of the indicators—

Ms Leon: Well, the indicators themselves are only indicators. They themselves will not drive down crime.

MRS BURKE: No, I realise that.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey, you have a question.

DR FOSKEY: Thanks. You have been talking about work force issues. How does the AFP fare in terms of recruitment comparative to other state police forces? Is it an attractive police force for people who want to join the police? Secondly, how do people within the AFP feel about being involved in ACT Policing as part of their tour of duty? Do you think people might join the AFP for what might appear—and probably isn't—more glamorous assignments, such as postings overseas?

Mr Hughes: In answer to your first question, the AFP nationally has little difficulty in attracting candidates for recruitment. I understand that currently there are over 3,000 unsolicited applications to join the AFP. Some of those would be for ACT Policing but it is true to say that I think the majority would be for the national side of the AFP.

DR FOSKEY: Can I just clarify something? When people join the AFP they can say that they want to be in ACT Policing?

Mr Hughes: That's right. It is difficult to answer the second part of your question but I can give you an indicator. Last week I met with one of the recruit courses that is in the college at the moment and that will be graduating in five weeks. They are 19 in number—they have lost one—and 15 of them are Canberra residents. They are Canberra people. The other four come from capital cities. They may do so for family reasons. It is a settled place and you don't get moved to Wilcannia or to Mount Isa. If you join the ACT Police you know you are within a geographical area, plus, as personal circumstances change, there is the opportunity to move into the other forms of policing that you describe, including international work. So it is a very attractive. I think we benefit over the states in that the national side of the AFP is an attractant. Some people choose to come to ACT Policing because they like the sort of work that we do here—the general grassroots of policing, I guess—but they know that there is that opportunity in time to move into other parts of the AFP, some of which are quite attractive.

DR FOSKEY: And what are the entry qualifications for joining the AFP?

Mr Hughes: Could I invite Commander Close to the table? Her knowledge is more contemporaneous than mine, as I have been out of circulation a bit lately.

Ms Close: You have to be over 18 years of age to join the AFP and be a citizen of Australia or a resident who is going through citizenship. There is no specific requirement other than a year 12 certificate. We take people from all different sorts of backgrounds and with all sorts of life experiences. As Mr Hughes said, the average

age in our recruitment classes is about 27, so people are joining with different university degrees or different trades—different prior employment as well.

Mr Hughes: And good character. They have to have no criminal record.

DR FOSKEY: If they join and they have a degree—a useful degree; who cares about an arts degree?—do they have to undergo the same training as everyone else or do they move into a higher level immediately? What attracts someone with a higher qualification—who is hotly desired by many areas at the moment—into the AFP?

Ms Close: At the moment, the AFP just has one stream of entry and a training program that takes five months to complete. We do not have a graduate program similar to other public sector commonwealth agencies. We have not gone down that track yet in the AFP. What attracts people is very much an individual aspiration to join a policing organisation. They are given information about what that training requires them to do. When they enter, they do all the same sort of legislative training that would see them have the skills and abilities to work in the ACT. There are also some specific training programs for the Australian Federal Police—for members moving into Sydney or Melbourne, for example. They will do some specific training in relation to the legislation that is applicable in the commonwealth arena for those members.

DR FOSKEY: I now have a specific question related to the budget. I really need some guidance through this.

MR STEFANIAK: I just have one supplementary on something you have said.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey has the question, Mr Stefaniak.

DR FOSKEY: I have a supp, so if you wouldn't mind holding on.

THE CHAIR: You can always come back.

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, go on.

DR FOSKEY: You promised. It looks to me as though the AFP wage negotiation budget is very high. It is on page 251. I am quite prepared to find that I may be misunderstanding things here. There seems to be \$82 million in funding over the next five years. This compares with the current year budgets of \$312,000 for ambulance officer wage negotiations—on page 261—and either \$528,000—page 259—or \$1.26 million—page 261—for the entire JACS clerical wage negotiations. The first and basic question is: why does the AFP wage negotiation budget seem so high?

Mr Hughes: The AFP has recently completed a new certified agreement with its members. The outcome of that was consistent with other CAs across other public service sectors. The \$13.1 million for the next financial year is to cover the costs of the wage increases and salary increases connected with that certified agreement.

MR STEFANIAK: You started off on a low base, too, didn't you? So it is a bit of catching up.

DR FOSKEY: I will leave that there. How many police—

Mr Corbell: Dr Foskey, I am not sure what other figures you are referring to. I am sorry; I missed that part of your question. I think the relevant table is the table at the top of page 251 of budget paper 4.

DR FOSKEY: Yes.

Mr Corbell: It says “Changes to Appropriation—Territorial”. The policy adjustments, as Mr Hughes detailed, are an additional \$13 million, approximately, in the coming financial year and some increments of increase after that to take account of the increased wage outcome that has been negotiated in the AFP.

DR FOSKEY: Right, so those are all already accounted for—

Mr Corbell: That is how much extra we are paying as a result of the increase in wages as a result of the last EBA within the AFP.

DR FOSKEY: That would seem to be a good outcome for the police officers.

Mr Hughes: By the end of the year, we will have 870-plus sworn and unsworn members in ACT Policing, so it is quite a large organisation. As I said in the earlier statement, it is consistent with other awards that public sector agencies, including other police agencies, have received in recent times. We are not out of step; we are not overpaid as an organisation comparatively with policing around Australia.

MS PORTER: I understand that the government has allocated an amount of money—which is listed in budget paper 3, on page 106—for the forward design of a new police station in Belconnen. I was wondering if you could give us a bit of information about what is expected—the plans, the size of the station. I believe it is to be located on some vacant land near the Winchester Centre at the moment. Is that right?

Mr Corbell: Yes, that is right. Funding has been allocated—to a total of \$1.2 million—to do the forward design for a new Belconnen police station. For anyone who has visited it and for everyone who has driven past it, the Belconnen police station currently is an increasingly old building and unfortunately has the same rabbit warren qualities as the Belconnen Remand Centre, to which it is attached.

The government does consider it important to upgrade our stations. We have recently completed Woden, which is an excellent building. We are now focusing on the other ageing station left, which is Belconnen. The proposal at this point is to locate the station in the same area as the Winchester Centre on Benjamin Way. It has been identified in a preliminary study undertaken by ACT Policing that that is the most suitable location arrangement. Locations were contemplated as part of that study, and it was concluded that the Winchester site was the most appropriate site. This will now provide for more detailed feasibility and forward design that will allow the government to make an assessment as to the potential costs of construction of a new station in next year’s budget.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

MR STEFANIAK: Didn't you promise that in 2002 or something? It has been on the cards for quite some time, hasn't it?

Mr Corbell: I do not think the government has made any commitment in relation to Belconnen police station. We did make commitments in relation to Woden, I think. Woden is complete.

MR STEFANIAK: That has taken a while.

Mr Corbell: It has been open for nearly a year. I am not aware of any political commitments the government has made in relation to Belconnen.

MR STEFANIAK: It is probably us.

Mr Corbell: Well, you haven't done it. What's wrong with you, Bill?

MR STEFANIAK: It has taken a while.

MRS BURKE: I have a couple of questions. The first is probably the most talked about issue in my electorate. When will Gungahlin get a permanent 24-hour police presence out there? I understand that the current arrangements are still of a part-time nature. Are there any plans in the pipeline and can you assure the people of Gungahlin that you are looking at this?

MR STEFANIAK: They had one.

MRS BURKE: They did.

Mr Hughes: There is a 24-hour police coverage of Gungahlin. At certain hours of the day that coverage is provided by the office at Gungahlin and other times it is provided from the mother station at Belconnen. Increasing the presence of numbers in the station itself is not necessarily going to give any real extra coverage, because that is all done quite effectively from Belconnen. In time, as these extra numbers come on board, it may be worth having a fresh look at that, in terms of whether—

MRS BURKE: How far off do you think that might be?

Mr Hughes: We will be getting the 43 officers during the course of the next financial year. That may be an opportune time to reassess whether we have our resource allocation right across ACT correct and whether the balance is right, looking at demographics, population growth and so on—and projections for ACT community growth. Without giving any 100 per cent commitment, I think it would present an opportune time for at least an internal look at that. We will be briefing the minister in due course.

MRS BURKE: My second question similarly concerns my electorate, the electorate of Molonglo—a big electorate, obviously. What about the numbers of staff at the city watch-house? Have they been increased in line with the KMPG joint study? I

wondered if that had actually been done.

Mr Hughes: The watch-house has been the subject of a review. The review will be out in the public arena next week—on Tuesday. It will be launched by the ombudsman and me, representing the commissioner, who is overseas. There is a raft of recommendations in that review, many of which have already been implemented. There are some options to consider in respect of the staffing arrangements. We are looking internally at the rostering practices in the watch-house at the moment. Commander Close is managing that process. We are trying to ensure that the coverage is appropriate for the work that the watch-house does.

MRS BURKE: So the answer is no at the moment?

Mr Hughes: The answer is that it is under review.

MRS BURKE: Okay.

Mr Corbell: Can I just clarify something in relation to the joint study, which I think was what you referred to? Is that right?

MRS BURKE: Yes, the KPMG joint study.

Mr Corbell: The KPMG joint study?

MR STEFANIAK: Yes.

MRS BURKE: Page 60.

MR STEFANIAK: It was released in July last year. You sat on it for 13 months. You released it in July last year.

MRS BURKE: You did.

Mr Corbell: I am sorry; I did not recall that.

MR STEFANIAK: Were you the minister then? It is probably not your fault.

DR FOSKEY: It was released when Mr Corbell became minister.

Mr Corbell: I beg your pardon; I did not recall KPMG's involvement. It is important to stress that what the joint study concluded was about the number of additional officers that were required for ACT Policing to meet the requirements of ACT Policing and policing the ACT. Where those officers were to be deployed is a matter for ACT Policing. The government does not allocate funding and then say, "This money is for traffic, this money is for investigations, this money is for the watch-house," and so on. We do not do that. We allocate the total numbers; we fund the total numbers. It is an operational decision for the CPO and his team to decide how that is carved up.

MRS BURKE: But haven't they been under-resourced for quite some time at the city

watch-house?

Mr Corbell: The joint study concluded that an extra 107 overall was required. We have funded that.

MRS BURKE: So they are not under-resourced at this current time? We will probably know next week.

Mr Corbell: The government does not believe that the total number of ACT officers is inadequate. But how that is allocated—how that number is allocated within the various things ACT Policing have to do—is a matter for internal movement within the organisation.

MRS BURKE: I have another question, chair, but I will let somebody else go.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. I might ask a question on a different subject. In hearings yesterday, the issue of the database system that you call PROMIS was raised. The courts indicated that they were able to access that database also—

Mr Corbell: The DPP.

Ms Leon: The DPP.

THE CHAIR: My apologies, the DPP. And also place information on it. How many other agencies are able to access and place information on the database?

Mr Hughes: I am informed that no other agencies have access to PROMIS. AFP nationally does, obviously, but in terms of the ACT it is the DPP.

THE CHAIR: No other federal agencies with AFP national?

Mr Hughes: I would need to check that. I am not aware of any. Whether there are I would have to check.

THE CHAIR: How long does the information stay on the database?

Mr Hughes: I am reliably informed that the Australian Crime Commission has access to our PROMIS database. It is an allied agency. The data would stay on PROMIS indefinitely. It is always there and would be a resource for investigators and intelligence officers in the future.

MR STEFANIAK: I have a supplementary to start with; then I have a couple in relation to numbers. Dr Foskey raised an issue in relation to recruitment. What percentage of the force in the ACT would be locals—people who joined the force from the ACT? Take it on notice if you do not have that.

Mr Hughes: We do not collect that sort of data—as to whether they are locals or not. Anecdotally, I think—

MR STEFANIAK: Anecdotally.

Mr Hughes: Well, we are all locals because we all live here.

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, sure.

Mr Hughes: We live and work here.

MR STEFANIAK: Anecdotally will be fine.

Mr Hughes: Anecdotally, I would say most.

MR STEFANIAK: In relation to numbers, I still did not quite get a handle on how many of the current crop of new recruits are actually on the job. If you do not have that, that is fine; I hear what you say about having a net number of 43 or thereabouts at the end of the next financial year, but how many of the current recruits who have completed their courses are actually on the job?

Mr Hughes: We have had recruit courses graduate this year. As I said, this is an ongoing process. It is almost a non-stop process of recruitment. There have been courses graduate so far this year; there will be another four graduate—two next month and then progressively. And there will be other intakes occurring. When you say “new recruits”, the new recruits have been coming through the door in a steady stream for quite a number of years now.

MR STEFANIAK: The minister keeps mentioning the figure of 107 additional, and he has again today. We have already talked about 43 net. Apart from that 60—that means there is another 47. But, as you pointed out, there is attrition and a lot of other things—people retiring. We have a figure of about 620.39 sworn police at about this time.

Mr Hughes: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: I note the KPMG study and I note that the government then said that you would have 107 extra police—that is, the 47 that existed plus the 60 they promised over the next three years, which we have discussed. Even on that, if you look at the KPMG study, it said that the total additional staff needed—and that is sworn police officers—was 193.2 plus 31 support staff. We will not worry about them for the time being. Even on those figures—193.2 in this report released in July last year—it would still be—even on the government’s figures of 107-plus—92.3 sworn police short of what that study recognised as being needed in the ACT.

Mr Corbell: No. The agreement between the AFP and the ACT government was quite clear. The joint study recommended 107 officers.

MR STEFANIAK: The additional services identified by ACT Policing—this is at page 58 of the KPMG report—amounted to 193.2. You might have had some other agreement—

Mr Corbell: No.

MR STEFANIAK: where you came up with 107, but even on that it still indicates that we are—

Mr Corbell: That was the number—

MR STEFANIAK: somewhat short of what is required.

Mr Corbell: No. That was the number put forward by the AFP, but—

MR STEFANIAK: They should know, shouldn't they?

Mr Corbell: This was a joint study which resulted in an agreed number—and that was the agreed number: 107.

MR STEFANIAK: That was an agreed number between you and AFP management, I would imagine.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: However, the figure put up in the KPMG report by the AFP, when asked, was somewhat in excess of what you ended up agreeing, wasn't it?

Mr Corbell: This is a negotiation, Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: I know it is a negotiation.

Mr Corbell: At the end of the day, the AFP are the provider of a service through a contract and we are the purchaser of the service. The AFP would have a view about the number of police required, but so does the ACT government. A range of factors need to be taken into account in determining what is the most appropriate number. I can draw your attention to the number of positions that have been funded since 2004. There were 17 positions—extra police—funded in 2004-05; another 10 funded in 2005-06; 27 funded in last year's budget, 2006-07; and 33 funded in this year's budget plus—

MR STEFANIAK: 2007?

Mr Corbell: Yes, 2007-08. Plus 10—another 10—in this year's budget which were positions funded in the 2005-06 budget. That is the 43 figure.

MR STEFANIAK: Yes.

Mr Corbell: Then there is another 10 funded in the 2008-09 financial year. That is the total. That is how we make up the full complement of additional officers as agreed in the joint study. That was the point of the joint study. The point of the joint study was to reach an agreed position on what were the requirements for policing services in the ACT. It was not a vehicle for the government to simply be told how many police were needed; it was a vehicle to reach agreement on how many police should be funded.

MR STEFANIAK: I note that; however, the fact remains that we are short in view of the national average.

Mr Corbell: No.

MR STEFANIAK: That is around 185 short. If your full 107 come on board, that goes some way towards that. But that 185 figure is pretty similar to the 193 here.

Ms Leon: Mr Stefaniak, perhaps if I—

MR STEFANIAK: And in the past. If you go back 20 years, the AFP was above the national average in terms of its policing component in the ACT.

Ms Leon: Mr Stefaniak, perhaps I can add some clarity to the issue of the role of the joint study. We embarked upon a study of this sort because the use of figures that simply involve comparing the number of police per head of population nationally is well recognised as not being a suitable vehicle for determining the number of police that any particular jurisdiction needs. That is because to do that fairly crude comparison fails to take into account the significant differences in policing needs between jurisdictions. If it were as simple as doing the comparison on a per capita basis, we would not have needed to do the fairly complex modelling that was involved in the joint study.

By way of simple illustration, the number of police per capita in the Northern Territory significantly skews the averages for the whole population, because the Northern Territory has a very specific set of socioeconomic indicators that result in a very high number of police per head of population.

The point of the joint study was to take all of the factors that influence the need for policing and to feed those into a modelling that was independently developed and then jointly agreed, so that we could arrive at a figure that demonstrated the number of police the ACT would need in order to meet the policing needs of the ACT. Using the national average simply does not reflect the particular circumstances—demographic, geographic and socioeconomic—of different jurisdictions. That is why the joint study was undertaken—so that we could develop a methodology that would appropriately reflect all of those factors and develop a number of police that would give us a level of policing appropriate to our needs and comparable to national policing.

MR STEFANIAK: I appreciate that, Ms Leon—

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey—

MR STEFANIAK: but I have just one more on that if I may.

THE CHAIR: You have asked—

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, I know. The ACT—

THE CHAIR: Mr Stefaniak, you have asked the same question three times.

MR STEFANIAK: —does also—well, I haven't—

THE CHAIR: And you have received the answer.

MR STEFANIAK: I am asking a supplementary, chair; then we could go to Dr Foskey. My supplementary—and I appreciate that, Ms Leon—is this: the ACT, apart from being a small jurisdiction, does have some rather unique characteristics which perhaps would deem it necessary to have additional police. For example, if there are demonstrations, our police are used outside federal parliament. We are the national capital and, putting aside any national role the AFP has, there is a role for the ACT components to provide the manpower and the womanpower for those additional tasks which you would not necessarily get in, say, the Northern Territory.

Mr Corbell: Those additional tasks are paid for by the commonwealth, not by the ACT government.

MR STEFANIAK: It still necessitates the use of our police, and it still comes back to the fact of—

Mr Corbell: And that is factored in—

MR STEFANIAK: —approaching the optimal numbers—

Mr Corbell: And that is factored into how funds are distributed by AFP nationally to services that are effectively provided by ACT Policing.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: I raised this issue with Mr Corbell yesterday, but it is more appropriately raised here, I believe. It is in relation to criticism that we have been hearing from the courts when the DPP has not been able to adduce forensic evidence at a hearing. Does the AFP consider the ACT's funding and time-line imperatives when it prioritises its own forensic resources?

Mr Hughes: The way that the arrangement between ACT Policing and the AFP's forensics works is that we have a service-level agreement. We have just signed a new one. If you have any questions on that, Commander Close played a key role in that. It provides a greater degree of flexibility for us than we may have had in the past. But there are a number of factors contributing to some criticisms that you might have pointed out that have come our way in two cases recently. There is a nationwide—indeed, a global—shortage of qualified forensic biologists, and AFP is not immune from that shortage.

And there is a requirement by some defence counsel—and indeed some courts—in the ACT for what experts regard as perhaps an excessive amount of biological examination—forensic examination. Therefore our detectives are providing more samples for a particular crime scene than they may need to do in other jurisdictions. As well as that, there is what I call—and I am not being flippant here—the CSI factor: these shows that seem to be proliferating on the TV from America where an offence occurs at 8.30 in the evening and is solved through forensic examination by 9.30. That

gives rise to an expectation that it is quite a simple process. In fact, a lot of these processes are complex; and they have to be verified, in terms of international best practice, by another scientist within that whole process. So often there is duplication of processes to get to the final outcome.

As I flagged at the outset, finally we have a monitoring committee that sits with the forensic people every month. We have our two deputy chief police officers on that, with others from the consumers within ACT Policing, and the list is prioritised down with forensics. We tell them what our priority cases are. At the present time, there is a backlog; we are working towards removing that, primarily through this new service-level agreement.

DR FOSKEY: So you are fairly confident that that agreement will solve the problem, Mr Corbell?

Mr Corbell: I am very hopeful that it will, yes. The advice Mr Hughes has given me is that that does give ACT Policing and forensic services additional capacity, where that is needed, to respond to requests and, I am advised, provides potential for outsourcing to other labs if that is deemed necessary—

DR FOSKEY: Where would you outsource to?

Mr Corbell: And a range of other mechanisms. So I am hopeful that it will make a significant difference.

Mr Hughes: There are other governments around Australia that maintain accredited forensic centres. There are also private facilities. We would be guided by our forensic people if we needed them. If we get to the point where it is more expeditious or better for us to get it elsewhere, we will. But we are satisfied. Let me say that the AFP's forensic centre is regarded as one of the best in the world, so the end product we get is world class.

THE CHAIR: I have a couple of questions that Commander Close might be able to help with. The first concerns the EBA. Now that the EBA is through, are ACT officers at rank paid the same as national officers?

Ms Close: Yes, that is exactly right. The pay scales are the same for officers at the different bands within the AFP.

THE CHAIR: Were there any trade-offs for the pay rise with the EBA—penalty rates, overtime?

Ms Close: In the AFP we have been on a composite payment since the last certified agreement was negotiated. The composite payment covers penalty rates. In the ACT we have a payment for overtime: if our officers work overtime, they actually get paid for that. That is a slightly different allowance within the national sphere. Members in other parts of the Australian Federal Police have an additional composite payment as opposed to overtime. There are slight differences in terms of some of those allowances, but the base pay is the same at the different bands.

THE CHAIR: And is that due to the 24-hour operation?

Ms Close: That is exactly right—the nature of business that we work in the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Is there any unpaid overtime before overtime payment occurs?

Ms Close: No—if the officer negotiates that with their individual team leader. That is a part of any agreement—that they can negotiate that on an individual basis—but it is not a general practice.

THE CHAIR: What was the amount of the pay rise?

Ms Close: I do not know the actual percentages. I could take that on notice for you.

THE CHAIR: The other question I have was more in relation to my electorate in Brindabella and a lot of the issues I have had raised from constituents there about—I guess hoon driving is the best way to talk about it. Last year we had an operation that occurred down in Gordon—Operation Globin—that was very successful. I think some 43 cars were impounded over a short period of time. We spoke to constituents in the Tuggeranong police station who were very happy with the result. Is that going to continue? Is a similar operation going to—

Mr Hughes: Globin is an ongoing operation. We will be refocusing our attention on that sort of unruly behaviour and other unruly behaviour over the coming weeks in response to concerns from members of the public right across ACT Policing. These things come in waves. We need to be ahead of the game, and I am not satisfied that what we are seeing out there right now is at the acceptable level. We will be putting a considerable amount of effort and resources into ensuring that Canberra remains very safe and a nice place to live.

Mr Corbell: I am advised that Globin was reinvigorated in February this year. You may be aware that about a month or so ago I had the opportunity to go out to the property area of ACT Policing in Belconnen, where police displayed 32 cars that had been seized since February this year as a result of people performing burnouts, street racing and other dangerous driving activity. The value of some of those vehicles is quite significant. There was a Falcon valued at \$60,000 and a highly modified Nissan 200SX with nitrous oxide valued at \$120,000.

MR STEFANIAK: I think we need a drag raceway.

Mr Corbell: And there were a number of other vehicles valued at between \$40,000 and \$70,000. That shows the worth of the operation. Policing were successful in getting very good media coverage of that to get the message out that this is an area of focus and police do have powers to crack down on that sort of behaviour and impose a significant penalty. That will be an ongoing activity, and I am very pleased with the results to date.

MR STEFANIAK: How many cars were impounded? When you impound them, I think you can hold them for three months. Were there any repeat offenders and were any cars actually sold as a result of that—or confiscated?

Ms Close: At this point we have seized 32 cars since the commencement of the operation. In terms of repeat offenders, I do not have that information with me today but we have certainly issued 58 traffic infringement notices in relation to that as well as 13 cautions and six defect notices.

MRS BURKE: I have a question on two areas that are related. In 2005 the sexual abuse and child assault team had 18 staff. The KPMG report identified high levels of stress; at that stage, the figures for cases of suspected abuse and referrals to police were on the rise, from 3,000 to an estimated 7,000. An additional 12 staff were identified as being needed to handle and manage the case loads that Minister Gallagher has talked about—more latterly, of course. Has that expansion happened, minister? And, in terms of fraud capacity, our fraud team had 10 staff and again a significant backlog of cases. The recommendations were an expansion of some nine staff, I believe. I am just wondering if there has been any movement on that.

Mr Corbell: I am sure that Mr Hughes can give you some further information, but before I ask him to do that I think it is worth outlining that in the ministerial direction that I issued around this time last year following discussions with the then CPO, Audrey Fagan, and the commissioner, I identified child sex offenders as one area of particular priority; and that was one of the special areas of focus that I identified in my ministerial direction to the CPO.

I am pleased to say that, in response to that—and, obviously, also, ACT Policing's own commitment in this very important area—the child sex offender registration team capability has been established and maintained. I know it is a slightly different area, but I just want to make the point that it is an area we are giving special attention to—one which I highlighted in my ministerial direction and one which ACT Policing has responded to very well.

In relation to SACAT, I will ask Mr Hughes to give you some more information.

Mr Hughes: There are a number of facets in my answer to this. Generally, the territory investigations group has increased in strength from 100 to 130 over the past two years. The number of sexual assaults in the last 12 months has declined—by 17.8 per cent from July 2005 to March 2006, compared to July 2006 to March 2007. So the workload has reduced. The SACAT team are now receiving counselling—professional psychological counselling. They are also screened by the psychologist before they are deployed to that very demanding work—very stressful work.

There are other aspects of sexual assault and child abuse and exploitation that are managed by other elements of the territory investigations group. For example, over the last weekend—we have a fellow now before the court who we will be alleging was grooming young girls in the ACT for child sex offences and, most likely, child pornography, which of course is very serious. So they do not shoulder the workload alone; there are other elements in the territory investigations group, which has grown in size. And, in terms of sexual assault, the workload generally has decreased and we have that support mechanism now in place.

MRS BURKE: What about the fraud team—10 staff in 2005 and the

recommendation by KPMG to increase by a further nine staff. What about that—again because of backlog pressures?

Mr Hughes: Whilst the fraud team remains at 10, there is now a criminal assets team—criminal assets forfeiture team—which looks at the assets of criminal conduct. That would take some of that type of investigation away from the fraud team so they can focus on the predicate offence rather than the assets confiscation.

MRS BURKE: Are you saying it has done or it will do?

Mr Hughes: No, there are. They are now in place. We have another arm of our economic crime total effort within the territory investigations group.

DR FOSKEY: Here in the ACT, as elsewhere, there is an over-representation of Aboriginal people—and often young Aboriginal men—in police statistics and lots of statistics around corrections. I am just wondering what measures ACT Policing takes to maintain good relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, given that there can be increasing distrust as a result of the over-representation. For instance, are your officers given cultural awareness programs, and are there elders in the community who can be called in to give advice in particular instances with some offenders?

Mr Hughes: At a general level your observations about the over-representation of the indigenous community in the justice system is accurate. Unfortunately, the situation is much the same in the ACT, although we have seen an improvement in the percentage of indigenous people who have been taken into custody—a slight reduction of about 10 per cent so far in the 12 months to 31 March, so that is some improvement there. To the best of our ability, we maintain very good relationships with the leaders of the indigenous community. There are a number of mechanisms through which that occurs. Internally we have an indigenous officer network within AFP; and efforts are made particularly to attract minority groups, including indigenous people, into policing so that we better reflect the composition of our society. I might ask Commander Close if she can elaborate on that answer.

Ms Close: Also within our crime prevention area we have an indigenous liaison officer. He works closely with the Aboriginal community in the ACT and local region, with Aboriginal youth and with our officers—and provides training and support to our officers as well. Our officers also undertake cultural awareness training in those programs.

DR FOSKEY: I have one more question and I will be through. There have been problems reported with the closed-circuit TV coverage in the city watch-house. Have any measures been taken to remediate those? If its reliability cannot be guaranteed, is there any funding in this budget to install a backup video system as part of the broader CCTV funding in this budget?

Mr Hughes: ACT government—not policing but the broader public safety elements of ACT government—were funded \$634,000 in this financial year for the implementation of a number of priority recommendations from the report of the review into CCTV capability in the ACT. Arising from all of that, we now have a

working group comprising representatives of JACS, the Chief Minister's Department, TAMS, ACT Policing, InTACT and ACT Procurement Solutions. That is working towards looking feasibility of mass gatherings and transport security sites for CCTV.

In respect of the city station—it is actually monitored in the front office of city station. If you walk into the front office, you will see that, behind the glass where the officers work 24 hours a day, there is a bank of TV monitors. They are monitoring the activities where those cameras are located around the Civic area. Twelve of the 15 cameras are operating as of today. Whilst they are not monitored with someone actually staring at the screen full time, they are right there present with the front office staff. There have been instances where they have detected minor matters and they have been responded to by the beat patrol or they have used that facility to assist police in response to an incident that has been reported. It is not 100 per cent monitoring, but it is so close at hand that it could be the next best thing, if you like.

DR FOSKEY: And that includes the watch-house?

Mr Hughes: The watch-house has CCTV, yes. That is recorded.

DR FOSKEY: Do you have a cell in the watch-house in the city?

Mr Hughes: Yes, there are cells.

Mr Corbell: It is a holding area for people who are detained.

DR FOSKEY: I just got a bit confused. There are a number of cells, are there?

Mr Hughes: Yes.

Mr Corbell: I think the answer to your question probably will lie in the findings of the ombudsman's review of watch-house activities and operations. I would imagine that surveillance will be a factor that has been considered in the review of watch-house operations. If there are issues relating to deficiencies or inadequacies in surveillance within the watch-house, I am sure the ombudsman will draw attention to that. It is worth highlighting that a number of the disciplinary actions that have been taken by ACT Policing and charges that have been laid against either existing or former members of ACT Policing have been the result, I understand, of the review of surveillance camera footage in the watch-house.

DR FOSKEY: So it appears.

Mr Corbell: I think that, to some degree at least, demonstrates that coverage is performing a useful function.

DR FOSKEY: That has reminded me of another matter, the incident that spurred the legal affairs committee's recent inquiry into police powers—an incident, also with capsicum spray, on the day of the federal election in 2004. As of about a month ago, I think that that complaint still had not been resolved. I believe it was with the ombudsman. It is three years ago. I am hoping that the ombudsman's report on those incidents that you are referring to is somewhat speedier. As far as you know, is there

any conclusion to that inquiry yet?

Mr Corbell: The watch-house one or the other one?

DR FOSKEY: No, the reclaim the streets one—the two young people who were capsicum sprayed.

Mr Hughes: I have here information that the investigation was completed—I am confident that it is the one you are referring to—in October 2006 and finalised through formal adjudication by the manager of professional standards in February 2007. The investigation into the matter found that all complaints against police were unsubstantiated and that the members involved complied with the appropriate guidelines.

DR FOSKEY: I am not too sure whether it is the same one.

Mr Hughes: It is arising from the Legislative Assembly Standing Committee on Legal Affairs report on police powers of crowd control. It was specifically mentioned in the report of 5 June 2007.

DR FOSKEY: Yes.

Mr Hughes: And this is one of the highlighted areas from that report.

DR FOSKEY: Okay. I do believe you then.

THE CHAIR: Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: Taking a slightly different tack—and I do have some more questions arising from something else—I am concerned about assaults on police. I regularly hear that the law on assault, police resist and arrest, which are matters dealt with by the AFP, has changed, but is it necessarily adequate? I would also like some figures on how many police have been assaulted, say, for this current financial year, up to 1 June. How much time have they taken off work due to their injuries? Are there any particularly serious injuries which have affected an officer's ability to come back to work? How many are convalescing at present as a result of assaults? I would like some figures on the number of assaults on police and the effect that has had on the officer's ability to go to work because of the injuries. You will probably have to take that on notice.

Mr Hughes: We will have to take that on notice.

MR STEFANIAK: This is anecdotal, but I hear from AFPA that the current laws are not much of a deterrent and that there seem to be some problems as to the offences that can be brought to bear. I note that in New South Wales there are a significant number of assaults on police. This question is for the minister: what is the status in regard to the number of police who have been assaulted? What offences are being brought to bear? Is anything being done to ensure that some additional offences are brought onto the statute book? I have a great concern about this matter. I certainly do not want to see police being blue punching bags.

Mr Corbell: Thanks for your patience, Mr Stefaniak. The first point I make is that it is not an issue that has been raised with me since I have been the police minister. I meet with AFPA from time to time. I also meet with the chief police officer and his team more regularly than that. It is not an issue that has been raised with me in any form. But obviously any assault against a police officer in particular is a serious offence, given the important role police play in our community.

That said, the government's general policy is that crimes against specific professions in our view do not usually warrant specific legislation. The reason for that is that there is no real evidence to demonstrate that, just because you got a harsher penalty for assaulting a police officer, it prevents the assault. I note that bus drivers from time to time have asked for specific penalties for assault against a bus driver. Other jurisdictions have legislated for specific penalties and different penalties for assaults against specific professions—in particular, nurses and bus drivers in New South Wales. But there is no evidence to suggest that it achieves any further deterrent than the general penalty that applies in relation to assault. And that is generally the government's policy position. I am not aware of the specific provisions that may exist in Commonwealth legislation, but I am advised that—

MR STEFANIAK: Could you check that because it used to apply in the ACT.

Mr Corbell: there are no specific provisions in ACT legislation as far as I am aware, as advised.

MR STEFANIAK: The commonwealth legislation used to certainly apply in the ACT. I am just uncertain from what I hear whether—

Mr Corbell: I will take that on notice, Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: I would also like the figures.

Mr Corbell: The in-principle position we adopt is that having a particular offence because the assault is against a particular type of person does not in any way add any additional deterrent value, but the court—

MR STEFANIAK: It expresses to society that it is appropriate, though.

Mr Corbell: can take those matters into account when sentencing. Obviously assaulting someone who is performing a particular role—

MR STEFANIAK: I think that is why they have specific offences in other states.

Mr Corbell: or assaulting someone who is in a vulnerable position or so on can be aggravating factors that courts can take into account.

MR STEFANIAK: Just on something else now, we hear about response times. What is the average response time for calls for help from the public? Obviously you have different calls from the public.

Mr Corbell: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: How are responses to calls from the public going? Recently I read that it took half an hour for police to come to a home invasion. Five criminals terrified the people in the house. There are certainly calls from people for other types of matters where the police do not turn up. But I am more concerned about the very dangerous situations where someone's physical wellbeing is at risk. It may well have improved—and I commend you for some additional numbers at least because that will obviously help—but it is still very disconcerting to hear that it took half an hour for police to turn up to a home invasion.

Mr Corbell: If I can generally comment on this, I am sure Mr Hughes or Ms Close can comment further. It is important to understand that there are specific categories for response. There are different priorities—priority 1, 2, 3 and 4—and then there are two tiers within each priority group. Obviously the most urgent responses are for priority 1. The first tier is within eight minutes and the second within 12 minutes. ACT Policing meet the first tier and only just fall short of the second tier. The first tier is 60 per cent or more of responses within eight minutes and 90 per cent or more of responses to the second tier within 12 minutes. The results for this financial year are 69.3 per cent and 87.7 per cent, so that means the first-tier response was met. The second-tier response target was only 2½ per cent below target. That demonstrates that for the priority 1 incidents the response is very good.

For priority 2, the response is within 20 minutes for the first tier. The target is 60 or more per cent. The result to date is 76.9 per cent. So again that demonstrates a very good outcome for the first tier, priority 2. For priority 2, the response is within 30 minutes for the second tier, a 95 per cent or more achievement, and the current year-to-date figure is 86.5 per cent. So, clearly, that is where there is some challenge. That is why the government has provided additional police: it is all about additional officers in vehicles on the road.

MR STEFANIAK: Very much so, minister.

Mr Corbell: As Mr Hughes pointed out, the additional numbers will provide—

Mr Hughes: Another four vehicles at any one time.

Mr Corbell: an additional four vehicles at any one time on the road, which we believe will make a significant difference.

MR STEFANIAK: Do we have that yet? How many patrol cars are operating at night in each of our town centres?

Mr Hughes: The squad strength is usually around 10 members plus one sergeant. As indicated in an earlier statement, we are aiming to get that to 12 plus 1. In some cases we are at 12, but we have people going on sick leave, people on leave and people at court. For a whole range of factors on any given day we may not have full strength. We try and backfill with overtime and so on. It is usual in the four larger stations that we would have five or even six cars on the road, taking out front office staff and other functions. There would be around 15 to 20 vehicles, depending on the day and other

requirements.

MR STEFANIAK: Throughout Canberra.

Mr Hughes: Throughout Canberra.

MR STEFANIAK: At any one time, yes.

Mr Hughes: Yes. There are traffic investigations through the Territory Investigations Group and other specialist formations like Specialist Response and Security. The vehicles would be included in the figure of 15 to 20 vehicles available for response calls.

MR STEFANIAK: What are you aiming to get that up to?

Mr Hughes: We would like to see another four vehicles on the road at any one time, which would be general duties vehicles, the primary response vehicles to most calls for assistance.

MR STEFANIAK: When do you envisage getting it up to that?

Mr Hughes: The 43 for the next 12 months recruitment program.

MR STEFANIAK: Basically about this time next year?

Mr Hughes: During the next 12 months.

MR STEFANIAK: So you would hope to have that up by June next year?

Mr Hughes: Yes.

MRS BURKE: I asked a question, I think it was this morning—it seems so long ago now—on a very serious matter, that being bullying in schools. There are probably four parts to this question, but they are sort of one-liners. How many acts of violence in schools have been reported to police in the last year? Have police responded to all of them? How many charges have been laid for incidents of violence in schools? The last, but probably most important: are there any outstanding investigations into major assaults in any schools at this time?

Mr Hughes: We would need to take that on notice, if we could.

MRS BURKE: Minister, do you have any comment to make on that?

Mr Corbell: No. It is something I need to take on notice.

Ms Close: I could add something on some of the strategies we have in place, though I cannot comment on some of the numbers. Our crime prevention area coordinates, with the department of education and different schools throughout the ACT, the members going into schools through the suburban policing strategy. That is one of the main platforms we have for working with schools and with the department of

education: to go in with a common message about what is appropriate behaviour, the penalties it may attract if people are undertaking bullying or other assaults within schools. Each of the matters that have been referred to ACT Policing has been thoroughly investigated, some of which are currently before the courts.

MRS BURKE: That is good. You have probably answered another part of the question: how many programs do you have in schools? Another supplementary to all of that is: how many teachers and children to your knowledge in the last year have been assaulted to the extent that police were called? Do you have numbers? Again, minister, you might need to take that on notice.

Mr Corbell: I would need to take that on notice.

MRS BURKE: While you are doing that, how many requests have you had from schools to conduct violence preventative programs in schools? I know that Commander Close has just outlined some of them. Perhaps we could get the number of schools involved; the names of the schools, if that is possible; the sorts of programs that you have and whether that is expanding. Hopefully by word of mouth that program is getting around. You are working in a collaborative way with the education department and we hope to see an expansion of that.

Mr Corbell: Again I am happy to take those questions on notice, Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: Thank you, minister.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: I do not have any more questions prepared.

MR STEFANIAK: Currently how many officers from the ACT component are serving overseas or on national duty? I understand that we are meant to have about 30 at any one time. What is the number?

Mr Hughes: We have 21 officers attached to the International Deployment Group of the AFP. There would be a very small number who would be assigned to overseas liaison posts. In the current selection round for replacements there were none taken from ACT policing. So it is a very small number and they will be coming back, we hope, into ACT policing.

MR STEFANIAK: You do not have that number. It is 21 overseas—

Mr Hughes: Twenty-one in IDG.

MR STEFANIAK: How many are detached to national duties, not necessarily overseas?

Mr Hughes: To national duties generally on joint operational activity?

MR STEFANIAK: Yes.

Mr Hughes: Just to clarify the part answer there, where officers are deployed overseas to overseas liaison positions they leave our books and go onto the national book and they are replaced. We do not have any currently deployed to national operations that are still on our books. Once they go to national operations they leave our books.

MR STEFANIAK: And someone backfills their position.

Mr Hughes: Then we backfill through that recruitment process or coming in, yes.

MR STEFANIAK: And that is actually occurring now.

Mr Hughes: That is occurring.

MR STEFANIAK: We have had problems in the past. You mentioned additional patrols and have gone into some detail. Has an additional patrol been added to each station? I understand that some still have not. Could you tell us when that will occur? Also, has there been an additional sergeant added to each patrol, as the KPMG report has recommended?

Mr Hughes: As I flagged in an earlier answer, this influx of new members gives us an opportunity to look at our deployments across the ACT, including obviously the Gungahlin exercise to see whether that is still appropriate. The arrangements have been in place for some time now. When we talk about four extra cars on the road, it may be that one station has two extras, one station has one and one station does not have another one. As the population of the ACT grows we need to look at that and the projections and so on. It may not be that each station gets one car. We will try and spread that out in accordance with work demand and so on but it could come out that way.

MR STEFANIAK: One of the benefits of additional police obviously is that you can get back to community policing—get police out who know their area. Obviously with the lack of numbers that has been problematic but I understand that you are looking to do that. There are one or two pilot programs. How is that going? One of the other aspects of the KPMG report was that police wanted two intelligence officers at each station just to get to know activities in the local community and give a boost to community policing as such.

Mr Hughes: The suburban policing strategy that Commander Close referred to in respect of schools has been a very successful one. It is only a relatively new program. It commenced on 15 November last year. In the period from 15 November 2006 to 30 April this year, there were 10,500 proactive tasks undertaken by ACT Policing teams. This compares to 2,418 for the same period in the 2005-06 year. That is nearly a fourfold increase in community contacts. That includes general community relation activities, beats, patrols, crime targeting and traffic targeting. So it is much more the real community policing roles that the suburban policing strategy envisages.

When we have the extra numbers out of the college and in their formations, that will obviously give us greater opportunity to improve even further on that. It has been a highly successful program to date in terms of those sorts of contacts that do

characterise community policing.

MR STEFANIAK: Are you looking at any variations on a couple of schemes which have been pretty effective in the past that, I suppose, depend on numbers? Under both governments there was a dedicated police officer attached to a school. I remember a very popular sergeant at Campbell high school who then went to some of the primary schools and spent some time there—a great PR who also helped with a lot of other issues. One of our old colleagues, Dave Rugendyke, was the country cop at Kaleen. When you have the numbers the system seems to work fairly well and to be quite effective in terms of police knowing their local area and also in combating crime. Are there any plans to do things like that along those lines which get police out in the community more and have the dual effect of not only their being the eyes and ears but also helping to counter crime and perhaps deterring crime simply by their very presence?

Mr Hughes: That is true. It also deals with fear of crime when people have that contact. We have to deal with reality as well as perceptions of crime. We need to manage the two things. It is no good having no crime if people do not feel safe. We obviously need to address both.

These sorts of community policing strategies are very good at that. One of the elements of the suburban policing strategy is that particular patrols, like a squad, have responsibility for a suburb or suburbs. They will actively engage with the community in a broad spectrum—schools, community groups and just general neighbourhood shopping centres and so on. They form the count that I have just given you for the first six months of the program. Commander Close has a keen interest and oversight on this.

Ms Close: The suburban policing strategy certainly has been extremely helpful in each of our different teams in getting to know their local area. It was highly effective for the officer and the particular school where the officer was located but the difficulty was that we cannot have officers in every single school throughout the ACT. The ones that do not have a dedicated officer really missed out.

The suburban policing strategy is about having a consistent message coming out of ACT Policing that gets to every school. We have a crime prevention officer attached to each police station working directly to our crime prevention central location in city station. They work with the teams, sending the same consistent message to each of the schools throughout the ACT and making sure that each school gets fair attention, not just one school at the expense of another.

MR STEFANIAK: If you had dedicated officers, they would be posted there for a period of time and would get to know a number of schools. Is that the aim?

Ms Close: The team concept is that people are available on a team. If someone is away on leave they are not in contact with one person; they have a team that they approach and have contact with. When one person is away on leave, the team can pick up from that person.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, do you have a supplementary?

MS PORTER: Yes, I do. Minister, we also have the very successful volunteers in policing program, I believe, which is a link between the community and the police service. It is still going, I believe, and is still quite successful. I believe that sometimes volunteers go into the schools and the shopping centres and have contact with people there. They give a human face to the police service and help break down the perception that you were talking about before. That is still quite successful, I believe?

Ms Close: The volunteers in policing program has been a highly successful program for the AFP and that continues to be the case. In fact, we have recruitment campaigns fairly regularly for the volunteers in policing scheme. The volunteers work with our crime prevention officers and go into schools and shopping and community centres. Again, we coordinate that through our crime prevention area so that we have a consistent message from ACT Policing through each of the groups that they have contact with.

MRS BURKE: If I could go back to something Mr Hughes mentioned a little earlier about grooming, a word we do not hear very often. This is just a side comment: I hope that as a force you talk about this more. Simply, it is not about looking good; it is totally the opposite. Sometimes words are used out of context. Through the minister, I would appreciate it if this was taken on notice: that word needs to be put about into the community so that people understand what it is and its relevance. I am a bit passionate about it; I am sorry about that.

My question is to the minister. In 2001, I was chair of the Digital Divide Task Force. I remember you spruiking, saying that you were going to do it bigger, better and so on, as is politics. On a serious note, again referring back to the KPMG joint study—I note that you now have a copy of the book—on page 60 it talks about the increase in e-crime. Given that on average it takes six weeks to examine a computer containing child pornography—we obviously have mobile phone issues and so on—an additional nine staff are recommended. If it has increased, please tell me. At present there is 0.6 of a full-time equivalent person looking into these matters and into investigations. Has a team been established, minister, given your keenness in this area of technology; if not, why not? When are we going to ramp up this side of your operation?

Ms Close: In relation to the e-crime initiatives, we have trained several people in our Territory Investigations Group to be able to access computers and undertake that sort of forensic examination on site when we undertake search warrants. Also, we work closely with our computer forensics team that has been established in the AFP in our forensics area. They have high-level specialisation and expertise and the necessary equipment and research that go with that to be able to access that sort of material. Part of our forensic service level agreement is the provision of service to be able to support us.

MRS BURKE: It is not a dedicated team per se; you do it across the organisation now?

Ms Close: No, not in the ACT. However, we also have the online child sexual exploitation team in the Australian Federal Police and we liaise closely with them, again through our Territory Investigations Group, on these sorts of investigations. We

also use the Australian High Tech Crime Centre to support us in some of those investigations and networks across other jurisdictions and internationally.

Mr Corbell: Just to clarify what Commander Close is telling you, Mrs Burke, those services are effectively purchased from AFP national. AFP national have that capability and we procure the services from them as and when they are needed.

MRS BURKE: We are confident though that a dedicated team is not needed, or is that something that we should look to in the future?

Mr Corbell: I think it highlights the advantages of having the AFP as the provider of policing services here in the ACT—that we can draw on their significant expertise as and when it is needed in these very specialised areas.

MRS BURKE: They are managing the whole impact of this. Again, this is a highly stressful area.

Ms Leon: I think it is also worth mentioning that the AFP and police forces nationally are not standing still in relation to their responses to cyber crime and child pornography. The KPMG study reflects practices at the time, and ACT Policing's view of practices at the time, but nationally the police are very actively developing technology that will enable a technological approach, a high-tech approach, to high-tech crime, and so in the area of cyber crime we aren't necessarily relying on old-fashioned forms of policing.

MRS BURKE: No, and this is two years old.

Ms Leon: There is a lot of very active work going on nationally that will enable better technological responses that will eliminate or significantly reduce the kind of human stress that you refer to from needing to look at many, many images of child exploitation.

MRS BURKE: So it is involving, finally, a number of people across the organisation addressing these investigations.

Mr Corbell: That's correct.

Ms Close: And that includes the psychological welfare services in the AFP as well.

MRS BURKE: How many, approximately, would be spending time on this issue? Would you know that, or is it hard to extrapolate.

Ms Close: It is difficult to say because people come in and go out, depending on how many investigations and the different sorts of services that we need, so it is a difficult question to answer.

MR STEFANIAK: You have talked about crime that crosses borders and high-tech crime, which reminded me of one thing. Biek gangs are a significant problem. Whilst we haven't had too much trouble in the ACT, I hear that there have been problems. I note that Western Australia has very effective antifortification legislation and

proceeds of crime legislation which is making it very hard for organised crime, especially bikie groups, to operate in that state. Minister, have you done anything, and do you intend to do anything, in relation to introducing antifortification legislation to assist the police in the ACT and to enhancing the proceeds of crime legislation along the lines of the successful Western Australian model?

Mr Corbell: Mr Stefaniak, it is not a matter that has been brought to my attention by the police as an issue of concern or an area where there is any inadequacy in our current laws. If, though, the matter was brought to my attention and the police considered that this was an area of concern, then I would obviously treat that very seriously and consider the government's options. But, at this point, the answer to your question is no.

MR STEFANIAK: I know that it has been mentioned on several occasions, probably over the last eight or nine months, by the association.

Mr Corbell: I am not aware—Commander Close probably would have a better idea than I would—of any of the fortress-type compounds that we hear of in other states.

MR STEFANIAK: There is one in Lyneham.

Mr Corbell: But it is not a matter that has been brought to my attention as an issue where there is an inadequacy in the law.

Mr Hughes: The Australian Crime Commission's outlaw motorcycle gang task force recently completed work looking jurisdictionally across Australia at the issue of outlaw motorcycle gangs and concluded that there were no major issues for the ACT in comparison to some of the other jurisdictions, like Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales, and of course the tragic events that appear to be linked to OMCGs in Melbourne this week.

MR STEFANIAK: There was mention earlier of people dropping out at the middle level and some problems with recruiting, but that is the position across the board as we do have a skills shortage. I note that there has been a couple of positive steps, such as bringing a few retired police back on contract. I understand, for example, that Alan Curtis is doing some sterling work at the police college. It has been suggested to me that we could utilise some recently retired police officers as mentors to assist the more junior police, not necessarily go out on patrol and have their heads bashed in by louts, but at least be in situations where they could be used in stations to free up some of the newer police from their duties until such time as you get your complement back towards an optimum level, that there is any number of quite expert senior police, recently retired, who would be willing to do that. What are you doing, if anything, about utilising some of that great expertise that we have here in terms of contracting them back in?

Mr Hughes: We do utilise that pool of people. Some of them don't want to become involved, and we respect that, as they have moved on to other chapters of their lives. But for those that want to become involved, that have developed a good reputation both within and externally in the community, the door is open. We like to engage them. That is done not just in ACT Policing; it is done in the AFP nationally as well

as an organisational initiative. There have been instances, quite a number, where these officers have come in and conducted reviews for us on certain issues, using their experience and expertise. Insofar as mentoring is concerned, there is the example that you cited at the college and there is that informal interaction; but, so far as any formal arrangement to conduit retired officers back in, I haven't really noted the need for that yet, bearing in mind I have only been back six weeks, but it is a suggestion that certainly we will take on board.

MR STEFANIAK: I have only two more. Firstly, is the AFP actually meeting all aspects of the agreement with the ACT government? If not, what areas are not being met and what is being done to rectify that?

Mr Corbell: There is a whole range of measures outlined in the agreement which require ACT Policing to report quarterly to me as the minister and to the government as a whole. I will just find the relevant report. This is reported on quarterly. There are approximately 36 measures in the agreement, of which 27 of those measures achieved or exceeded the target, and obviously there was a range of measures which did not achieve or exceed the target. As to the measures where we did not achieve the target—

MR STEFANIAK: Perhaps you could table that.

Mr Corbell: It may be easier if I answer that on notice, because there is a whole range. I will do that, but 27 of the 36 measures are being met, and the others are not being met at this point.

MR STEFANIAK: Is there anything that should be highlighted amongst those measures?

Mr Corbell: The issues of greatest concern to me, and this is the reason I outlined them in my ministerial direction to the CPO, were response times for lower priority incidents. Particularly category 3 and category 4 response times are not meeting the targets and that is of concern to me. That is why the government agreed to fund those positions that we funded in the last budget in particular, and we will be looking with interest to see whether or not that makes a real and substantive difference in the response times for those lower priority matters. Priority 3 and priority 4 are the—

MR STEFANIAK: Things that affect people.

Mr Corbell: That is bread and butter stuff. That is important stuff for people and their confidence in police services. I will be looking forward with interest to seeing how the figures react and how the response times improve with those additional resources.

MR STEFANIAK: I have one final question. Congratulations on the pay deal and congratulations as to the additional 43 senior constables. Whilst they wear the rank, it is still not actually, I understand, a rank as such. Has anything been done to ensure that some of the old rank structures are brought back on a formal basis, like 1st constable, constable, station sergeant and, I think, inspector, which I understand is being brought back? What is being done in relation to that, which is obviously giving due recognition to people attaining a certain level, and they can take great pride in

that? That is certainly something that, again, has been mentioned to me on a number of occasions.

Mr Hughes: As it happens, I recently completed a review for the commissioner on ranks and titles, and that review was reported at an executive meeting recently. The only additional rank that was contemplated in that review was the rank of inspector. That has gone away for further work because of some anomalies. Having taken on the Australian Protective Service, which has a different rank structure to the AFP, it is more complex than just creating new ranks. We need to ensure parity and so on. The commissioner has a very firm view about common branding for the AFP and inherent in that is a common uniform, badging, rank structure and so on, so that it looks and feels like one AFP. So, insofar as having other ranks, like station sergeant, or other commissions, there is no thought on that. We have flattened the structure and that has worked well for the organisation and there is no thinking about reintroducing those particular ranks, but there are opportunities to recognise, through other means, someone's experience and so on.

MR STEFANIAK: If the police are allowed to wear that rank, if you are on the hoodlum patrol or the beat squad and you don't have a sergeant but you have got two stripes, at least the local louts know that you are an experienced person.

Mr Hughes: Senior constable is a designated rank for us, yes.

MR STEFANIAK: Is it? Good. But not 1st constable or station sergeant.

Mr Hughes: No. We have a band 8, which is equivalent to the old station sergeant, which, subject to further work, may become an inspector rank again, but that is subject to internal deliberation at the moment. It is a current issue for the AFP executive.

MRS BURKE: I am interested in the strategic approach to managing and deterring public disorder. I know there is something called the beat team, and I am obviously referring again to the joint study. Is the beat team still in operation, minister? It says here that it was reduced in size. Again, it is just all about what is the strategic approach to deterring and managing public disorder.

Mr Corbell: Again, that is an operational matter for ACT Policing, so I will defer to Mr Hughes.

Mr Hughes: The beat patrol is still alive and active. We are currently developing new strategies and new operations to address some areas of public disorder. We are looking at areas like Civic after closing hours for nightclubs, and Manuka and other areas where entertainment, particularly where alcohol is served, is conducted. In the coming weeks there will be some significant increase in operational activity. We will be looking at utilising all elements of ACT Policing, including beat patrols, but also importantly including specialist response areas, which are the men and women that provide a wide range of tactical support to general policing.

MRS BURKE: Specialist response?

Mr Hughes: Yes, like tactical response, search and rescue, water operations, bombs and so on. I believe, as does my executive, that we can better utilise those officers in down time, when they are not deployed to their specialist areas, in supporting their colleagues in general duties, including beat patrol, and we will be doing that in the coming weeks. Traffic operations similarly with a much more coordinated effort. You have heard about the seized vehicles. What I am very keen to avoid is that we are operating in silos, that the intelligence gained from one area of activity flows across the organisation, that we proceed on it in a very coordinated way. We know the town well, we know our community, and we therefore should be able, I believe, in a much more collective and collegiate way to tackle these problem areas and problem individuals and groups of individuals in a much more coordinated sense, if that helps.

MRS BURKE: The final question from me is about the backlog of warrants. In 2005 it was around 11,000, minister, and the staff level then was 1.5. I know that it was raised as a major concern. What are you doing to address that issue and clear the backlog?

Mr Corbell: What sorts of warrants are you referring to, Mrs Burke?

MRS BURKE: Warrants for minor matters. Other jurisdictions have typically adopted non-police methods for dealing with such matters.

Ms Close: I could address the issue, chair. We have had different operations and put some people onto this issue over the last 12 months or so. We have had concerted efforts in addressing some of the warrants that we have in existence and backlogs, and that continues to be a focus for us. We have a warrants team as well which manages that process for us. If there are particular issues, we use our operations committee, which meets on a fortnightly basis and governs our operational activities, to then task our general duties members or other members to make sure that we address this issue.

MRS BURKE: What is the backlog now, do you know?

Ms Close: I don't have the figure.

MRS BURKE: Take it on notice, if you like. It would be interesting to see how it has reduced over two years.

Ms Close: I would suggest that it is quite steady because continually we have more warrants in the system, but I can get those figures for you.

MRS BURKE: And probably the staffing levels of people dealing with the warrants, thank you.

MR PRATT: My question is for either Mr Hughes or Commander Close. Going back to the suburban policing strategy, can you tell me how many suburbs you have covered to date with the pilot program as it now runs?

Mr Corbell: Mr Hughes actually answered this question earlier in terms of the level of activity that has occurred.

MR PRATT: I am sorry about that. Okay, I will find the answer. Do you have a program—forgive me if you have also answered this one—as to how many suburbs you may be reaching out to and covering with that as well?

Mr Corbell: It is an ongoing program, Mr Pratt, and it covers all suburbs.

MR PRATT: So you are aiming to cover all suburbs. By what time frame?

Mr Corbell: It does cover all suburbs. All suburbs have been allocated a suburban policing team.

MR PRATT: Okay. Are you familiar with the British neighbourhood policing program which the London Met and the county police forces run?

Mr Corbell: I am.

MR PRATT: A component of that program, perhaps still under trial, is the development of a particular officer known as a community support police officer, an auxiliary who is not, in fact, a police officer. They are community officers but they perform auxiliary duties, with no powers of arrest. The British police seem to think they have been able to stretch their reach in terms of community policing. Do you have any comments as to whether there is any value in analysing that concept for possible use here?

Mr Corbell: Can I just interrupt for a moment? Chair, I am afraid I have to go. I have to leave a little bit earlier than I originally anticipated, if you will excuse me, but I am happy for my officials to continue.

MRS BURKE: We thought you were here till 6 o'clock, minister.

Mr Corbell: Yes, I was to be.

MR PRATT: This is only an operational question anyway, minister. I am sure you won't fret.

MR STEFANIAK: Perhaps you could take one thing on notice from me, minister. One thing that has been raised with me by a number of officers is that it would be of benefit to them on the beat if they could issue on-the-spot notices for things like offensive behaviour and also possibly reactivate some of the old summary offences, such as offensive language, for that sort of on-the-spot fine. You don't have to answer it now if you are busy.

Mr Corbell: No, that is a matter which has been raised with me, particularly in the context of some of the antisocial behaviour we saw following the Skyfire fireworks display earlier this year. That is a matter on which I have asked for some further advice.

MRS BURKE: Will you be able to provide that advice to the committee?

Mr Corbell: No, it is a policy matter for government at this point, but I can advise the

committee that it is a matter on which I am seeking further advice.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, minister, for your time. We will continue with Mr Pratt's question and try to wind up after that.

MR PRATT: Do I need to repeat that question?

Mr Hughes: No, I've got it, thanks. I am familiar with that process. You need to look, I think, at the underlying rationale for the processes of engaging in what is a quite complex community policing structure in the UK, where they have fully sworn and fledged officers and they have special constables that have powers of arrest but they are not trained to the same level. They look like and they feel like, but they are not. They have now a new cadre of community policing support officers who have very limited roles and work with, presumably, these other officers. The reason I looked at this overseas in a previous role before taking on this one was that there was a difficulty in recruiting sworn officers and certain other factors like costs involved in having a fully trained and equipped officer. They have trouble attracting numbers into the force that are appropriately qualified, with the right attitude, characteristics and so on. We don't have that issue here.

We are fortunate that we have a good pool of people from whom we can recruit and the standards of our recruits are, generally, very high. So that driver is not there in this community. Also, Canberra is a much smaller community than London and there are lots more dynamics in that greater cosmopolitan scene than we see here. But all of these have got merit in various contexts and we certainly don't rule a line through them and say never, ever. I think it's good to keep alive to what is being developed overseas. We learn a lot from that. In fact, many of our initiatives have been developed overseas and we have modified them for our environment here. In answer to your question, there are no plans at this point to proceed along that. We do have our volunteers in policing which provide a very important and useful auxiliary role which was also discussed earlier this afternoon. But, insofar as having a model like the UK one, it is not on our radar at the present time.

MRS BURKE: I would like to comment on that as a very quick aside. I suppose the advantage of that—as you have said, it is a bigger jurisdiction—is that you are going to get people of a like peer group. That may be part of the idea; I don't know. Mr Pratt wants to say something; I'm sorry.

MR PRATT: I had a look at this concept over Christmas. In fact, some of your colleagues running out of Australia House in London pointed me in that direction, I might add. My understanding was that the attraction was that the community also became involved in purchasing that type of officer in collaboration with the local chief constable and it seemed to give them an extra bit of reach; that is, the CSPO would be stationed in the community, not necessarily in the police station, but commanded by a patrol sergeant and they thought it gave them an extra bit of reach.

Mr Hughes: London, of course, has got a very diverse ethnic composition—

MR PRATT: And a different typography, too.

Mr Hughes: Quite, and there are large groups—considering the huge size of the population, over 5.5 million—that it is difficult for mainstream police to reach into. I am talking here about, for example, some of the Muslim communities and other multicultural groups. It does work as a two-way advantage, both ways. But I think that in the ACT, whilst we are a very multicultural society, there is a degree of homogeneity across our society which maybe isn't, as I said, driving the need for us to actively start engaging in that sort of project at this point. But, as I said, we are open to lots of suggestions and that is certainly one that I have looked at in another context.

Ms Leon: Chair, with your indulgence, since we have a few minutes left, I wonder whether I could return to the subject that we ran out of time with yesterday concerning Mr Stefaniak's question about the investigation into a certain matter in the courts? We were running out of time for other outputs.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Leon: I think that you asked me whether the person who had to be directed to answer questions was the only person and whether I had had to have recourse to that power before. I can confirm for you that I only had to direct one person to assist that inquiry and I am happy to say that I have not previously had to direct anyone to assist with an inquiry. I think that reflects upon the generally very high standards within the department and the fact that officers of the department do demonstrate a commitment to the ethical standards that are expressed in the Public Sector Management Act. I hope that an investigation of the sort that I have had to conduct into the allegations about misuse of parking tickets in the courts will be a very rare instance and that high ethical standards will continue to be upheld across the department.

MR STEFANIAK: Thank you for that. Has the investigation concluded? Has it reached a conclusion?

Ms Leon: It hasn't concluded yet, but I was informed by the investigators this week that they expect to conclude within the next couple of weeks.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Leon, CPO Hughes and Commander Close for your time this afternoon. We will come back at 9.30 in the morning with the Minister for Housing, Mr Hargreaves.

The committee adjourned at 5.50 pm.