



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

MONDAY, 2 JULY 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

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The committee met at 9.31 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 Territory and Municipal Services

Zissler, Mr Mike, Chief Executive

Kiemann, Ms Susanna, Director, Strategic Finance, Office of the Chief
Executive

Gill, Mr Tony, Acting Executive Director, Enterprise Services

Hill, Mr Ian, Acting General Manager, Australian Capital Tourism

Sanchez, Mr Chris, Senior Business Manager, Australian Capital Tourism

Guthrie, Mr Neale, Group General Manager, Territory Venues and Events

McNulty, Mr Hamish, Executive Director, Environment and Recreation

Marriage, Ms Sue, Director, Sport and Recreation Services

Kelley, Ms Rebecca, Deputy Director, Sport and Recreation Services

Roberts, Mr Geoff, Registrar, Public Authorities and Territory Owned
Corporations Unit

Chief Minister's Department

Davoren, Ms Pam, Acting Chief Executive

Hudson, Ms Cathy, Deputy Chief Executive, Governance Division

Centenera, Ms Liesl, Director, Office of Industrial Relations, Governance
Division

McCabe, Mr Mark, Senior Manager, Workplace Injury Performance,
Governance Division

Saad, Ms Tanya, Senior Manager, Asbestos, Governance Division

Neser, Ms Kate, Chief Finance Officer, Policy Division

ACT Construction Industry and Contract Cleaning Industry Long Service Boards

Roberts, Mr Geoff, Registrar

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority

Guy, Mr Gary, Chief Executive Officer

THE CHAIR: Minister and members, welcome back to the 2007 estimates committee hearings. This morning we will be hearing from the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation, firstly in output class 1.6, sport and rec, then moving to tourism events. At 11.30 we will go to industrial relations with Minister Barr. Before we begin I will read the witness card out to 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 discharge all 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.

I remind witnesses to collect their name tags from the side table and state their names and positions for Hansard when responding to questions. Minister, would you like to make any opening comments?

Mr Barr: I would, thank you. I again thank the committee for the opportunity to appear before it in relation to the portfolio of Tourism, Sport and Recreation. I will make some brief opening comments to outline some of the highlights of the 2007-08 budget in these portfolio areas, particularly in relation to sport and recreation. I would like to highlight the additional investment the government has made through the 2007-08 budget towards the construction of playing fields in Harrison—a figure of \$3.75 million. This facility, as a district playing field, in conjunction with the neighbourhood oval, was funded in last year's budget and will serve as a hub for many sporting teams in the Gungahlin area. The government has also committed \$250,000 towards improvements for Griffith oval, which not only serves as a valued community oval but also is the training base for the Brumbies.

In addition to these new sporting ovals, we are keen to ensure that existing sporting facilities are kept up to date. To this end, the government has provided \$6 million to improve the leisure centres in Tuggeranong and the city. Some \$4 million will be provided to upgrade the Tuggeranong Lakeside Leisure Centre, including the 50-metre pool, upgrading heating and cooling systems and repainting the entire facility. Some \$200,000 will be provided for a feasibility study into a modern inner city aquatic and leisure centre, and \$2 million has been set aside for the replacement of the dome that covers the Canberra Olympic pool, pending further engineering assessments.

Another challenge that we are facing—perhaps alleviated in the last week or so by the recent rain—is the drought. As the Treasurer indicated on budget day, an appropriately sized surplus has been set aside to allow the government to respond to this challenge.

Turning to tourism venues and events, the 2007-08 budget sees these areas of government combined, giving recognition to the fact that many of our venues and events boost the tourism sector. This budget continues the government's commitment to bringing major sporting events to the city. Some \$1 million has been invested in bringing the world mountain bike championships to the ACT as well as a new event,

the inaugural Rob De Castella invitational cross-country event, to be held in November 2007 at Stromlo Forest Park. These events will take place in Stromlo Forest Park, which receives an additional \$1.754 million over four years in the budget on top of the \$7 million invested to establish the facility.

In addition, I would like to highlight the \$2.5 million that has been invested over four years in the Tidbinbilla nature discovery centre, to be opened in early 2008. This funding will help deliver visitor educational programs, manage wildlife collections and provide a stronger emphasis on Aboriginal history and culture.

The ACT will host the 2007 national tourism awards early in 2008, which will provide a great opportunity to promote the wealth of tourism experiences here in the ACT to the nation's leading tourism operators. A \$50,000 cash sponsorship is being provided to assist in staging these awards.

I also wish to highlight the funding of Floriade, which will be supplemented by a further \$1.568 million over four years, which will primarily meet the cost of servicing the growing number of international, national and local visitors to our iconic springtime event. As I am sure committee members are aware, Floriade provides a significant contribution to the ACT economy. Total attendance at the 2006 event was just over 375,000 visits, which was the largest attendance on record. This generated \$22.5 million in direct expenditure into the ACT economy, up nearly 10 per cent on the 2005 result.

In closing, can I say that the government is committed to furthering Canberra's reputation as the nation's sporting capital and the nation's peak tourist destination. This budget provides a significant investment in achieving these goals. I look forward to taking the committee's questions.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Thank you. Minister, in your opening remarks you mentioned the Harrison district playing fields. You would be aware that I have made a number of representations to you on behalf of the Gungahlin United Football Club with respect to their playing facilities. I wondered if you could let the committee know what your time line is for the development of these particular fields, as they are critical for those particular clubs out there. As you know, they are growing in number.

Mr Barr: Certainly. The money that is provided in this year's budget will provide for the establishment of two additional district playing fields. That goes to complement the money that was made available in the 2006-07 budget for the Harrison neighbourhood oval. It is progressing with the development of the Harrison primary school in the first instance, and it will be progressed to a P-10 school in time.

A significant amount of capital works are underway on the site. The opportunities that present themselves through this redevelopment at Harrison are around creating what will be a 21st century set of playing fields in terms of water usage and the opportunity to partner with a number of other sporting organisations to provide facilities. As part of the government's overall package, a pavilion, public toilets, canteen, storage, cricket practice nets, 200 car parks and fencing and landscaping form part of the

larger project. Work has commenced in relation to the neighbourhood oval that is part of this overall package.

There are some considerations in relation to water restrictions that need to be considered in terms of the time line for development of the ovals. However, the recent rains and increase in storage—I note from Actew’s website that storage is at nearly 38 per cent at the moment—have alleviated some of our immediate concerns around impending stage 4 restrictions. We will need to seek further advice from ActewAGL in relation to what the process will be as we head into spring and summer, but a lot of the other work in terms of all of the facilities I have outlined can commence virtually straight away. The only issue will be prevailing water restrictions at the time we seek to sow the grass for the ovals, but my advice—following the recent rain, and if it continues in the current pattern—is that stage 4 restrictions are now some months away, if they occur at all. We are more confident than we were two or three months ago that we can proceed with the planting of grass over this spring. Another key feature of the investment in Harrison is around installing tank and pump systems so that we are able to use recycled water, or at least not potable quality water, for these facilities so as to drought proof them effectively.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: Minister, I would like to ask you about what you see as your vision for sport and recreation over the next few years, given that your government has presided over the greatest cuts made to sports in self-government, your grant levels are back to about 1993 levels, and clearly sport is hurting—and this is at a time when we have increasing childhood obesity. Just how do you see sport and rec developing when it suffers such significant kicks in the guts and the head from these cuts? It makes it very hard for a large number of sporting bodies.

Mr Barr: The government has put forward a range of new directions in terms of sport and recreation. I would cover them across five key areas. In the first instance, there have been a number of strategic investments in new infrastructure—

MR STEFANIAK: I appreciate that. I am more interested in what you, as minister, intend to actually do in the next couple of years to try to get it back on track.

Mr Barr: Indeed. I am a member of the government. As minister for sport, I take responsibility for carriage of this policy for the government. My position and the government’s position are exactly the same. If you would let me even begin my answer, I would more than happily respond to the issues you have raised.

In the first instance, there has been some strategic investment in new sporting infrastructure in the city. I would highlight Stromlo Forest Park as a key example of that—the desire to bring new events and new recreational opportunities through that venture. It is a multi-purpose facility and a key one for what are growing sports for the capital region, particularly around cycling and cross-country running. There is involvement from equestrians. A range of sports are able to access those facilities.

Through the academy of sport program, we have sought to refocus our priorities on our elite athletes. We have changed the focus of the program to deliver a high-quality program. No longer are we counting athletes who we provide a drink bottle and a T-shirt to as part of our academy program. We are investing more money per athlete than we have in the past. The ACT's previous arrangements were to provide a very low level of support to a large number of athletes. We have refocused that to provide a much higher level of support to elite athletes through those programs.

Through this year's budget, we have also provided additional support for ACT athletes who are headed to Beijing in 2008. Through our funding arrangements with the AFL, the Brumbies, the Raiders, the Canberra Capitals and A league soccer, we have sought the provision of support to bring peak elite events to the ACT in order to not only provide opportunities for our elite athletes but also provide examples for junior sports and the opportunity for them to see sport at an elite level. It is a very strong view that that does drive increased participation at a grassroots level.

In terms of individual support for individual sports, through our review of sports grants funding we have sought to more closely target needs and address key priorities. What we saw through the 2006-07 grants round was a more targeted approach to the support we provide. Over the weekend I announced a second round of grants targeting areas where participation is lower than in other areas of the community, particularly amongst older people, youth at risk, women and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds—\$70,000 worth of grants provided to 15 different organisations to increase grassroots participation in those segments of the community.

Through the \$2 million that was made available for sporting grants through the 2006-07 year, we also saw a focus on the key priorities of individual sports. No longer did we go through the process of—

MR STEFANIAK: That is code for justifying cuts, Andrew.

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: No longer do we go through the process of sports putting up wish lists of seven or eight different projects. They focused on their number one priorities, and those priorities were delivered. In fact, we have funded a higher percentage of applications in 2006-07 than we have in other years, indicating that, through the review process of sports grants, the sports got together and worked out where their priorities were, particularly in terms of shared facilities. One of the key features that we are seeing through this process—and what has been the result of the potential implications of stage 4 restrictions—is sports working together to share facilities with a view to the longer-term viability of their sports. I am particularly pleased that we are seeing a greater level of cooperation amongst sports, particularly those that have complementary uses but in different seasons. For example, cricket and AFL use a similar sized field at different times of the year; there has been a greater level of collaboration amongst those sports. I think that is fantastic. I would also—

MRS BURKE: On a point of order, chair, I believe the question was about—

Mr Barr: I would also like to—

THE CHAIR: Minister, a point of order has been raised.

MRS BURKE: Thank you, chair. I believe that the minister needs to address the question, which was about the minister's vision, not what has occurred.

Mr Barr: And I am outlining—

MRS BURKE: It is not what has occurred.

THE CHAIR: There is no point of order.

Mr Barr: I am halfway through my response. I said I was seeking to deal with five key areas. I have got through two of them, and you are not even letting me finish.

MRS BURKE: That is what has happened. It is not what your vision is.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke!

Mr Barr: I am implementing my vision for sport now, Mrs Burke.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke, you do not have a point of order.

Mr Barr: This is not something that is six or 10 years away. This is something we are doing now. If you would let me finish—this is the second time that I have been interrupted. I am attempting to finish the answer in response to the issues Mr Stefaniak has raised.

Sport has a leading role in the Canberra economy, employing about 3,500 Canberrans. We continue to work with sports. I have provided some additional assistance for sports that have had governance issues, particularly some of the smaller ones. We provided an additional \$20,000 in 2006-07 to provide support for improved governance arrangements for the smaller sports. This is particularly important as sports administration is a key area within the ACT. It is an area where our education and training institutions are providing pathways, but it is important that the government is there to provide support to improve the governance of some of the smaller sports. It encourages their longer-term viability.

Through a series of targeted announcements in the education portfolio and work that is occurring with the sports ministers council nationally, we are seeking to open up school facilities for use for community sporting organisations. There is a program that the Tasmanian government is taking the lead on—but it is a national one—called “Unlocking the gates”, which is around the provision of sporting facilities for community groups. It is something that we are looking at very closely.

Mr Stefaniak, you would have noted my announcements through the education portfolio around the provision of gymnasiums for government high schools that are without a purpose-built facility. We recently opened a new facility at Melrose high. If there is a key advantage that we have in the ACT, it is the ability to let community groups access those sporting facilities.

In terms of the longer-term vision, we have a desire to continue to improve on our participation rates. We are targeting the areas, the segments of the community and the parts of the community, where participation is not as high as others. We lead the nation in participation in sport, but some segments within our community do not have such high levels of participation. We are targeting grants particularly to support increased participation there.

Extra facilities around the city are being provided, again focusing on areas where there is high demand. Gungahlin, for example, is an area where we do need additional sporting facilities—hence the money in the budget for the Harrison district playing fields. And, as part of the package of capital works that will form the Gungahlin college, there will be sporting facilities made available for community use.

We are seeking to drive elite sport through not only new events for the territory but also investment in new infrastructure—using the links that we have into tourism and into venues and events to ensure that we have a diverse range of product available for the citizens of the ACT.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: I would like to refer you to comments made in the social plan. It would seem that the Stanhope government is struggling to keep hold of some of the grand statements it made and keep the threads going forward. It is replete with references, for example, to encouraging participation in sport and similar comments.

THE CHAIR: This is in relation to the sport and tourism portfolio, Mrs Burke?

MRS BURKE: It certainly is. Why aren't the sentiments in the social plan followed through into a substantial policy on maintaining sportsgrounds—while acknowledging the impacts of the drought, of course?

Mr Barr: At the beginning of this year, we undertook a series of seminars. We partnered with the University of Canberra and some of the surrounding shire councils who have experienced some real difficulties in maintaining their sporting facilities through the drought. I am sure that committee members would be aware that in the Yass and Goulburn regions stage 5 restrictions were in place. That had a huge impact on the ability for outdoor sports to be maintained in those areas.

Back in March this year, I hosted a seminar at the University of Canberra that did involve all of those key players. We talked through some of the experiences and some of the approaches that other councils have taken in addressing these particular issues. A task force has been established within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, within sport and recreation, to address these particular issues. I held a major stakeholder meeting; more than 220 people attended. There have been individual workshops and focus groups with all of the sports to address their concerns and seek to provide innovative responses to the difficulties that we were to face—and potentially might still face if stage 4 restrictions come in.

The government has been proactive in addressing these concerns and seeking to work

collaboratively with the sport and recreation industry to address these concerns. These are difficult issues. We are very lucky that the last week has seen an increase in dam levels from the trigger point for stage 4 of 31 per cent up to nearly 38 per cent today. That has provided some short-term respite from an immediate introduction of stage 4 restrictions, but it does not mean that this work should not continue. To this end, I have commissioned a major research project with the University of Canberra to provide further research into sport in a drought and how this jurisdiction can respond. It is a collaborative partnership with the University of Canberra and another key feature of the government's commitment to work collaboratively with peak research organisations, such as the University of Canberra, to address local concerns.

MRS BURKE: Minister, isn't it true that it is more by good fortune than by good planning, because of the rain falling? You seem to be devoid of any long-term strategic plan—knowing that we have been in a drought for quite some time now. Why has it happened all of a sudden? It seems that there is no strategic straightforward plan for the future. You have done a lot of talking—a lot of talking—but what are we actually going to do to see the restoration of ovals back into community use?

Mr Barr: A lot of talking is necessary to work with the industry to address these problems.

MRS BURKE: Two, three, four years?

Mr Barr: You would equally be critical if the government had just gone ahead with a plan without any consultation.

MRS BURKE: But you are not listening to the community.

Mr Barr: I think we are. I think we are listening extensively.

MRS BURKE: The sporting community?

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke, you have asked your question; let us hear the answer.

Mr Barr: Absolutely—extensive consultation, right down to individual focus groups and stakeholder meetings. There has been everything from tightly focused seminars on key aspects of response to sport in a drought right through to major stakeholder meetings. This has been one of the most extensive projects that sport and recreation has ever undertaken.

We are seeking collaborative research partners in terms of longer-term responses. We have had pilot programs around different sorts of playing surfaces—different sorts of grass—and significant improvements over the last 12 years in the irrigation system that we use to water our ovals.

MRS BURKE: That was a long time coming, I believe, too.

Mr Barr: That has seen about a 40 per cent reduction in the amount of water that is used. And further investment in that technology is occurring. As I say, we have a

range of pilot programs around different grass types and sub-surface irrigation that are occurring across the city at the moment. But we need to ensure that we let these pilot programs reach the end of their assessment period and that we get the best advice on what is the best way forward. If there is going to be a dramatic change in the sorts of grass that we are using on all of our ovals, it is important that that is underpinned by quality research.

This is an ongoing process. You would be aware from when Mr Costello appeared before the committee that Actew is purchasing something in the order of 50 to 60 water tanks to locate around strategic facilities around the territory in order to ensure that there is an ongoing water supply in case stage 4 restrictions come into place. There are 24 hectares of sportsgrounds that are currently watered using recycled water from the Fyshwick treatment plant. Through some of the announcements the Chief Minister has made in relation to stormwater retention, there are opportunities to look at watering other precincts of the city through those opportunities. Where commonwealth funds are available, we will be partnering with the commonwealth government in order to ensure that there is that longer-term sustainability for our sportsgrounds.

MRS BURKE: Why is it that sporting groups have said that you were not working with them in the initial stages, yet you have said you have had all these meetings? Is that not right?

Mr Barr: I am not sure which sporting groups you are referring to.

MRS BURKE: People who use the ovals.

Mr Barr: We have had extensive consultation, so I find that statement—well, it is a classic Jacqui Burke statement.

MRS BURKE: No; it was ABC radio.

Mr Barr: No specifics.

MRS BURKE: It was on ABC radio, minister, so not my words.

Mr Barr: That makes all the difference then, doesn't it? There is an authoritative source if ever you have seen one. My advice and my understanding—not only from individual meetings I have had but from the length of stakeholder consultation that the sport and recreation department has undertaken—are that it has been the most extensive project in the history of sport and rec in the ACT in terms of stakeholder consultation.

MRS BURKE: So the ABC got it wrong?

Mr Barr: It has been known to happen.

MRS BURKE: Tim Gavel must be absolutely wrong?

Mr Barr: Mr Gavel has emceed a number of the events, as Mr Smyth would know,

because he has been to maybe one of them. In the series of events where we have sought to consult directly with stakeholders, Mr Gavel has been the emcee of at least three that I can recall.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: I wonder if you could table for the committee—in response to a question on notice—first of all a list of all sportsgrounds which currently use recycled water and a list of sportsgrounds for which plans exist to introduce it. They may be sportsgrounds that are still in the planning stage, as I think you have mentioned. Secondly, I was wondering if you could produce a breakdown of amounts of money spent on particular sports. I am just interested to see which sports swallow up the dollars. I am also going to go a bit further here and ask you if you monitor the use of sporting facilities—in terms of how much some of the ovals are used, for instance. I currently live in Narrabundah. I have observed on my walks that there are quite a number of sporting facilities around Narrabundah. I think that is good, but I would be interested in knowing how much they are used. So all these are questions—

Mr Barr: Sure. I have counted three.

DR FOSKEY: Yes. You might not be able to answer some of them now.

Mr Barr: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: We know that we have a younger generation where, sadly, a lot of people are perhaps getting less exposed to sport. I am wondering whether there are some ways that the government has thought of for trying to engage students or young people for whom sport is not cool and whether the government has a way of knowing what the emerging interests are. Of course, people can play sports only where facilities exist; if there are not facilities, they cannot play those sports even though they might want to. I am wondering whether you have a way of finding out which are emerging new areas, whether you have any answers to those and whether that might be a way of engaging the young people who are currently more inclined to play sport on their computers.

Mr Barr: Thank you, Dr Foskey. I think there are about five questions in there.

DR FOSKEY: There are. I knew that if I stopped someone else would jump in.

Mr Barr: I am just thinking in terms of answering each of them. Your first one was in relation to the sportsgrounds that are currently watered using recycled water. They are in North Canberra. Southwell Park is one—and the group of ovals in the Lyneham precinct, on Northbourne Avenue and Mouat Street, I think. But it also extends through Reid, Braddon, Campbell and into Ainslie, I understand. I will get that full list. It is 24 hectares. The list of other ovals that are being considered for recycled water will be available later this month. Following the consultation with all the sporting groups, the task force will complete its deliberations towards the end of July. That will be made available at that time. Your third question related to programs to encourage students—

DR FOSKEY: Did you miss the one about the breakdown of money spent on various sports?

Mr Barr: Yes, indeed. Each year the grants money is distributed, and a list is made publicly available. That is available through the department on the sport and rec website, I understand. We can print that out and provide it to the committee.

DR FOSKEY: I would like that tabled for the Assembly.

Mr Barr: There are also performance agreements with the AFL, the Brumbies and the Raiders, plus national league team support of about \$450,000.

DR FOSKEY: Will that continue beyond—

Mr Barr: Yes; all of those programs are continuing. There are a variety of initiatives within ACT public schools that seek to encourage physical activity. It is not just sport; it is physical activity. There are a number of outside organisations that we are able to bring in to provide specialist support—organisations such as Blue Earth, for example, which provides physical education content, within primary schools in particular, as part of what is a mandated time within the school curriculum.

We have a series of measures that are used to measure the levels of participation—and segments of the community or areas of the community whose participation is not as high. They are called ERASS. I will ask Sue to give you a bit of detail on that, but it is an annual survey that goes to just the issues you have raised.

Ms Marriage: The participation rates are done on an annual basis. The data that is provided is normally 18 months, two years old by the time it is done as an ABS survey. It is called ERASS, which is the exercise, recreation and sports survey. Unfortunately, it only measures participation if people participate once in a year, and that can be any sort of activity. That can be incidental as well as organised sport activity. So, obviously, there is a difficulty in measuring the length of time that people participate or the number of activities that they participate in. That is the national measure at this particular point in time, and we are still the highest participation rate in all of Australia.

DR FOSKEY: Does it indicate what sports people play?

Mr Barr: Yes, it is broken down to a level of detail over about 30 or 40 different categories.

Ms Marriage: And recreational activities as well. So it indicates walking and bike riding and things like that. Not necessarily competitive sport as such.

DR FOSKEY: Are there any emerging areas? Is there a way of identifying emerging areas of interest?

Mr Barr: Yes. It measures changes over time, because it is an annual survey. So you can see which sports are growing in participation and which are not, or which recreational activities are growing in participation in which area.

DR FOSKEY: Would you say swimming was one of those? Would you be able to identify people who participate in it but see it as an area that—

Mr Barr: Well, I will have to take the detail on notice.

DR FOSKEY: Yes. Well, I notice you are investing some money in pools.

Mr Barr: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: So I am interested in where the data comes from that tells you that is a good investment. I do not know whether you want to take that on notice.

Mr Barr: Certainly we can give you the data of participation in swimming, and related activities, over an extended period.

MR SMYTH: Minister, on page 296 of BP4, indicator h says the number of athlete scholarships for last financial year was 250. For 2006-07 it was 250. Its estimated outcome is 150. Were there 150 scholarships? I see the notes say that the number may vary.

Mr Barr: No. The 2007 scholarship numbers are 164. That is 129 full scholarship holders across 11 squad programs; 15 individual scholarships across 12 sports; 20 associate scholarships—they are mainly overseas-based athletes who require less frequent servicing; and there are 10 elite athletes with a disability who are also sponsored as part of the program.

MR SMYTH: I note for the 2007-08 year that the indicators have been discontinued. Why is that?

Mr Barr: We are seeking to focus on the quality of our support rather than the numbers. Again, I indicate that in previous years by receiving a water bottle and a T-shirt you were counted as an Academy of Sport athlete, or as low as one visit to the gym over an entire 12 months. That is not a particularly useful measure of the level of support that we provide to our elite athletes. So our focus now is to increase the value of individual scholarships to individual athletes. We were lagging. I think the Australian average was in the order of \$12,000 to \$13,000 worth of assistance for an individual scholarship. We were down at \$7,000. So we were providing 250 athletes with about half the level of support that the average Australian elite athlete was receiving. Again, we were counting in those numbers, as was a previous practice that began under the former government: anyone who turned up for one session at the gym or received a water bottle from the academy, or a track suit, as an athlete.

MR STEFANIAK: I think it was a minimum of about \$5,000 annually.

Mr Barr: We are seeking to ensure that through this more targeted assistance we are providing support for elite athletes at the Australian average, or around the Australian average level. We are above some of the other smaller academies. When you look at the number of athletes that are supported in jurisdictions of similar size, say the Northern Territory and Tasmania, we are in the ballpark of the Northern Territory or

slightly more. It rates at about 150. Tasmania was down as low as just over 100 in last year's figures. So we have settled on about 164 this year as the appropriate number for the program, recognising, of course, that the individual level of support for each athlete has increased by about 50 per cent on what they were receiving under the previous arrangements.

MR SMYTH: Why did you mislead the public accounts committee on this matter when I asked you these questions in November last year?

Mr Barr: Because I determined the final number early in 2007.

MR SMYTH: Well, that is not true, minister.

THE CHAIR: Order, members! There has been an imputation.

MS PORTER: Yes, I think so.

MR SMYTH: It is perfectly reasonable to ask the question.

Mr Barr: I approved the 2007 ACTTAS program on 8 March 2007.

MR SMYTH: That is interesting, because I have a brief here that I got through FOI and had to go after review—and I will ask Mr McNulty some questions. The brief is about squad and athlete numbers. At the bottom of the first page, “You have been briefed verbally on these changes on a number of occasions. This brief now seeks your formal approval.” On page 2 it says, “Scholarship numbers need to be reduced to approximately 150.” On page 3 it says, “It is proposed that the 150 ACTTAS scholarships will be broken down as follows,” and it is signed by Andrew Barr on 9 November. Now, when I asked you on 30 November last year, you said that decision had not been made. Why did you mislead the public accounts committee?

Mr Barr: I did not mislead the public accounts committee. I supported, through that brief, a broad business decision by the Academy of Sport to review the program, to benchmark its service value, and its athlete numbers against other state and territory institutes of sport.

MR SMYTH: That is not what the brief says.

Mr Barr: I did not sign off on a final number until March of 2007. That final number was 164. So it was in advance of the figure that was being broadly recommended through that brief last year. But the final sign off on the scholarships for the 2007 program was done on 8 March 2007—164.

MR SMYTH: I asked you, “I have a final question. Have you or have you not signed off 150 athletes for the Academy of Sport?”

Mr Barr: And I had not.

MR SMYTH: It says:

Mr Barr: No, that decision has not been taken at this point.

Mr Barr: It had not.

MR SMYTH: That is not what this brief says. This brief says, “150 scholarships will be broken down as follows”

Mr Barr: Well, I signed off on 164 on 8 March 2007, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Well, that is not what this brief says. This brief says that we start the process to implement 150 athletes, and it is agreed by one Andrew Barr on 9 November, some 21 days before you misled the public accounts committee last year.

Mr Barr: I did not mislead the committee. I signed off on 8 March 2007.

MR SMYTH: Will you now apologise to the Assembly?

Mr Barr: No, I have not misled the committee. I signed off on 8 March 2007 on 164.

MR SMYTH: But that is not what the brief says.

Mr Barr: That is the number.

MRS BURKE: That is not what that document is saying, though, is it?

MR SMYTH: That is not what this brief says. “Your approval of this process is sought by Friday, 3 November, to allow meetings to arrange for mid-November.” This was the start of the process to drag it down from 250, as it used to be—and, indeed, as the Labor Party platform says that the Academy of Sport will remain at—to 150. You misled, you lied to, the public accounts committee last year.

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: That is an outrageous slur, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: No, it is not. It is quite clear.

Mr Barr: Withdraw it now.

MR SMYTH: It is quite clear. This is the brief.

Mr Barr: I ask that you withdraw that. That is an outrageous slur.

THE CHAIR: Order! Order, members!

MR SMYTH: It is quite clear. This is the brief.

THE CHAIR: If you cannot keep order, Mr Smyth—

MR SMYTH: This is the brief, ACTTAS 2006-07 squad and athlete numbers.

THE CHAIR: If you cannot keep order, I will call a private meeting.

MR SMYTH: I am keeping order.

THE CHAIR: I have called you to order.

MR SMYTH: He needs to apologise to the Assembly.

THE CHAIR: I want you to withdraw that statement, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I will withdraw it if you like, but he has misled the Assembly.

MRS BURKE: Well, you cannot argue with what is on paper.

MS PORTER: Withdraw that too.

Mr Barr: The brief said reduce to approximately 150. The final decision was taken in March of 2007 and the number was 164. Mr Smyth is wrong. He is misleading this committee.

THE CHAIR: Order, minister!

MR SMYTH: I am happy to table the document. On the third page it says, "It is proposed that the 150 ACTTAS scholarships will be broken down as follows." This is a proposal to break down the scholarships. You have misled the Assembly through the PAC.

THE CHAIR: Order. Mr Smyth!

MR SMYTH: You need to apologise, minister.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth!

MR SMYTH: The ministerial code of conduct says, "Ministers should take reasonable steps to ensure the factual content of statements they make in the Assembly are soundly based and that they correct any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity." Will you correct the record?

Mr Barr: I approved the process for the business case and the work to be undertaken to reduce the number of scholarships to approximately—

MR SMYTH: To 150!

THE CHAIR: Order, Mr Smyth!

Mr Barr: But it was reduced to 164, a figure that I signed off on in March of 2007. Mr Smyth is yet again wrong.

MR SMYTH: Your signature is here on the back of the document. I am happy to

table the document.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Smyth.

DR FOSKEY: I have a supplementary question. I just wonder whether Mr Barr could table the documents that he is referring to there?

Mr Barr: Well, it is the same brief. So, yes, I am happy to have that brief tabled.

MRS BURKE: Well, how can you dispute that, Mr Barr?

THE CHAIR: He is going to table it. Thank you.

Mr Barr: Because I have it in front of me as well, Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: So the plan was well underway, clearly?

Mr Barr: Yes, I indicated at the time that we were reducing the number of athletes in the program.

MRS BURKE: So you knew then?

Mr Barr: Yes. But I said no final decision had been made.

MRS BURKE: You are splitting hairs.

Mr Barr: Well, if the number of athletes had ended up less than 150 which it did not. It was 164—a decision I finally took in March of 2007. So this is a non-issue.

MR STEFANIAK: You are going against Labor Party policy too. Why are you going against Labor Party policy and the policy of your predecessor?

Mr Barr: Because I am investing in the quality of the programs, Mr Stefaniak.

THE CHAIR: I am very happy to see you have an interest in Labor Party policy, Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: I do, I do.

THE CHAIR: But please do not interject. Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

MR SMYTH: But this is very important. Just to follow up on that.

THE CHAIR: Yes, you will be able to follow up in just a minute, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: If I could ask Mr McNulty a question. Mr McNulty, when I put the FOI in—

Mr Barr: No, excuse me. We have a question from Ms Porter at this stage, I understand.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much. Thank you.

MS SMYTH: Well, if you want to cover up, that is fine, if you want to protect the minister.

Mr Barr: What an outrageous slur—outrageous.

THE CHAIR: Order, members!

Mr Barr: Typical Brendan Smyth.

MR SMYTH: That is exactly what has just happened. You have stopped the line of questioning.

THE CHAIR: I call you to order again, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Get him to answer the question. Call him to order. Make him answer the question.

MRS BURKE: Ministers are here to answer questions.

Mr Barr: And I have answered it about seven times.

MRS BURKE: You did not.

MR SMYTH: And you have not apologised yet.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke, you have interjected four times. Order!

MRS BURKE: Ministers are here to answer questions, are they not, chair?

THE CHAIR: He has. He has answered eight questions in a row on the same topic and now we are moving on.

MRS BURKE: Is that not what he is here to do?

MR STEFANIAK: I thought Ms Porter had a supplementary to it.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: Thank you. Yes, my supplementary is about the Beijing allocation. You mentioned that before. Is this part of this program, or is it a different one?

Mr Barr: No, this is an additional amount of money that is being provided to support those athletes that are headed to Beijing 2008. It is a \$50,000 investment in those athletes towards their training and progress to Beijing next year.

MS PORTER: How many athletes? Do we have a final number yet or is that still in the pipeline?

Mr Barr: No, that is still in the mix because some of the Olympic squads have not yet been finalised.

MS PORTER: Have not been decided?

Mr Barr: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr Barr, you mentioned in your opening statement there is some extra money for the Tuggeranong Leisure Centre. Can you give us a bit more detail about where that is going to be spent?

Mr Barr: Certainly. It does involve a significant investment, \$4 million. The components at Lakeside are broken into three main areas: re-tiling of the main pool to replace some of the tiles that are lifting up at this point; reconstruction of the air-handling system to improve its effectiveness; and reconstruction of the roof structure to deal with some corrosion issues. As well, as indicated, there is some re-painting work and other associated amenity upgrades that will all feature as part of the project.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Stefaniak?

MR STEFANIAK: I would like to see that document come back. I have a couple of other questions relating to page 296, value of sport and recreation grants and, d, value of funding to community sport and recreation and national league competitions. Minister, I see that the value of sport and recreation grants was meant to be \$2.1 million in 2006-07, that was the target. The outcome was even lower—as I think I suggested earlier, the lowest since the early 1990s, \$1.997 million. Then, of course, that target is not applicable for 2007-08. You said you had rolled in your national league funding to get a grand total of \$2.447 million, which I think is still lower than what the sport and recreation grants were prior to your cutting them so dramatically. Why have you got rid of the accountability measure and why have you just simply rolled in the national league funding as part of that grant process? Is that some kind of pathetic attempt to make it look as if the grants are not all that lower than they used to be, or do you have some real valid reason for doing it?

Mr Barr: Through the re-assessment of the grants program that was undertaken through 2006-07 in consultation with stakeholders, a number of inequities were identified around previous arrangements and levels of support that were provided to different organisations. So through the national league teams funding, for example, we set in place a series of tiers so there was a consistency of funding. For example, tier one are national league teams. Raiders, Brumbies, Capitals received \$100,000 in assistance. Tier two teams, such as the Gunners, all received, I think, \$31,000, and then tier three and tier four. So there was agreement in ranking amongst all of the sports where each of the national league teams would fit within that structure and then there was consistency of support provided across those structures.

We also identified, through the main grants round, a range of inconsistencies. This followed a detailed piece of work by the department and that also involved the Sport

and Recreation Advisory Council. I might get Ms Marriage to outline the process there, but what we have sought to do is ensure greater equity amongst sporting organisations. There is a greater degree of transparency around where sporting teams fit within the national league program, and the new output class, the new measure, is a clear combination of the two previous ones. That is pretty reasonably straightforward. As I say, I will get Ms Marriage to outline the processes around the review of the grant arrangements.

Ms Marriage: With the review of the 2006-07 grants program, we did extensive consultation with all of the sports organisations that were previously funded under the program and were currently going to be funded under the program. We asked them to look at how we would do the initial reduction, which was \$300,000 in the program. Through that process, a lot of sports indicated that they wanted to make sure there was an equitable reduction in the umbrella organisations—which was Fitness ACT, Sports Medicine ACT and ACT Sport—so that they, with their umbrella funding, got an equal reduction to what the sports were going to look at from their own perspective.

That identifies why there is a difference between the \$2,109,385, which is there as a target, and the estimated outcome of \$1,997,385. When the sports had that conversation through the consultation process, they wanted a reduction of the umbrella organisations as well. So the umbrella organisations took a reduction of \$112,000 from the program.

The combining of the grants program with the national league team program is clearly a way of identifying and illustrating to everyone what is the composite amount of money that is provided to our sport and recreation organisations. As Dr Foskey has explained, a lot of those sports that are national league team funded organisations are exactly the same organisations that receive community grants. So it is a better output to identify them as a combined level. But the new measure there indicates what the equal amount is of the grants program of 2006-07 plus the national league team. So it is just a combination of the two figures.

MR STEFANIAK: You have cut the national league funding by \$120,000 from \$570,000 down to \$450,000 as well, have you not, minister?

Mr Barr: There are fewer national league teams being funded, yes. Well, fewer national league teams full stop.

MR STEFANIAK: And whilst the big organisations like the Brumbies and the Raiders did not get a cut, a lot of the little organisations, where that money goes a long way, did suffer a cut?

Mr Barr: Some increased and some went backwards, yes, through that process. But through establishing the tiered structure of funding, some national league teams received additional support, others received less.

MR STEFANIAK: I have just one more question on that. Also my colleague is keen to follow through. Could you just indicate what national league teams have ceased playing in the national league since July of last year?

Mr Barr: The Dolphins women's water polo team, but that was not in relation to ACT government support. It was somewhat disadvantaged by other issues within the sport overall—the declining levels of participation and support from other sources as well. Obviously, the decision that has been made in relation to a new netball competition for next year will see some changes in the way the AIS Darters operate. They will not be playing in the peak competition as a result of the decision to have a trans-Tasman league. So there is another change that will occur in the future.

THE CHAIR: Minister, you are probably going to expect my question on Rally of Canberra. Can you tell me of the decision that the government has made, and whether there will be any future support for the event in the outyears?

MR STEFANIAK: That is tourism.

THE CHAIR: It is sporting.

Mr Barr: It is, and it identifies the overlaps between portfolio areas. The government has provided assistance in the transition from it being a government-run event to one that is undertaken by the private sector. So there is that \$300,000 in transition assistance that has been provided for next year's rally. We have also provided all of the associated material and collateral that goes with the event to the new organisers as part of the new contract.

The government will continue to provide in-kind support through Australian Capital Tourism for the promotion of the event, such as on our website and through all of our publications that highlight activities in our events calendar. But the transfer to the private sector is, I think, an important one that has freed up resources within the tourism portfolio to direct them back into events that generate a larger tourism return.

Rally of Canberra is an outstanding event, but it is not one that has been a high achiever in attracting visitors to Canberra. So the outcome of the new arrangements, I think, is a win-win. We get to see a continuation of the rally, but we are also able to free up resources within the tourism portfolio to allocate to higher priority users that attract visitors to the capital.

MR CHAIR: But there was a recommendation out of last year's estimates committee, that the event itself be moved into sport and recreation and out of tourism. Why has it stayed in tourism?

Mr Barr: Well, it has not. It is no longer part of tourism, only in its promotion. With the change in arrangements, the government no longer has a role in running the event, so it does not sit within the tourism portfolio, it not being an event delivered by Australian Capital Tourism.

MS PORTER: Can I ask a supplementary to that, please, chair?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS PORTER: What are those resources that you refer to that will be ongoingly supplied?

Mr Barr: Not ongoing. There is a one-off transitional payment of \$300,000 for the new contract. Also a series of marketing and collateral support will be provided into the future. For example, when the event is on, it will feature on Australian Capital Tourism's websites and will be part of our event program that we publicise through a variety of publications and into our key target markets. It is in-kind support, but there will not be staff time devoted to the running of the event like there was previously. So that has freed up staff time within the Australian Capital Tourism. It has also freed up, over the outyears, about \$2.75 million for reinvestment back into the tourism portfolio.

MRS BURKE: Minister, I have an electorate-specific question relating to the electorate of Molonglo, and most specifically with the Phillip oval. Obviously I am very keen to know what the status of that site is and what the plans are to develop the site. I would like to know about consultations that have taken place, are taking place, and will take place, and who has been consulted to date on this?

Mr Barr: Yes, it has been a major piece of work undertaken both within sport and recreation and by the ACT Planning and Land Authority. Master planning a process for Phillip oval has been underway. That has involved consultation with the Woden Valley Community Council, amongst other organisations. The government has provided \$1.7 million for a funding of work at Phillip oval. In addition, about \$700,000 was available from an insurance payout as a result of the arson attack on the former main grandstand.

Consultants were appointed in April of this year to develop the master plan for the precinct. I am expecting a draft report later this month. The completed master plan will provide the costings for the various components of the project. But, in the first instance, there has been a reconfiguration of parking surrounding the facility to provide, I think it is, about 300 additional surface car parks through that reconfiguration.

The realignment of the oval will open up development opportunities on Launceston Street for commercial opportunities fronting that street. At this stage the short-term remediation works on the oval are not far away from commencing, I understand. Additional temporary car parking has been made available inside the perimeter of the facility. There is, through the oval realignment, desire to sow new grass this spring with a view to it being available for summer sports in 2008 and into the next winter season. It will not be ready for winter sports immediately because the grass will need time to gather.

MRS BURKE: Going back to the consultation, who are you working with other than Woden Valley Community Council? What other groups are you engaging?

Mr Barr: Well, the ACT Planning and Land Authority is engaging in consultation.

MRS BURKE: Sporting groups, perhaps?

Mr Barr: Well, in particular with the AFL, as it is expected to be the major user. But there are obviously opportunities for summer usage for sports like cricket.

MR STEFANIAK: Minister, in relation to motor sport and the dirt track at Fairbairn, I note that the issue of asbestos, which was illegally dumped there by a contractor through no fault of the motor sport concerned, has still not been resolved, and that great facility, which is used by hundreds of junior athletes, especially junior motorbike riders, remains closed to the ACT public. What are you doing to resolve that issue, which is specifically important seeing that motor sport seems to have suffered considerably under your government with the dragway and now we have one of the main tracks at Fairbairn being closed for an inordinate amount of time?

Mr Barr: Mr Stefaniak, I have been advised that it is an Environment Protection Authority matter. The issues around remediation at the site rest there. So your question about delays would be better addressed to the environment minister.

MR STEFANIAK: I am asking you, minister. Have you spoken to the Chief Minister about who is the minister? Have you had discussions around motor sport facilities?

Mr Barr: We have had a number of discussions.

MR STEFANIAK: What are you doing to speed it up?

Mr Barr: Well, I am not going to speed up an Environment Protection Authority process. I want to ensure, as sport and recreation minister, that the site is safe. I think that is the paramount concern.

MR STEFANIAK: I understand it is perfectly safe, minister, and has been for some time.

Mr Barr: I am not going to be seeking to intervene in an independent process in order to speed something up. I am sure, Mr Stefaniak, were I to do so and the work not be completed to appropriate standards, the first question coming from you mob would be “Why did you interfere in this process?” I am aware of the issues. I have discussed them with my colleagues, and we await the conclusion of that process. But the fundamental issue here has got to be that the site is deemed safe. It would be inappropriate for me, as sport and recreation minister, to intervene in that process and I hope you are not asking me to.

MR STEFANIAK: I am not saying you can, minister. I am just asking did you talk to the Chief Minister so this can be resolved?

Mr Barr: I talk to the Chief Minister on a regular basis.

MR STEFANIAK: My understanding is there have been amazing delays in relation to this and it would be quite simple to make it safe.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, members. We will go to the break and return at 10.50 am.

Meeting adjourned from 10.29 am to 10.49 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back to the estimates hearings on sport and recreation.

MR SMYTH: Minister, I was wondering what was happening with the staff in sport and rec. Can you tell the committee how many staff—FTEs, the number of positions and positions filled—there were at 30.6.06 and 30.6.07 and how many there will be at the end of this financial year, 30.6.08?

Mr Barr: We began this financial year with 36.1 FTEs and will conclude this year with 41.6 FTEs. That includes transfers of sportsground staff into sport and rec and some transfers out in relation to shared services and other changes when sport and rec moved from the department of economic development into territory and municipal services.

MR SMYTH: Can you say how many are coming in with sportsgrounds and how many will leave to shared services?

Mr Barr: Seventeen come in. I will have to get the figure on the transfers out, but some have gone to shared services and some are positions that are no longer within that area, positions that were lost as part of the transfers and the budget reductions in public service staffing through 2006-07. The total number within the unit now has increased from 36.1 to 41.6.

MR SMYTH: As a net, though, it hasn't increased.

Mr Barr: No. The combined two entities were larger than 41.6 when they started. Sorry, it was about 53 and it was reduced to 41 when the two were combined.

MR SMYTH: How many actual sports-related staff have been lost?

Mr Barr: Twelve.

MR SMYTH: Twelve full-time positions.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MR SMYTH: How will you implement your program with such a dramatic loss of staff. You are talking about over a third of the staff having gone. After the cuts of last year and this year, there will be another third go. How will you implement anything with that reduction?

Mr Barr: A variety of efficiencies have been achieved by bringing the sportsground staff into the unit. They are now part of a larger department, so there have been efficiencies achieved through a variety of administrative tasks. Obviously there are some savings around ministerial support and corporate support as there were already those positions in place through territory and municipal services. So in the transfer into that department there is a requirement for fewer administrative positions in support of the minister, for example.

MR SMYTH: How many FTEs were there as at 30.6.06?

Mr Barr: As at 30.6.06, 53 within the combined entities, and that has been reduced to 41. So there has been a reduction of 12. Once they have been combined there will be

12 less.

MR SMYTH: Can you give a written reconciliation of all of that to the committee?

Mr Barr: We can provide that, yes.

MR SMYTH: Thank you.

MRS BURKE: Minister, you alluded to \$70,000 worth of grants being awarded.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MRS BURKE: I did note that you said something about programs for older citizens. How much money was allocated to that particular program and what was it?

Mr Barr: There is a variety, and I can table the list of funds.

MRS BURKE: That might be helpful.

Mr Barr: For example, Gungahlin regional community services received additional grants for their gentle exercise program for over 55s. There is a number of examples, but I am happy to table the list for the committee.

MRS BURKE: How much money would you think there would be for that cohort in the community?

Mr Barr: Through our actively ageing funds, there is just shy of \$100,000 available, and these targeted grants are in addition to that. I'm happy to table for the committee details of the allocation of additional grants money that I have announced.

MRS BURKE: Thanks, minister. Do you see that rising, or are you not making any decisions on that? What I'm getting at is that obviously we have an ageing population. I am thinking specifically of health and wellbeing, particularly obesity, adult onset diabetes and all the heart-related issues.

Mr Barr: Yes, there is renewed focus on preventative health, not just at the territory government level but across Australia, so there is the opportunity to access some additional resources and programs out of the health portfolio, at both the territory and national levels, that perhaps we had not seen as much focus on in the last 10 years or so, but it's good to see that there has been that shift.

We will continue to monitor activity levels through the various survey measures that are available to us and continue to provide targeted support if the current trends continue, although it is interesting that since the introduction of the actively ageing framework the gap between the level of participation for people over 55 and the general population has shrunk considerably as a result of those programs. It is clear that there has been success in targeting assistance at those particular areas, and we will continue to monitor that and provide strategic investments to improve those outcomes. But that is a very good point and one that is noted.

MRS BURKE: Is that your personal desire as a young man? It's hard to look ahead, I know.

Mr Barr: I think I'm about to enter the veterans class for most sports, so I take a personal interest, of course, but it's broader than just my personal interest. It's a matter of priority, I think, not just for this government but for all governments.

MR SMYTH: Michael Costello of Actew told the committee that they have some criteria for determining which ovals will be shut should stage 4 restrictions come in place. Have you seen those criteria, and do you agree with them?

Mr Barr: We are working through those issues with the affected sports through the process we have undertaken around stakeholder—

MR SMYTH: No, I'm asking about the criteria by which Actew make their decisions. Have you seen their criteria?

Mr Barr: We are working through those issues and having input to that criteria. We are seeking to provide a level of information to Actew around the decisions that they may have to take if we reach stage 4.

MR SMYTH: But have you seen the criteria that Actew have set?

THE CHAIR: I think he has answered your question.

MR SMYTH: No, he hasn't. He is avoiding the answer quite well. Mr Costello said that he would provide the committee with a written document. Have you seen from Actew a written set of criteria about how they will judge your submission?

Mr Barr: Once we receive advice from Actew around the percentage reduction in water and the targets that we will have to meet if—and I stress again: if—stage 4 is introduced, and we are now some months away from any trigger point, according to the information that Actew have provided, we, according to the processes that we have undertaken in consultation with all the sports to identify high-use ovals and those that are less frequently used, will then make decisions finally according to the particular water saving targets that we are given by Actew. They are not determining which ovals. They are determining a target in terms of water reduction, and we can then make assessments against the criteria that we have developed with the sports around the use of ovals, distribution through the city and all of that.

MR SMYTH: No, that is not what Mr Costello told this committee. He said they were going to set their own criteria and they would judge your submission against that. So I go back to my question: have you seen the criteria—

Mr Barr: No, I have not seen them, because no such criteria exist at this point, because they are still being developed, and the issue is not one—

MR SMYTH: Mr Costello said he was going to provide the committee with written criteria.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, the minister is trying to answer the question and you keep talking over the top of him.

Mr Barr: He can do that, but at this point those issues are still being worked through in consultation, because we are yet to provide a report to Actew on our particular priorities. So, having gone through an extensive consultation process with the affected sports of seeking to find the particular ovals that are of highest use and those that are of lowest use, we will then be in a better position once that work is completed to look at where there are possibilities to source alternative water that is not off the main town supply, we will then be able to make those assessments. But that work has not been concluded at this point. As I have indicated, with the dams at 38 per cent, we are some months away from any introduction of stage 4 restrictions.

MR SMYTH: But I am interested in the process. I know that you are going through a process where you have been consulting with the sports, but Michael Costello of Actew told this committee last week that he will provide a written document. I asked for a written set of their criteria and he said that he would be happy to provide that. It has not been forthcoming. Did you have input to their set of criteria?

Mr Barr: Yes, we are working with all of the relevant stakeholders, including sporting organisations and including Actew. I have been having regular conversations with the Chief Minister around these issues. Once those processes are finalised, we will be able to make that information available.

MR SMYTH: All right. As planning minister, will you be in a position to help some of the clubs that are coming up with infrastructure projects to assist in this—

Mr Barr: I've already provided letters of support for a number and will continue to do so.

MR SMYTH: Sure, but as planning minister will you help expedite those processes should clubs put in DAs to assist them with water-saving projects?

Mr Barr: Within the bounds of the legislation and where it is appropriate, yes. I'm more than happy to assist in ensuring that good quality projects that meet all of the relevant planning guidelines are approved, but I am not going to shortcut any processes in terms of appropriate levels of public consultation or any of the established protocols in order to fast-track a development just because a sporting organisation deems it essential. We would go through the normal processes, but I am happy to continue to provide support, be it in terms of letters of support for grant rounds that the commonwealth has provided, but also through the various government departments and government agencies that are providing solutions to this water crisis.

MR SMYTH: Has ACTPLA been in consultation with sport and rec over this matter?

Mr Barr: ACTPLA have been in consultation with sport and rec over a number of matters.

MR SMYTH: But in particular water-saving features at sporting facilities and for sporting clubs.

Mr Barr: Through the Phillip oval project, for example, there is some work that is being done with both ACTPLA and sport and rec around the master planning for that site. At Harrison that work is also occurring. So, yes, and it will continue.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I call Mr Stefaniak for one last question on sport and rec and then we will go to tourism.

MR STEFANIAK: I have a question about the cost of pool operations per attendee as shown on page 296 of BP4. The target was \$7.20 for 2006-07 and the estimated outcome is a bit higher, at \$7.47. You have discontinued the target for this item due to difficulties in data collection. We have always been able to work out how many people attend our pools. It isn't difficult. Why, after probably several decades, is it now too difficult to collect the data?

Mr Barr: I think Ms Marriage has some information that will assist the committee.

Ms Marriage: In particular, when it comes to assessing the number of users of the facilities, what we have found over the last couple of years is, in fact, it's very hard to monitor the increase in school carnivals that are occurring at the facility and how to count those numbers. Those have been actually skewing the data in the most recent years. We are more interested in the satisfaction, so therefore it is the cost effectiveness in some respects. So we are still focusing on the quality of the experience rather than the number of people that are utilising the facility.

MR STEFANIAK: Maybe you could provide the committee with information on just how much we are subsidising pool operations now. I understand that it probably isn't very much, but just how much we are actually subsidising pool operations and also how much the government might get now from some successful operations.

Mr Barr: Indeed, we have contracted out the operations.

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, I know that, but I am interested in the updated figures.

Mr Barr: We will take it on notice and provide that to the committee.

THE CHAIR: Okay, we will move now to tourism. Welcome, Mr Hill and Mr Guthrie. You were here earlier when I read out the witness card. Minister, on page 298 there are some indicators as to Canberra as a tourist destination. Can you inform the committee as to the latest visitor statistics for the ACT?

Mr Barr: Yes. There are two pieces of research available. Tourism Research Australia provide quarterly updates on our tourism performance, so they have released data in relation to domestic tourism, the national visitors survey from January to March 2007, and that provides some interesting figures for the territory.

I can advise that the 12 months to the end of March 2007 saw a 1.6 per cent increase in the total number of domestic overnight visitors to the ACT and that for the March quarter, the first three months, of 2007 we recorded a 12 per cent increase in visitors. These increases have been occurring across a range of key categories, which is

particularly pleasing. Domestic overnight visitors are broken down into those who were here for holiday purposes, those who were visiting friends and relatives and those who were here for business. The category for others includes education.

It is worth noting that our strongest increases on the domestic side have been in the education category. Nonetheless, we had a 24 per cent increase in visitor nights in the holiday sector, 18 per cent in visiting friends and relatives, and 23 per cent in the business end of the market. Also, there were increases in day trip visitors. The day trip visitors for the year ending March 2007 increased by 11.5 per cent. Particularly pleasing was that day trip visitors out of New South Wales increased by 23.8 per cent. Overall, visitor nights in the ACT were up by 22.7 per cent, from 5.1 million in the year ending March 2006 to 6.3 million in the year ending March 2007, compared to a 5.7 per cent national increase: ACT, up 22.7 per cent; nationally, up 5.7 for the corresponding period. The length of stay increased from 2.6 nights for the year ending March 2006 to 7.2 nights for the year ending March 2007.

Turning now to the international figures, we did record an increase in the number of visitor nights for the year ending March 2007 over the previous 12 months. Visitor nights went from 1.827 million to 2.267 million. It is pleasing to note that the expenditure of international visitors was up from \$156 million to just shy of \$190 million in the year ending March 2007. Those who came here from overseas for a holiday increased by 2.7 per cent in total, and the length of stay increased. Total visitor nights were up by 47 per cent. So there was an increase in the number of people coming to the ACT from overseas for holiday purposes and they were staying considerably longer.

We did have a decline in the number of people visiting their friends and relatives in the ACT in 2007. That accounted for the largest decrease. That was the one factor that went backwards although, interestingly, the number of visitor nights increased. So fewer people came to visit friends and relatives, but they did stay longer, about a 10 per cent increase in visitor nights in that category.

Importantly for business, there was an 11 per cent increase in the number of people coming to the ACT from overseas for the purpose of business tourism. There was a large increase in the visitor nights for students coming to study in the ACT, of the order of about 39 per cent. So we have a large number of international students who are studying and staying a long time in the ACT.

I think the key thing, just in closing on this point, is to highlight the particular investments we have made in Singapore and Malaysia, and that area has now risen to be our third-largest market. The UK is the largest, then the USA. Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Hong Kong come in third—they are our third biggest source market for international visitors—followed by China and New Zealand. So there were some strong returns in areas where we have invested. The only disappointment in the figures was the reduction in the number of international visitors coming to visit friends and relatives, but particularly pleasing was the increase in those coming here for a holiday.

MR SMYTH: Minister, are the overnight stay figures back up to the 2001 level yet?

Mr Barr: No. They peaked during the Olympics. We have had some significant increases against what has been a declining national trend. In fact, I will just get these figures in front of me. Tourism Research Australia has undertaken an assessment of the Australian domestic tourism market looking at the long run, and the key points from that research, which is available on their website under the title “An assessment of the Australian domestic tourism market”, are that overall Australians are making fewer trips, they are spending a lower proportion of their income on tourist activity, and the appeal of domestic travel is declining relative to overseas travel.

Tourism’s share of household consumption has been in decline since the Sydney Olympics. In fact, the share of the wallet, if you like, was down to 14.3 per cent of total household consumption, which was down from 16.3 per cent just prior to the Olympics. In spite of an annual spending increase in marketing, an increase from 2003 of \$270 million to \$370 million, from all jurisdictions, this has had no effect whatsoever on the domestic tourism market. There has been particular concern within the domestic market that has led to some further work being done by Tourism Research Australia. That report has been made available to state and territory tourism ministers and will be discussed at the tourism ministerial council in August of this year that Fran Bailey is hosting in Canberra.

I turn to what I believe is the factor that has the greatest impact on domestic tourism, that is, that 70 million days of unused annual recreation leave have been stockpiled by Australian workers. Nearly 60 per cent of full-time workers do not use their full four weeks of annual leave each year and have accrued eight weeks or more in annual leave. One-third of the full-time workers do not take any annual leave. Australians work the longest hours in the developed world and around 40 per cent of workers cite workplace issues as the most significant barrier to taking leave.

ACNielsen have done research focusing on those who have accrued more than 25 days in leave and found that less than half of them had taken more than four weeks leave in the previous 12 months. So there is a large and growing group of workers in Australia who are not accessing any of their annual leave. Federal government policies that are encouraging the cashing in of annual leave, whilst they might be providing additional income to those particular workers, are having a significant detrimental effect on domestic tourism in Australia. It is a matter of significant concern that current IR policies are having this major detrimental impact on the domestic tourism industry. Until those laws are changed and until workers feel more comfortable about being able to take their four weeks of annual leave, it will be difficult to see how we are going to have an improvement in domestic tourism.

With one-third of our potential domestic tourists not taking any leave, it’s very difficult for even the best equipped and most innovative and intelligent tourism marketing authorities to be able to coax those people to have a domestic holiday. As I’ve indicated, there is a range of other issues that confront the industry around a preference for Australians to travel overseas and the competition with other forms of entertainment and leisure, but all of the research is finding that, with Australians working so long and taking such short leave, the leave that is taken is being used essentially for domestic respite, as in staying at home and having a short break from what are considerable workplace pressures. This is a growing trend and is something that state and territory tourism ministers are going to take quite seriously.

MR SMYTH: But the reality is that your numbers are still less than those for 2001, aren't they?

Mr Barr: Yes, and this is an issue that's occurring across Australia. The key reason—

MR SMYTH: But you've also cut the tourism budget in that time and you've got rid of a number of events.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, he is trying to answer your question.

MR SMYTH: No, he is giving his little tirade on IR.

Mr Barr: The key reason for that is that one-third of workers are not taking any leave; 70 million days of unused recreation leave. Consider that in terms of the potential to unlock that and what that would do for domestic tourism in Australia. So what we are essentially arguing about here is Mr Smyth's view that states and territories should continue the spending option to try to capture a greater share of a flat or diminishing market, or you have an alternative vision and an alternative strategy which is trying to unlock 70 million days of unused recreation leave, trying to encourage the one-third of full-time workers who take no annual leave because of the federal government's industrial relations legislation—

MR SMYTH: The decline occurred before the WorkChoices legislation was put in place, minister.

MRS BURKE: It was well before that, minister.

THE CHAIR: Order, members!

Mr Barr: The issues are being exacerbated by this draconian industrial relations legislation that is leaving every year this stockpile of unused recreation leave as a result of industrial relations policy changes.

MR SMYTH: But that contradicts your own numbers.

THE CHAIR: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR SMYTH: You were just saying it was getting better. It has got better in the last year, but it's not as good as 2001.

THE CHAIR: Minister, if you could just respond to Mr Smyth's questions, not his statements, that would be helpful.

MR SMYTH: The numbers belie what he is saying. It has got better in the last year since WorkChoices was introduced. The numbers have increased.

MR STEFANIAK: What do you say about that, Andrew?

DR FOSKEY: I would say we will never get agreement on that one, so why don't we

move on?

THE CHAIR: We can expand on industrial relations when it comes up.

MR SMYTH: Perhaps he could answer it. Since WorkChoices was introduced, your numbers have gone up, haven't they? You were just spruiking about how good it has been in the last year, weren't you?

Mr Barr: We have had some improvements as a result of our targeted advertising.

MR SMYTH: Not because of WorkChoices.

Mr Barr: But the national market continues to be flat.

MR SMYTH: It was flat before WorkChoices.

Mr Barr: It has been flat for some time. One of the major factors—

MR STEFANIAK: Maybe WorkChoices is helping it.

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: The Workplace Relations Act has been in place since 1996. You need a memory check.

MR SMYTH: No, the legislation you object to came into place last year.

Mr Barr: We have objected to aspects of the workplace legislation from 1996.

THE CHAIR: Minister, we will deal with IR when it comes up.

DR FOSKEY: I want to talk about changes since last year's budget. Tourism ACT now sits within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services where Mr Hargreaves is the minister, but you remain the tourism minister. While the CEO of TAMS reports to Minister Hargreaves, the head of tourism reports both to the CEO of TAMS and Minister Barr. This structure seems—not just to me but, I think, to the tourist industry—rather messy. Can you please tell the committee what you have done to make it work?

Mr Barr: It is very straightforward. There are a number of areas within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services that report to me as Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation—just as the office of industrial relations sits within the Chief Minister's Department and reports to me. There are no issues at all in terms of consultation. It works very effectively. Australian Capital Tourism has a general manager who reports to me but also reports to the head of the department. That is not particularly complex and it works very effectively.

In fact, on the delivery of perhaps our key event, Floriade, it is all handled within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services. The planting of the bulbs is done by the Department of Territory and Municipal Services; the watering of the plants is done

by the Department of Territory and Municipal Services; the staging of the event is done by Australian Capital Tourism within the Department of Territory and Municipal Services. Through bringing in venues and events, we are now able to have some of our key tourism events and venues delivered, again, within the same department. Rather than having to work across three different agencies, I now have a streamlined approach that has saved a huge amount of money in terms of back-end administrative functions and provides what is an outstanding focus and collaboration across the agencies. It is not unusual for departments—

MR SMYTH: It goes like this: CMD with Stanhope—

THE CHAIR: Order, Mr Smyth!

MR SMYTH: and IR—

Mr Barr: If the clown on my right would let me finish answering the question.

MR SMYTH: But it is like this, isn't it? It is confusing, though, isn't it, minister?

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, I warn you.

Mr Barr: It is very, very simple. Only Mr Smyth seems to struggle with it.

MR SMYTH: No, no; I can understand it. It is quite clear.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

Mr Barr: You are a clown. You are a joke. You are a joke.

MR SMYTH: Oh, a personal attack, Andrew. I am sorry that I have offended your sensibilities.

Mr Barr: It is ridiculous that you are carrying on—

MR SMYTH: It is ridiculous. I agree.

Mr Barr: You are carrying on in this hearing like a child, like you do every—

MR SMYTH: And it is ridiculous that you come on with your petulant tone when you don't get things to go your way.

Mr Barr: I am seeking to answer Dr Foskey's question and you are doing drawings.

THE CHAIR: Minister.

MR SMYTH: I was just helping Dr Foskey.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, I call you to order again. Next time, I will move that you be ejected. I have warned you already. Questions. Dr Foskey.

Mr Barr: Please ask a supplementary. You seem to have some interest in this, unlike others.

DR FOSKEY: Yes. I expect you lost your train of thought. The extra money that is in the budget for Floriade, was that by any chance to pay for extra water if it does not rain?

Mr Barr: No. We have been able to reach agreement with the National Capital Authority to access water from Lake Burley Griffin for Floriade as a permanent feature from now on. Through their capital works budget, they will be installing the infrastructure necessary to enable us to use lake water for the watering of Floriade from now on, which is a fantastic outcome. We are very grateful to the National Capital Authority for their assistance in this; it ensures the sustainability of this event regardless of any water restrictions into the future, which is fantastic for Floriade, for the tourism industry and for the community, as it is a major community event. That is a very welcome initiative.

We have been working with the National Capital Authority for some time to reach agreement on this. I am very pleased to be able to advise the committee that that is the case. There are a number of contracts that come up at the end of the three-year process. We are expecting some escalation, as you would expect. But we have also provided additional resources to expand the variety of services that are available for visitors to Floriade, which has been our peak tourism event, and continues to be so.

DR FOSKEY: How much altogether do you expect Floriade to cost this year?

Mr Barr: Total government assistance is in the order of about \$2.4 million.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter, you have a supplementary?

MS PORTER: Yes.

Mr Barr: But then there are obviously other sources of revenue that Floriade attracts—through sponsorship and traders who set up in the village, for example.

DR FOSKEY: So that is extra too.

Mr Barr: That is extra on top of it, yes.

MS PORTER: My supplementary is this: what financial benefit is Floriade bringing to the ACT? Also, you mentioned the recreational benefits that Stromlo park brought. What financial benefits do those two events bring to the ACT?

Mr Barr: Floriade injected more than \$22 million into the ACT economy in 2006. This was a 10 per cent increase on the performance in 2005 and shows that the event continues to be a major driver of tourism in the ACT over that period. Through the partnerships with our various national attractions, through the Floriade trail, we have been able to expand the opportunities for associated tourism businesses to benefit from Floriade. We have virtually reached the point where the park is at capacity on the weekends of the event, so in terms of what we are looking to do into the future a

key feature is to try and get midweek visitation. It is easier during the school holidays than it is outside that period, but that has to be a key focus of our future efforts with Floriade.

In relation to Stromlo Forest Park, we have provided in this budget some additional resources for the development of that facility, both from the capital side and also in seeking to sell the marketability of that as a venue. We are leading into the world mountain bike championships in 2009. The experience from Rotorua—if members are interested, there is an economic impact report that is available on that event. I think it attracted about 30,000 visitors to Rotorua and was a significant injection into the New Zealand economy. We are confident that we will see similar levels come to Canberra for the 2009 event.

MS PORTER: Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke, you have a supplementary?

MRS BURKE: I do, thank you, on Floriade. I want to go to budget paper 4, page 298, “Accountability Indicators”, (e). I am confused about the figures here; perhaps you can give an explanation to the committee. Budget paper 4 says that 167,000 people visited Floriade. Estimated was 132 but you achieved 167. We are now dropping the figure down to 132.

Mr Barr: It is the same target as last year.

MRS BURKE: Yes—which seems strange. You have jumped by 30,000. Why aren’t we trying to achieve higher? That is the first bit.

Mr Barr: Okay.

MRS BURKE: The second bit of the question is this. What figures are correct? In the media, we heard figures over 300,000—as many as 355,000 or 375,000.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MRS BURKE: Which figures are correct?

Mr Barr: In the first instance, the issue, in terms of achieving 167,000 visitors last year, was four weeks of perfect weather. I do not think it rained at all during the entire time. We had what can only be described as exceptional weather over that period.

DR FOSKEY: It is called a drought.

Mr Barr: Yes, indeed. But in terms of springtime in Canberra, every single day was perfect. We set individual record attendances for particular days—opening weekends, closing weekends. It was a fantastic result. In terms of your second question, you need to differentiate between visitors attracted from outside the ACT and those locals who attend. Then also you need to bear in mind that the total number of visitors represents a turnstile figure; some people visit more than once.

MRS BURKE: That is a good point. Can you give a breakdown of who was being counted—local, interstate and international?

Mr Barr: It is about fifty-fifty, but we do have that detail. It is available in the report on the event. I would refer you to that. We can make that available for the committee.

MRS BURKE: To the committee.

Mr Barr: Broadly speaking, it is about 50 per cent locals and 50 per cent visitors, and that 50 per cent has a domestic component and an international component in terms of the visitors.

MRS BURKE: What are we doing to try and attract more locals, given that we get only 50 per cent?

Mr Barr: That means effectively that half the city have walked through the gates.

MRS BURKE: Yes.

Mr Barr: That is reasonably impressive.

MRS BURKE: Is that on one single occasion or more than once? How do you record that?

Mr Barr: There are some people who visit—

MRS BURKE: Double up.

Mr Barr: who—

MRS BURKE: I do, for example.

Mr Barr: Indeed. There are some, but by any measure to get 175,000 to 180,000 local visits—

MRS BURKE: It is visitations, isn't it—not people?

Mr Barr: Yes, but—

MRS BURKE: So we need to be careful there.

Mr Barr: That is true, but, even if you worked on the average of everyone visiting twice as an average, that is still 90,000 Canberrans. That is heading up towards 30 per cent of the city that has gone through the gates in that period. That is pretty impressive for an event. I do not think there would be any other event where we would attract 30 per cent of the city. Maybe the Skyfire fireworks would get close, but in terms of an event that is pretty impressive.

THE CHAIR: Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: Minister, what is the reason for the budget numbers that are on page 285 of BP4?

Mr Barr: As in the combination of tourism and events in the one output class?

MR STEFANIAK: Yes. You have 6.158 million.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: That does not seem right. What is the correct number? And what is the change in funding, especially between 2006-07 and 2007-08?

Mr Barr: Thank you, Mr Stefaniak. This provides me with an opportunity. I took a question on notice from Mr Smyth in relation to what the 6.158 million included. I can advise that that refers to costs associated with the outputs of territory venues and events, being Canberra Stadium, Stromlo Forest Park and Manuka Oval. In last year's budget papers, these costs were reported as part of output class 1.6, sport and recreation. That is a discontinued class, so it has been put together with tourism in this year's budget papers as they are all my responsibilities within the portfolio.

I will give an example as to the reason for that. We now have the total delivery of an event such as Floriade that was previously accounted for in the tourism budget, where tourism effectively purchased services from Territory and Municipal Services or from the then Urban Services. That is not a particularly useful accounting measure now that they are all in the one agency, accountable to the one minister. So we have seen the combination of that 6.158 with just over 16 million from tourism supplemented by a range of new initiatives—Floriade, Tidbinbilla, Stromlo, the Australian tourism awards—to take the total package for tourism and events from about 22½ million up to just short of 25 million. There have been some strategic investments in new events in the city and also some additional funding for some of our traditional and iconic events such as Floriade.

MR STEFANIAK: And you have a \$1.47 million government payment for outputs.

Mr Barr: Yes. That reflects the fact that those venues—Canberra Stadium, Manuka Oval and Stromlo Forest Park—have a significant amount of own-source revenue: they get additional money for their budgets from hiring out the facilities.

MR SMYTH: Would you provide a reconciliation of all those numbers in writing to the committee?

Mr Barr: What do you mean by “a reconciliation of all those numbers”?

MR SMYTH: The discontinued class in tourism was 16.2 million.

Mr Barr: Yes.

MR SMYTH: If you add the 6.1 million from events—

Mr Barr: You get about 22½.

MR SMYTH: You get about 22½.

Mr Barr: And we now have 24.

MR SMYTH: So between the 22½—

Mr Barr: And 24.8.

MR SMYTH: and 24 is another 1.5. What does that 1.5 consist of?

Mr Barr: What does it consist of? Additional funding for Floriade.

MR SMYTH: Sure.

Mr Barr: Additional funding for Stromlo Forest Park. And additional funding for the world mountain bike championships—not additional funding, but money that we have allocated to the world mountain bike championships.

MR SMYTH: Sure.

Mr Barr: There is \$50,000 for the Australian tourism awards that we will host in 2008. And I think there is \$80,000 over four years for the Rob De Castella invitational event. I can have all this written down for you but that pretty much covers it.

MR SMYTH: That is what I would like. Can you give us the breakdown over the next four years of what the tourism budget will do?

Mr Barr: Of tourism and events money?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Mr Barr: Yes, certainly.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Minister, on page 298 under the accountability indicators for this output class, (d) talks about the number of hits to the website. It is estimated there as 400,000, and it went up to 660,000. We estimate that there will be that number of hits again, obviously. I wondered why we had that significant increase. What factors led to that?

Mr Barr: This is clearly a growing area within tourism. In terms of the research and the categories reported under that, I think we are seeing the free and independent traveller who, in terms of their holidays, does a lot of their planning online and seeks to undertake that research themselves. Through our bookings at the visitors centre, we have seen a significant increase in our commissions off that and off the website. Looking forward to where we need to position ourselves, a revamp of our web presence is a key part of the ongoing work this year. I am going to get Mr Hill to outline some of the trends in terms of IT and how people are utilising that for their

tourism services and then outline the future directions for Australian Capital Tourism in that area.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

Mr Hill: Just reiterating what the minister was saying, we are certainly seeing some trends in both domestic and international markets where consumers are researching and booking their holidays online. We will find that most of us in this room are doing that too. Therefore we have started to skew some of our marketing mix towards more online activity, whether that is website advertising or the delivery of the booking engine on our website. The visitcanberra.com.au website has a real online booking system to book accommodation; we are starting to package that up with other experiences as well. We will be continuing to evolve that in the next 12 to 18 months with a refresh of the website and some of the functionality that technology is providing us with at the moment.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: The minister said recently that tourism numbers and visitation to the ACT are still strong, I think using that as an argument that the cuts in last year's budget did not make a difference. But what do you say to the idea that Australian Capital Tourism's work was forward looking and that we may still be reaping the benefits of that, somewhat compensating for the rather drastic cuts last year?

Mr Barr: There are always cycles in terms of work within agencies. There was a lot of effort put in and a lot of money expended on research, for example. That is work that has informed our forward-looking campaigns; there is not a need to replicate that level of research every year. When we were looking at the budget for the last financial year, we were able to be strategic in where we reduced expenditure within the overall budget.

The largest change and the largest cost savings came from the administrative reorganisation, with the number of staff reducing from just over 50 to 41. There remain 41 staff—41 FTEs—and there will be through this financial year. Examples of where staff cuts were made were in relation to ministerial support—again being picked up by the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, so there was no longer a need for Australian Capital Tourism to have a full-time position devoted to ministerial support. We also made some reductions in other program areas.

The key thing is to have a critical eye to how we spend the money. I go to no more authoritative source than the Productivity Commission, which undertook a major piece of work in 2005 looking at state and territory tourism assistance. I would refer you to section 7, subsection 10 of their report, which said that “it is important that support to tourism be rigorously reviewed from time to time to ensure that it addresses genuine instances of market failure or inequity”—

MR MULCAHY: The work of economic rationalists again.

Mr Barr: “does so in an efficient manner and that it is associated with net benefits for the community”.

MRS BURKE: I was going to say, it is code for cutting.

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: That does pose a series of questions around whether it is the job of government to persuade consumers that they are better off spending their money on travel rather than whitegoods. It questions whether, in the absence of significant tourism subsidies, there would be an undersupply of goods and services needed to ensure Canberra’s economic future. We have to have a critical eye to our tourism expenditure. Those who claim that it should be a bottomless pit and that every dollar you throw in will reap \$11 back for the government or back for the economy are just—it is a fundamentally flawed economic analysis.

We need to ensure that we are spending the money efficiently. The most relevant example I can give the committee relates to the changes to the Rally of Canberra. We were subsidising that event to the tune of three-quarters of a million a year and it was not delivering a tourism dividend. It was a great event, but not a great tourism event. The question of why we were funding it out of the tourism budget was an entirely relevant one, and one that we have addressed. Through the changed arrangements, we have freed up \$2.75 million into the outyears to invest back into tourism and back into areas that will deliver a return.

I have already announced—but I will re-announce it for the benefit of the committee today—that part of that \$2.75 million in savings has been redirected into additional support for the Canberra Convention Bureau. For this financial year, support will increase from the \$692,000 that was available last year up to \$800,000; that will then increase to \$900,000 in 2008-09 and, subject to meeting the agreed performance targets, \$1 million in the final year of a three-year investment, backing our \$30 million investment in the refurbishment of the convention centre.

We are seeking to target our tourism expenditure into areas that deliver returns, in terms of both increased visitation and increased expenditure in the ACT economy. That has to be another key feature. If there is a public good that derives from \$16 million worth of investment, it has to be in jobs and economic development for the city. If it is not—if it is just a direct private subsidy—then, Dr Foskey, I know that you and I could agree on about a hundred higher priorities in terms of other portfolios. Unless we are getting a return from this, we are wasting our money. And what I am—

MR SMYTH: Are you getting a return?

Mr Barr: What I am concerned to see through my stewardship of this portfolio is that we are focusing our efforts in areas that will deliver a return—and that we are measuring. We are measuring that and we are seeking to work in collaboration with the private sector. There is no doubt that the largest beneficiaries of government investment in tourism—any government at any level: across Australia more than a billion dollars in taxpayer subsidies are provided, 80 per cent by state and territory governments and the other 20 per cent by the commonwealth—are in the private

sector. It creates jobs and it creates economic activity, all of which is good, but let us make sure that we are spending the money wisely.

DR FOSKEY: Just as a corollary to that, the ACT is very lucky because tourists largely come here to see national capital institutions that are paid for by the taxpayer but are part of the public infrastructure. What are the unique aspects of Canberra that the ACT government is developing so that you can say that we are not just riding on the back of the national investment in our capital?

Mr Barr: That is a very good question, Dr Foskey. I would highlight three specific areas first up, two of which have been funded in this budget. That includes the investment in Stromlo Forest Park that will create Canberra as the home for mountain biking and cycling in Australia; hosting the world championships in 2009 is a clear effort for us to differentiate ourselves from other tourism regions and move into a niche market where we are very well served and very well situated to be able to grow. And it has strong community support in the ACT, given our very high percentage of involvement in cycling. I would also highlight the opening of the glassworks as another example of ACT government investment, particularly in cultural tourism.

MR MULCAHY: A Liberal initiative.

MRS BURKE: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, it was.

Mr Barr: Everyone can put their little brick on and seek to claim responsibility for that. In the end the project was delivered under the Stanhope government.

MR STEFANIAK: A bit slow.

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: But it is open and it is there. Let us not get churlish about this, Mr Mulcahy. It is a welcome addition.

Mr MULCAHY: I am just saying that you should acknowledge who came up with the idea.

Mr Barr: I am happy to acknowledge that it received bipartisan support throughout its development. Also, Dr Foskey, money was provided to Tidbinbilla to enhance our nature tourism capabilities and provide new product. Another thing the research is showing is that people see domestic tourism opportunities within Australia as somewhat stale. We need significant investment, but it has to come from the private sector as well in new product. That is a key finding of Tourism Research Australia and another issue that tourism ministers will be discussing next month here in Canberra.

They would be the three key areas that I would highlight, in addition to support for new events within the ACT, such as the Rob De Castella invitational and our support of AFL matches, for example—using the various leverages that we have. We are

hosting the Pacific School Games in 2008. We are looking for every opportunity to diversify our tourism experience, our tourism product. We have had good cooperation from industry.

Another example I would give would be the rapid growth of the Canberra District Wine Industry Association. A re-branding exercise was undertaken; some new events and some particular cooperative work with Australian Capital Tourism marketing into Sydney. We are seeking to diversify what we offer locally, recognising, of course, as you rightly indicate, that having all of the national institutions in this city provides us with a tremendous advantage.

I know the committee discussed this at some length last year around the levels of collaboration and support that are there. I am very pleased to have on my Tourism Ministerial Advisory Council representatives from the national institutions. I think that is very welcome in terms of collaboration with the ACT and commonwealth government. Another initiative that I would like to highlight and congratulate the NCA on again is their winter in the capital promotions. The night-time winter markets and the variety of new experiences that the National Capital Authority are funding over this winter are yet another example, when we work together, of what we can achieve being greater than some other parts of the tourism industry.

DR FOSKEY: Finally, do you have involvement with the Tourism Council and the ACT Corporation in planning for the centenary of Canberra? It would seem to me that that might be a very major opportunity for attracting a large number of domestic visitors—

Mr Barr: Are you referring to the Tourism Industry Council or the tourism industry more broadly?

DR FOSKEY: I am seeing it as a tourism opportunity.

Mr Barr: Indeed, yes.

DR FOSKEY: And how you are planning to milk that.

Mr Barr: Absolutely. And we are, through a variety of different initiatives, seeking to utilise what will be a fantastic opportunity for the city. For example, through the arrangements with the AFL we are looking, in 2013, to host a major series of AFL matches. Cricket Australia have indicated a willingness to discuss the possibility of a test match at Manuka for that summer. Through the sport portfolio I am certainly pursuing a range of iconic events.

I think it is also very important that we continue our focus on cultural tourism and seek to work with those national institutions around having some major events in 2013. It is interesting: when you look at how Canberra performs as a cultural tourism venue, we do very well. I think we bat well above our weight in terms of being, for domestic visitors, the third most visited jurisdiction for cultural tourists behind Sydney and Melbourne. Internationally we move up into the top 10 in terms of international visitors spending time in the city for cultural tourism purposes. Again, I

seek, through Don Aitken and others on my Tourism Advisory Council, to have strong representation from the cultural tourism sectors to ensure that we have a complete package of not only advice but also interest and input into our overall tourism strategy.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I think we have still got a couple of questions left on tourism. We might try to get to IR at 10 to 11. Mr Stefaniak and Mr Smyth.

MR STEFANIAK: Thanks, I have just one question. How many staff are there now, minister, in the tourism function?

Mr Barr: Forty-one.

MR STEFANIAK: You might take this part on notice—

Mr Barr: How many last year? There were 41.

MR STEFANIAK: This time last year?

Mr Barr: Yes, 41.

MR STEFANIAK: And on 1 January 2006?

Mr Barr: Forty-one is the number and that is where it is staying.

MR STEFANIAK: What was the number on 1 January 2006?

Mr Barr: On 1 January 2006 it would have been just over 50—about 50.82. I have been corrected: 53.

MR STEFANIAK: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, you mentioned Stromlo Forest Park and the mountain bike races. Why is the extra money needed for the ongoing support of Stromlo park? Wasn't all that covered in the business case when it was put forward or was it anticipated that you would have to come back with additional funding?

Mr Barr: No. I think you are confusing the world mountain bike championships as a stand-alone event from the ongoing support for the development of Stromlo Forest Park as a venue for—

MR SMYTH: No. I am talking about both. Then we will get to the mountain bike race.

Mr Barr: I am sure you will because you are a known critic of the event.

MR SMYTH: No, I am not being critical at all.

Mr Barr: But we—

MR SMYTH: I have supported it from the start.

Mr Barr: Mr Chair, if I can, through you, respond to the question. We have provided just over \$1 million, staggered over four years, in support of the world mountain bike championships. They are being staged at Stromlo Forest Park, but that money is associated with the staging of that event. The second question that Mr Smyth has asked is in relation to the ongoing or the four-year funding support that is provided in this budget for Stromlo Forest Park as a venue. That is separate from its role as hosting the world mountain bike championships.

It was always anticipated, following such a significant investment in that facility, that we would want to ensure that its use was maximised not only for community sporting events. So virtually every weekend and every day of the week there are a variety of organisations who utilise that facility—be it cycling, athletics, cross-country, equestrian. But, equally, we also want it to be the home to other major events. For example, the Rob De Castella invitational cross-country event is an example of a new event that we are going to be hosting at Stromlo Forest Park.

The additional money that is provided in this year's budget is for marketing, for the day-to-day operation of the venue. We have a view that the support will be phased out over those four years as the venue becomes commercially viable in its own right, in a similar way that Manuka Oval and Canberra Stadium are. The ongoing revenue from that venue will come from hiring fees for a variety of organisations that seek to utilise the facility.

But as a start-up and to back up our capital investment in the facility, we require some additional resources around marketing and service provision on the site. The initial operating budget deals with the land management issues, but this additional money will provide the opportunity to greatly expand the capacity of the venue to provide services and events to meet the needs of a wide variety of stakeholders.

MR SMYTH: So this additional requirement was unexpected at the time when the initial business case was put forward?

Mr Barr: No. There was always a view that some additional support to take the venue to the next level would be provided. A business case was put forward in this budget round that I and my cabinet colleagues supported and we move ahead. But there is a clear view that this support will be phased out after four years—that it is the set-up of the venue—and that just like Manuka Oval and Canberra Stadium this venue will be able to source its own revenue from hiring fees into the future.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We will move on to industrial relations.

MR SMYTH: Before you go could you please provide the set-up costs and then the ongoing support for the next four years as a written reconciliation?

Mr Barr: I am happy to do that, yes.

MR SMYTH: I did say that I would just ask a quick question about the mountain bikes. Despite your protest that I am against the event, I have never said that the event is not a good event.

Mr Barr: You criticise it every time.

MR SMYTH: What I have criticised is the fact that—

Mr Barr: We made the decision that it wasn't you.

THE CHAIR: Minister—

MR SMYTH: According to the report, the local—

THE CHAIR: Minister, wait for the question.

MR SMYTH: and central New Zealand government has put \$317,000 into the event; we are putting in \$1 million. The local economy in Rotorua got \$12.4 million, the national economy got \$33 million and TV coverage was something like 35 million people worldwide. We are putting \$1 million into this event. We expect to receive only 25 million viewers. You have conservatively put the benefit at \$20 million. Why are we putting in three times what the New Zealand local and national government has put in and getting so significantly less a return on the investment? That has been my question the entire time.

Mr Barr: I have indicated in response—and this is about the fourth or fifth time that you have sought to raise these issues—that we have been conservative in our estimates. We are not seeking to overblow the economic return on the event. When the business case was prepared and it was considered by cabinet, there was very strong support for this event to go ahead. Through securing this as the venue for the world championships, we have also been successful in getting Australian championships each year in the lead-up, which is again an important spin-off of it being the venue for the world championships.

Through the tourism portfolio there is an exciting opportunity for us to seek to market this venue as the home of the world mountain bike championships and to give people the opportunity to come and ride the track, which will be the world championship track, both in the lead-up to the event and post the event. I don't think there is any doubt that this is good value for money for the territory. One need only contrast the level of expenditure on this with the economic return as compared with some other events that previous governments have sunk huge amounts of taxpayers' money into. The audit office has come back and said, "No. You have massively overstated the economic return." I am not in the business of massively overstating, unlike some others. We have put in some conservative estimates—

MR SMYTH: But have you massively understated—and done so deliberately.

Mr Barr: If we have massively understated then I am very happy for the event to achieve more than a \$20 million return—

MR SMYTH: But this is a trend in the government: you understate the return on land sales—

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: Well, I—

MR SMYTH: you are understating the return on investment—

Mr Barr: I am very—

MR SMYTH: and on a number of things.

Mr Barr: I am very happy—

MR SMYTH: How is that good economic management?

Mr Barr: if the event exceeds our expectations. But what I am not going to do—

MR SMYTH: That is easy if you set a low bar.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, stop talking over the top of the minister.

MR SMYTH: Well, stop talking over the top of me.

Mr Barr: What I am not going to do is put in place a series of unrealistic expectations and seek to beat up on the organisers if the expectations that were unrealistic in the first place are not achieved. Nor am I going to be in the business of massively overstating an event in a fairly transparent way, or not particularly transparent way, of trying to justify government expenditure in an event.

MR SMYTH: Given that the Chief Minister has said—

Mr Barr: For example, the V8 super car race was a manifest failure.

MR SMYTH: No, it wasn't.

Mr Barr: An absolute failure.

MRS BURKE: You didn't give it a chance.

MR SMYTH: It was a five-year program.

MRS BURKE: You never gave it a chance.

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: One need only look at the work—

MRS BURKE: Adelaide are reaping what we have lost. Well done.

THE CHAIR: Order!

Mr Barr: of the Auditor-General, the Australia Institute and the Productivity Commission in assessing what a joke of an event that was for the ACT.

MR SMYTH: Five-year lifetime.

MRS BURKE: You didn't put your heart and soul into it. We have lost out.

Mr Barr: And how much taxpayers' money was wasted on that event.

MR STEFANIAK: Only because you cancelled it.

Mr Barr: It was wildly unpopular with the people of Canberra. That was a dud—

MRS BURKE: You never wanted it because it wasn't your idea.

Mr Barr: a Brendan Smyth rolled-gold dud.

MRS BURKE: Now Adelaide is reaping the benefit.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke!

MR SMYTH: Given that the Chief Minister has said that the Stanhope Labor government would not hide behind commercial-in-confidence, will you now reverse the decision of the FOI not to release the business case to me?

Mr Barr: It is a cabinet-in-confidence document.

MR SMYTH: Minister, the Chief Minister said that they would not hide behind commercial-in-confidence, and I am told it was released on commercial-in-confidence—

Mr Barr: I repeat for the benefit of —

MR SMYTH: not cabinet-in-confidence.

THE CHAIR: Minister, wait for the question.

Mr Barr: Mr Smyth. it is a cabinet-in-confidence document.

MR SMYTH: How can we check the accuracy of your figures if you won't release these numbers?

Mr Barr: I repeat for the benefit of Mr Smyth that it is a cabinet-in-confidence document.

MR SMYTH: So you will hide.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, thank you. We will go on to industrial relations. Thank you, minister and officials from your department. Officials are aware of the items on the witness card. Minister, do you want to make any opening comments in industrial relations?

Mr Barr: No, chair. I think in the interests of time I will just get straight into questions.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: Thank you. First of all, in the accountability indicators on page 43 in budget document 4, what is the improved policy and legislative framework that accountability indicator b will deliver and why is it necessary?

Mr Barr: Thank you, Dr Foskey. We are undergoing a number of significant legislative reviews in relation to the Occupational Health and Safety Act. We have an ongoing review into the ACT workers compensation scheme and there is a key target around a new OH&S Act. These are some of the key areas that we are seeking to address through that output class.

DR FOSKEY: That was one of my questions. Preparing a new occupational health and safety act is what you are doing under this improved policy and legislative framework?

Mr Barr: Amongst other things. There is a variety of other projects underway, streamlining a number of pieces of legislation, and an anticipation, following the finalisation of the review into the workers compensation scheme, of some further work to be done there too.

THE DEPUTY CHAIR: Have you got a supp on that, Mary?

MS PORTER: Yes, thank you, Mr Stefaniak. Minister, with regard to the improved policy and legislative framework—that is what we are talking about here; and you have focused on occupational health and safety in particular—how does that relate to the federal IR policy? How are we managing that sort of mix? Is it having an impact on the development of that policy or are we able to just develop our policy in a policy-free zone?

Mr Barr: We don't have an industrial relations framework of our own; we operate under the commonwealth legislation. We have powers in relation to occupational health and safety, for example; hence our desire to review that legislation and the effectiveness of that. That has been an ongoing process and involved considerable consultation with the Occupational Health and Safety Council, one of the key stakeholders there.

There are other pieces of commonwealth legislation that have had an impact in the ACT, such as the independent contractor legislation. We are developing, and will be developing over the course of 2007-08, some strengthening of the legislative framework, particularly in relation to protection of workers under the age of 18 that the commonwealth have not sought through WorkChoices to specifically regulate

there.

We have the opportunity like other states and territories to provide some protections for some of the most vulnerable workers in the territory—those who are under 18. But there are other key pieces of work that are underway in relation to changes to public holidays that have potential impacts and crossovers with federal legislation, given that WorkChoices has removed a day's leave from private sector employees in the ACT. So there is a very clear issue there that the government needs to address.

THE CHAIR: Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: Thanks, chair. I refer you to BP4, page 36, minister. Of the total budget of 146 full-time equivalent staff how many are directly involved with the development and maintenance of industrial relations policy?

Mr Barr: There are 12 full-time positions and 14 people altogether.

MR STEFANIAK: Right. Will any of the additional staff budgeted for in the Chief Minister's Department specialise in industrial relations?

Mr Barr: I will get Ms Davoren to answer that question.

Ms Davoren: No. Those positions are currently in that area. It is not at this stage envisaged that there would be additional staff in that area.

MR STEFANIAK: Has there been an increase on last year or is that basically last year's figures just continued to this year?

Ms Davoren: That is the same as last year's.

Mr Barr: It is a continuation.

MR STEFANIAK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: My question is next. Minister, I note on page 47 of budget paper No 4 that the government is extending the safety first program. Can you provide the committee with some detail on this program renewal and the focus the program will maintain during its extended funding periods?

Mr Barr: Thank you, chair. It is a \$540,000 project over two years. The project is designed to reduce the human and financial cost of workplace injuries within the ACT public service. The project ran previously from 2002 to 2005 and was very successful in containing ACT public service workers compensation premium costs. The source of funds is from our insurer Comcare following a successful appeal against the size of the 2006-07 premium. This project will run for a further two years in 2007-08 and 2008-09.

THE CHAIR: Ms Porter.

MS PORTER: Yes, thank you. Minister, on page 42 of budget paper No 4, output 1.2

governance refers to negotiation of an agreement as an outcome for 2006-07 and then refers to implementation of an agreement as a target for 2007-08. The same applies for the negotiation of the lands agreement, I believe. Can you update the committee on the time lines for finalising this implementation, thus providing ACT public services employees with their pay rises?

Mr Barr: Indeed. Thank you, Ms Porter. As you would be aware, the negotiations for the 2007-10 template collective agreement cover about 10,000 employees across the ACT government. That commenced in October 2006 and concluded with the signing of an in-principle agreement on 5 April 2007.

The agreement provides for a four per cent salary increase for each of the three years of the agreement and, as with the government's negotiating parameters for all other agreements, productivity benefits have been negotiated to fund one per cent of the salary increase each year. The agreement calls for the parties to cooperate to achieve savings in a number of areas, and these are primarily linked to reducing overheads in employing staff within the ACT public service.

It's also important to note that, through this new agreement, conditions of service have been enhanced in a number of areas specifically designed to increase the attractiveness of employment within the ACT public service. Following employee consultation and voting, the salary increases are expected to be paid later this month.

MS PORTER: What areas are you talking about when you talking about improving their conditions?

Mr Barr: There is an opportunity for more flexible arrangements within the public service, so we are looking to be an employer of choice, perhaps in marked contrast to some other agencies within the public sector and also in the private sector. There is no denying that over the years the ACT public service has been a fertile recruitment ground for the commonwealth, and by enhancing the attractiveness of work within the ACT public service we are seeking to address our staff turnover, which has been running as high as 20 per cent in some agencies. We are seeking to reduce that to closer to 16 per cent over the life of the agreement.

MS PORTER: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Mulcahy.

MR MULCAHY: Thank you. Minister, under output description the industrial relations policy will coordinate the territory's consultative bodies for industrial relations and work safety and participate in national policy bodies. I have three parts to my question. The first is that we have spoken previously of \$100,000 that your government spent on what turned out to be a futile High Court challenge on IR—

Mr Barr: If I can jump in—

MR MULCAHY: Well, let me finish my questions, if I could, minister.

Mr Barr: I just wanted to correct one point—

MR MULCAHY: I would be keen to—

Mr Barr: It is not \$100,000.

MR MULCAHY: Okay. You can—

Mr Barr: So I can correct that.

MR MULCAHY: respond to that when we get your comment, if we could. To conclude the other two parts of my question, I would like to ask you whether you, as minister, sanction the practice recommended in the ACT federal election strategy manual that specifically instructs union members not to read out a series of working conditions that are now protected by the Australian government's legislation when attempting to influence people as to whether you think that is good conduct, and also whether, as claimed in this document, either you or your government, your party have given access to copies of the electoral roll for unions to use with the Magenta Linus program? Is that something that you as a member of the territory government or you as a minister have signed off on in terms of letting unions have that confidential information on ACT residents that is provided through the electoral roll for electoral purposes?

Mr Barr: To answer the first question, the cost of the ACT's involvement in that High Court case was in the order of \$89,000, not \$100,000 as Mr Mulcahy has misquoted. In relation to the second issue, no, I have no role in writing documents for the ACTU, nor do I have any comment one way or the other on the content of that material. They are a private organisation and not one that I have any oversight over. How they choose to campaign is their business, just as the campaigning techniques of Mark Texter are not my business either. I can provide some commentary on push polling, if Mr Mulcahy is interested, but—

THE CHAIR: I think we will just try and stick to the question.

Mr Barr: Yes. For the benefit of the committee and in the interests of time, we will not go down that path. Finally, in relation to the third question, no, I have not signed off as Minister for Industrial Relations, on anyone's access to the electoral roll.

MRS DUNNE: Will you be?

Mr Barr: That information is made available to a variety of organisations under the Commonwealth Electoral Act. We have a joint roll—

MR MULCAHY: There is quite a limited number of—

Mr Barr: Yes, there is, but it is still made available. As an MLA, I have access to the electoral roll, as you do, Mr Mulcahy. But there has been no ministerial directive from me to make the electoral roll available to—

MR MULCAHY: Just so I am totally clear, chair—

Mr Barr: Individuals can, I understand, view the electoral roll at an electoral office.

MR MULCAHY: So just so I understand, minister, the provision of the electoral roll in concert with the Magenta Linus program—

Mr Barr: I am not aware of the Magenta Linus program.

MR MULCAHY: You are not aware of that? To make it clear, the fact that misleading information has been provided in relation to people's employment conditions is not something that troubles you at all, minister?

Mr Barr: Mr Mulcahy, the way that various organisations seek to campaign in the federal election is a matter for them. It is not something that I intend to provide a running commentary on. As I indicated, there have been a variety of documents that have come forth in recent times around particular campaigns, be they public advertising or grassroots campaigns. That is simply a matter for those organisations. You are better off directing your questions to the ACTU.

MR MULCAHY: Minister, can you indicate the level of dialogue and cooperation between your government and the Australian government in relation to the WorkChoices legislation and its implementation?

Mr Barr: My officials sit on a number of national bodies with other state and territory officials and the commonwealth. By and large, the federal industrial relations minister—the current one I am yet to meet—does not seem interested in holding a ministerial council this year. But I met the previous minister on a couple of occasions and had the opportunity to discuss some issues relevant to the ACT, particularly in relation to occupational health and safety for long-haul truck drivers. That has been an issue across jurisdictions that my colleagues from New South Wales and Victoria have raised with the minister in relation to the Independent Contractors Act, and I sought to raise that as well on behalf of my ACT constituents.

But it is not an area where, at a ministerial level, there is a huge amount of dialogue. We exchange letters from time to time but, you know, I am not Joe Hockey's drinking buddy. I do not sit on Kerry Anne's couch and do vaudeville. I will leave that to Minister Hockey.

MR MULCAHY: I do not think we expect you to do that, minister.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you, Mr Chairman. This is probably something that requires some taking on notice, but it refers back to an investigation and report compiled by WorkCover back in 2003 which formed the basis of the submission by Minister Gallagher, who was then the minister, into Sandra Norrie's inquiry into sexual servitude. The basic premise of the report was that prostitution outside the regulated framework in the ACT was quite prolific, and Ms Gallagher said as much on radio at the time. The submission that she made to Sandra Norrie's inquiry made specific reference to the operation of prostitution from apartments and hotels and the use of hidey holes et cetera. The paper also talked about the high level of drug

dependence amongst people in the prostitution industry in Canberra.

Following on from that, what steps have been taken by WorkCover and the other people who work together in overseeing the prostitution industry to address some of those issues: the people who operate outside the regulation; the level of drug dependence and the acknowledgement that arises from time to time that there are a large number of people who are either illegal immigrants or people who have been trafficked into the ACT who work from time to time in the industry?

Mr Barr: Thank you for the question, Mrs Dunne. A large part of the information you are seeking refers to the day-to-day operations of WorkCover, which is now part of the Office of Regulatory Services that reports to Minister Corbell as Attorney-General. I am happy to take that on notice and seek some information from Minister Corbell to provide back to the committee. But the day-to-day operations of WorkCover, as it is now incorporated within the Office of Regulatory Services, are not with me. I provide overall policy in terms of occupational health and safety but—

MRS DUNNE: You do not have the same WorkCover oversight as was previously the case?

Mr Barr: No. That has changed.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: Thank you, chair. Minister, I have a general question. Are you aware of any bully-boy tactics being meted out to subcontractors who fail to sign up to effectively what is a union instigated provider of choice type scheme?

Mr Barr: No, I am not aware of that, Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: So nothing has come to your attention about the activities of the LHMWU?

Mr Barr: I have met with the LHMWU on a number of occasions. A particular issue that has come forward is their campaign for a clean start for workers in the cleaning industry, and that is something that they have been—

MRS BURKE: Is not this a bit like—sorry.

Mr Barr: pursuing by way of industrial justice for their members and—

MRS BURKE: So it is not a closed shop type activity where, if you do not sign up—

Mr Barr: No. Well, I would imagine that those sorts of activities would be illegal under—

MRS BURKE: Indeed, they would—

Mr Barr: federal law and—

MRS BURKE: and I suggest you might want to check out if it is happening.

Mr Barr: Well, enforcement is not an area under my jurisdiction, Mrs Burke. If you have an issue with a breach of the federal law, you would be best placed to take that up with the responsible federal agency.

MRS BURKE: Do you have contact with the local unions here?

Mr Barr: Do I?

MRS BURKE: Under your powers?

Mr Barr: Yes, I meet regularly with—

MRS BURKE: And you are aware of the best practice type program that is being instigated around Canberra?

Mr Barr: I certainly have had a briefing on the principles behind the clean start campaign, yes.

MRS BURKE: And you fully support some of the thuggery that is going on in relation to other contractors who will not sign up?

Mr Barr: That is an allegation that I have no—

MRS BURKE: I have got proof, minister.

Mr Barr: I have absolutely no basis to believe that allegation. I am not in a position either to support or otherwise behaviour that has not been brought to my attention but is—

MRS BURKE: I am sure it would not have been.

Mr Barr: significantly not in my jurisdiction to respond to. It is simply a scurrilous allegation at this point from someone with a long history of dispute in this particular area.

MRS BURKE: No. It has actually happened in this city, would you believe?

THE CHAIR: Order, Mrs Dunne!

MR MULCAHY: I have a supplementary, chair.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR MULCAHY: Is the minister aware of coercion being applied against workers in ACTION to adhere to a new industrial agreement that the unions want them to sign up to?

Mr Barr: No. I am aware of an ongoing process of negotiation between the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, ACTION management and the relevant unions in relation to a new enterprise agreement.

MR MULCAHY: Would you be disturbed if you were aware that there were complaints from people working in ACTION who feel that they are being coerced and pressured?

Mr Barr: Well, I would be—

THE CHAIR: You should not respond to hypotheticals.

MR MULCAHY: It is not hypothetical.

Mr Barr: but I am not aware of any.

MR MULCAHY: Are you happy to investigate if matters are brought to your attention?

Mr Barr: Again, it is—

MS PORTER: Well, it is not his responsibility.

Mr Barr: I am not going to be spending my time going around chasing down rabbit holes that Mr Mulcahy or Mrs Burke might allege are happening.

MRS BURKE: They are certainly not rabbit holes, and I will provide you with information after this hearing—

THE CHAIR: Order, Mrs Burke!

MRS BURKE: quite willingly.

Mr Barr: If—

MRS BURKE: You should be aware of—

THE CHAIR: Order, Mrs Burke!

MRS BURKE: what is going on.

Mr Barr: If any—

MRS BURKE: The minister—

THE CHAIR: Order, Mrs Burke!

Mr Barr: If any—

MRS BURKE: The Minister posed a—

THE CHAIR: I warn you, Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: Fine.

Mr Barr: If any information—

MRS BURKE: Warn the minister, too.

Mr Barr: If any information is available and members of the committee feel there is a breach of the law, I would refer them to the appropriate agencies. If there is a breach of the law, the appropriate action is to raise that with the appropriate authorities, not to raise it in estimates. If you have been sitting on something that you believe to be illegal, for some time, in some sort of phoney effort to surprise me in an estimates committee hearing, then I question —

MR MULCAHY: Minister, my information came by email this morning. I would ask you to withdraw the allegation.

Mr Barr: I question your integrity and your actual interest in the matter. But—

MR MULCAHY: You question my integrity?

Mr Barr: Yes.

MR MULCAHY: I said it came this morning by way of an email.

Mr Barr: Have you advised any appropriate authorities of this matter?

MR MULCAHY: I received the email just before I came down here and I intend—

Mr Barr: That was remarkable timing.

MR MULCAHY: I am now raising it with you.

Mr Barr: I hope, Mr Mulcahy, that—

MR MULCAHY: Are you saying you won't look at it as Minister for Industrial Relations?

Mr Barr: I hope, Mr Mulcahy, that your first port of call would have been the appropriate authorities.

MR MULCAHY: And who would that be—not the Minister for Industrial Relations? You don't want to know about these matters.

MRS BURKE: He doesn't want to know.

THE CHAIR: Order, members!

Mr Barr: I don't have jurisdiction over federal law in the ACT.

MR MULCAHY: This is ACTION I'm talking about.

Mr Barr: In relation to ACTION, I'm not the minister negotiating that agreement.

MR MULCAHY: Industrial relations issues don't trouble you?

Mr Barr: Industrial relations issues I take an intense interest in but, Mr Mulcahy, if you are going to use the estimates committee as some sort of Star Chamber to raise allegations for which I have no basis other than your word and the words of your colleagues, you must be joking.

MR MULCAHY: I am happy to give you the information if the people are willing—

Mr Barr: If you've got a serious allegation, present it outside of this forum where parliamentary privilege does not apply.

MR MULCAHY: Where would you like it directed to, minister?

MRS BURKE: I'm happy to present mine.

Mr Barr: If you would like to write me a letter, Mr Mulcahy, I will look at the matter.

MR MULCAHY: Okay.

Mr Barr: But if you think that, as a cheap stunt, raising it in this forum—

MR MULCAHY: It's not a cheap stunt. I am raising a matter immediately.

Mr Barr: At least the television cameras aren't here, I presume.

MR STEFANIAK: You just don't like difficult questions.

Mr Barr: Good on you, Bill! You are kidding! Next question, please.

THE CHAIR: I have one. Minister, I've noted the budget's investment in the development of a security of payments scheme for the ACT. Can you provide the committee with some details?

Mr Barr: I can, and thank you, Mr Gentleman.

THE CHAIR: It is relevant to the budget papers.

Mr Barr: It certainly is, yes. It is one of the few questions this morning that have been. I will just get my notes in relation to the detail of the scheme. The sum of \$75,000 has been set aside in this financial year to establish the scheme, and that increases to \$110,000 in the outyears. It is important to the viability of contractors and subcontractors in the building and construction industry who rely very heavily on the

timely payment for their work that there is some form of enforcement of this and the need for those payments to be made at a reasonable time. The advice I have is that there are considerable delays in the industry, that this is a common problem and that these delays have resulted in the creation of similar schemes in other jurisdictions. The government will look at the various schemes that are in place in other jurisdictions to find the best practice and to implement that in the ACT. The desire is to have the scheme up and running for the 2008 year.

THE CHAIR: Yes, there are some concerns, especially, you may have noticed, at some developments in Tuggeranong. There have been reports that some contracts hadn't been paid for some years.

Mr Barr: There was some media attention to this matter, yes. It's very timely that there is this funding within the budget to address this specific concern, and so we look to expand the program into the financial outyears.

DR FOSKEY: Sometimes you have to ask questions about things that aren't in the budget because they are not in the budget.

MR MULCAHY: Hear, hear!

MR STEFANIAK: Good point.

DR FOSKEY: I'm wondering what happened to the community task force report while it was in your bailiwick.

Mr Barr: Aspects of the report and the government response remain with me as Minister for Industrial Relations. However, the bulk of the implementation of the report and the government response does sit with the minister for community services. The Chief Minister has written to all members of the task force responding to the recommendations and providing a progress report on the implementation of the initiatives. He has, of course, requested that the Deputy Chief Minister take the lead on the matters raised by the task force in her portfolio around community sector sustainability. You would have noticed in the budget papers the recent increase in indexation for the community sector. It was a composite of CPI and the wage price index, I understand. There was an increase in the level of indexation that had been previously provided.

MR MULCAHY: Is this a new dimension again?

Mr Barr: Reflecting that wage costs are a larger component within the community sector than perhaps other industry sectors, Mr Mulcahy. In relation to the areas that I have responsibility for, I think that perhaps the most important area would be around the establishment of a long service leave scheme similar to what is on offer for the construction and cleaning industries. We have been having some negotiations and some discussions with the people charged with administering those existing schemes to have a look at possible models for the sector and possible support from those schemes in terms of the establishment of a new one. Those discussions are at an early stage and I don't want to pre-empt anything there. I think there is a possibility of some involvement from those existing schemes in the establishment of the new one, but

that's work that still needs to be done and completed. That's something that I am progressing through the IR portfolio.

MR MULCAHY: How many cases of default in the community sector in the provision of long service leave are you aware of?

Mr Barr: I will have to take that on notice. I don't have all of the stats in front of me, but there are some issues, I understand, particularly when community sector organisations would lose aspects of funding support, say, when a grant program expired. I will have to get that information to you, Mr Mulcahy.

THE CHAIR: Minister, on that note, it is probably appropriate that we now deal with the ACT Construction Industry Long Service Leave Authority and the ACT Cleaning Industry Long Service Leave Authority statements of intent.

Mr Barr: We need to make a changeover.

THE CHAIR: Mr Roberts, are you aware of the conditions in the witness statement there?

Mr Roberts: I'm not familiar with them.

THE CHAIR: All right, I'll read it 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.

MR MULCAHY: Minister, I refer to a bill introduced on 29 May and passed on 7 June, the Long Service Leave (Building and Construction and Contract Cleaning Industries) Legislation Amendment Bill. I raised an issue then and it wasn't addressed. I'm just curious to know why it was rushed into the Assembly. It obviously had to be passed before the end of the financial year, but is there an issue with the administration of these areas of the authority? I don't know if you or Mr Roberts can answer that, but it seemed an extraordinarily rushed job, given the normal protocols in this Assembly of consultation on legislation.

Mr Barr: Certainly. As I indicated at the time of tabling the legislation, I was asking the Assembly to consider the matter quickly. I think I tabled it on the Tuesday of the sitting fortnight and sought to deal with it the following Thursday. Following the untimely death of the chair of both boards, there was a period where things slowed down a little and then, with my coming in as the new minister not long after that, there were some delays in that process. That was unfortunate but largely the events were beyond our control. That provides a lead-in to the particular issue.

MR MULCAHY: So there are no fundamental issues with the administration.

Mr Barr: No, there are no fundamental issues. There is always a need when new chairs come into those roles for them to familiarise themselves with the processes, and equally for me as a new minister. In relation to the particular piece of legislation, there are also, as I'm sure you would be aware, particular time lines and cut-offs around when legislation makes it to cabinet and then when it appears on the government's forward program. A key date was missed and that meant that, rather than being introduced in the sitting period prior to the start of that sitting fortnight, rather than the month earlier that would have been a more normal time frame for the Assembly to debate it, it had to be introduced on the Tuesday. I indicated at the time of tabling the legislation my apologies for the fact that it had to be dealt with quickly but we did, as I think you indicated during the debate, provide briefings for all members who were interested in the detail of the legislation.

MR MULCAHY: An issue has been raised with me. It was raised in the very limited time I had to consult with industry and it has since come up from another source, and I emphasise that I haven't seen evidence of the matter I am going to raise. It's speculation, so I'm not making the allegation, but there is concern in particularly the cleaning industry that information may be getting out and becoming accessed by competitors, some of whom I believe are on the board. You did give me an indication, I think, or the chief executive indirectly conveyed the message that access to confidential information is quite restricted. I was also, I believe, informed that there was a review of the protocols and the handling of matters of that nature and I was troubled when I got a further call from a concerned contractor because I hadn't heard that in other areas of government administration. What has prompted the review that is underway of the handling of information? Is that routine or is there something that is troubling people? How confident can the industry be that those on the board could not possibly access confidential data?

Mr Barr: I think we indicated in response to this issue at the time that there are protocols for those who sit on the board in relation to confidentiality of information. I might get Mr Roberts to add a little bit more on the process—it's a level of detail that I don't have in my head at this time—in terms of what the protocols are for those who sit on the boards and then also the basis for the review.

Mr Roberts: There is a code of conduct that has been signed by all board members relative to their role on the boards, as would normally be the case in such an authority. To come back to your question relative to the review of access to information, I am not so sure that there is such a review happening. I am not sure where you got that particular line of questioning from.

MR MULCAHY: I think it was the minister. I think the minister raised it in the Assembly.

Mr Roberts: Perhaps I can clarify that in a broader sense. In the interests of ensuring that we are performing at best practice relative to corporate governance, we have taken on the services of a consultant to benchmark us against best practice relative to our corporate governance within both entities. As a part of that exercise, the question of availability of information which comes to board members regularly at board meetings may be questioned or tidied up, as the case may be. I am not aware in any way of any particular case specific of an issue or a problem in that area.

MR MULCAHY: You say that you have not heard of a specific case. Has this issue ever been raised with you by anybody?

Mr Roberts: No, it has not.

MR MULCAHY: Who is doing this review?

Mr Roberts: RSM Bird Cameron is doing the review for us.

MR MULCAHY: On 2CC there was an interview with Mr Lyndal Ryan of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union when he was asked to justify a claim that the majority of ACT cleaning companies had signed a code of conduct agreement when in fact only a few ACT employers had signed the code, and he responded by saying that the majority was meant in the sense—

Mr Barr: “She” actually.

MR MULCAHY: She; it is Lyndal.

DR FOSKEY: Yes.

MR MULCAHY: It is a female. Yes; all right. She responded by saying that “the majority” was meant in the sense of the number of employees in the square metres cleaned rather than the actual number of employers. Is there any concern on your part that Ms Ryan could have obtained that information from your organisation—that level of detail on statistics for cleaning companies?

Mr Roberts: No, absolutely not. Lyndal has assured me—even at the last board meeting—that she does not ever—in any way, shape or form—make use of the information that she gains from board meetings. Lyndal has her own sources of information, and she relies totally and solely upon her own sources. She is very aware of her responsibilities as a board member—that she is limited or in fact forbidden completely to use any information that comes to her via the board meeting.

MR MULCAHY: But could they get that from the board meetings? Is that data available?

Mr Roberts: Certainly there is information given to a board meeting relative to the

compliance of industry or the compliance by industry with the legislation. At each board meeting there is, for instance, a report given by the compliance inspectors as to the level of compliance—activities that they have been involved in, employers that they are dealing with—

MR MULCAHY: Does that name individual employers?

Mr Roberts: They would be named, yes.

MR MULCAHY: So it is quite easy to access that information?

Mr Roberts: The information—

MR MULCAHY: You are just relying on people hearing it, knowing about it and not using it in any other capacity?

Mr Roberts: I have been given—

Mr Barr: Presuming they do not hear about it from other sources anyway.

Mr Roberts: Quite so.

Mr Barr: As you would expect—

Mr Roberts: It is a small town.

Mr Barr: Yes, indeed.

MR MULCAHY: I do not know if that small town gives you access to that level of statistical data, though.

Mr Roberts: As I say, I do not know what situation you are talking about because nothing of this nature has come to my knowledge. I am not aware of any case specifically relative to your questioning.

MR MULCAHY: All right. That is all. It does keep coming up. It has come up twice now. It troubles me why people would be subscribing to this view in relation to your organisation.

Mr Roberts: Quite so.

THE CHAIR: Are there any further questions for this output class? Thank you, Mr Roberts.

Mr Roberts: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Members, we will move on. We now have the ACT building and construction industry training fund statement of intent and Mr Gary Guy. Mr Guy, you are aware of the witness card?

Mr Guy: Yes, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Are there any questions for the minister or Mr Guy on this output class? No questions.

Mr Barr: He has just come all the way. You have to ask him a question, Bill.

THE CHAIR: He has come back for us.

MR STEFANIAK: Mr Guy, how much currently is in the fund; how much do you anticipate spending in this coming financial year; and exactly what on?

Mr Guy: Currently in the fund in our working account we have roughly \$900,000. We have a reserve fund that at this point in time contains about \$2.2 million. The reason for us having that reserve fund is that we honestly believe that in the future, when the construction industry starts to get out of the boom that it is in currently and starts to go into a bust stage, there could be a huge number of apprentices who would be out of work or whose employers would be seeking to put them off because of their work situation. We want to have that reserve fund available for those employers at that particular point in time when we can assist them with additional training, supplemented training or any other kind of training we can, so that those apprentices are not lost to the industry and so that they do get through and get their full qualification at the end.

MR STEFANIAK: How many apprentices have you got in the industry at present?

Mr Guy: In the industry at the moment there are probably 600 apprentices.

MR STEFANIAK: So if anyone is an apprentice in the industry you would be able to contact them and be able to assist as far as your training fund would be—

Mr Guy: We would work through the group training companies, we would work through the RTOs and we would work through the training authority in the ACT, to get the names of all the individual employers and apprentices.

MRS BURKE: How many group training companies are there currently?

Mr Guy: Currently we fund six group training companies: CITEA, MBA, HIA, Capital Skills, Electro Group Training and RGT.

MRS BURKE: And you fund those?

Mr Guy: We fund those, yes; for each apprentice working for those particular companies we pay \$1,000 per year.

MR STEFANIAK: I have one final one. Have you got any projects which you are directly involved in or have initiated? I think I can recall the fund and some of those groups being involved in some model projects where basically apprentices were doing a lot of the work on some of the houses, for example.

Mr Guy: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: I think there were some model houses being built. Have you got any of those continuing to run?

Mr Guy: Each year we get applications from different associations, mostly group training companies, to run programs—and from other areas. We are sponsoring Floriade at this particular point in time. We are paying some money to Floriade, who then pay that on to CITEA and CIT—the apprentices who work for those—to do projects at Floriade. They have done that over the last four years. They are building a boardwalk. They are building something to do with a beach—I think that is the theme this year: Australiana, virtually.

Mr Barr: Aussie icons.

Mr Guy: Aussie icons.

Mr Barr: Absolutely. Look forward to it.

Mr Guy: We do some school-based programs that we are funding for students at risk in year 10, year 11 and year 12. We are funding a couple of group training companies in those particular programs. At this point in time we are not funding any building of homes or anything like that—or sustainability homes or environmental homes—but, if any group came to us and wanted some funding, we would do that kind of funding. We have funded in the past.

MRS BURKE: Have you ever investigated the CRASH scheme in Sydney? Are you aware of that? I cannot remember what the acronym is; I am sorry. It utilises students in the industry to redevelop or refurbish properties. With the schools issue coming up, minister, I wonder if you would consider that as an option. I have been pushing—

Mr Barr: I am not familiar with the scheme, but we will have a look at it.

MRS BURKE: All right. I am happy to talk to you after today, but Mr Guy may be able to get some information on that scheme. It was apparently quite successful. It allows students to have hands-on training. I was also thinking that, with the closed schools situation, we may have some synergy in working with young people, particularly in relation to skill shortages. Would you be happy to look into that, minister?

Mr Barr: Yes, we will certainly look at that.

MRS BURKE: Thank you.

DR FOSKEY: I was wondering to what extent the authority, possibly through some of its partners, provides support to apprentices in the building industry. Anecdotal information indicates that some employers support apprentices better than others and some do not support them at all. And do you have a role to play in improving that support?

Mr Guy: Individually we cannot support any individual apprentice as far as wages go or anything like that—

DR FOSKEY: No; it is more—

Mr Guy: Because we deal with the training side.

DR FOSKEY: It is not a financial issue of support; it is so that when they go to the workplace they know what to do and who to go to if they need information or have a complaint. It is that kind of pastoral care support.

Mr Guy: At this point in time we fund a field officer in each of the group training companies. They are there to provide pastoral care and monitoring of apprentices. We also now provide some funding to the Construction Industry Training Council; they have employed a field officer on a part-time basis—I think it is three days per week. One of the roles of that gentleman is to look after the apprentices who are not working for group training companies. The group training companies have a pastoral care officer and a monitoring officer, but anybody who is employed by what we call a mainstream employer, outside a group training company, has an opportunity to go and speak to this particular person and he will refer them on to whoever they have to be referred to.

DR FOSKEY: Would all apprentices know that they could do that?

Mr Guy: That position has been in operation only since January this year, so at this particular point in time I do not think everybody would know. But the gentleman is getting around. I believe he is going to all the CITs and the RTOs and telling them that he is available and that, if any apprentices have any problems, they can come back to him and he will discuss it.

THE CHAIR: I wonder if you could expand a bit on the students at risk program and advise of any outcomes that have been achieved.

Mr Guy: The student at risk program is a program that the Master Builders Association or the Master Builders Group Training Company runs in conjunction with PBS. They have had a program running now for the last two years, and it is still running now. At this point in time they have not asked me for any funding this year, but I have no doubt that they will somewhere down the line.

It is a program where the apprentices—the year 10, 11 and 12 boys or girls—go from their schools and work for PBS. They put them through a range of the trades. Instead of just going and doing carpentry or electrical or just doing plastering, they run them through the range of trades. They might do two months or a month with each particular industry trade. It gives the individual an idea of what it covers. Some people may want to be a carpenter but find out that carpentry is not for them—but they have become a very good plasterer, or whatever is the case. It is an extremely successful program. The success we have had out of it and the uptake into apprenticeships by people who commenced those are excellent.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: In terms of the skills shortage and the whole issue around that, what is the focus of the authority in relation to broadly encouraging more people into industries? We know that it is hard to get carpenters and plumbers and so on. I know it is a national problem—before the minister mentions that, let me say that I know that it is. But specifically we need to look at the ACT. That is one part of the question. Secondly, what is your focus and vision for apprenticeship for people with disabilities? Given the safety issues around a lot of those—where it would simply be impracticable—there would be some with mild disabilities. What is your focus and vision for that?

Mr Guy: I will just answer the second question first if that is okay.

MRS BURKE: Thank you.

Mr Guy: As far as disabilities go, and people in equity positions and access and equity, we provide additional funding to any employer who takes on a person from an indigenous background. We provide \$2,000 each year for them throughout their apprenticeship term. For women entering a trade, or a non-traditional trade, we also provide \$2,000 to an employer who takes one on. With a person who has a disability—depending on what that disability is, we will fund them as well. We have funded up to \$175 per week for an apprentice who had a major disability; that assisted his employer to continue with his employment and keep him on. In the access and equity funding we do provide additional funding over what we give to anybody else.

As to your first question, about skills shortages, we look at those each year in particular areas where there is a skill shortage and we provide an additional \$4,000 to any employer who takes an apprentice on in those particular trade areas or vocations. As to the first section of your question about how we get people into the industry—unfortunately, I cannot answer that.

MRS BURKE: Who do you work with to achieve that? Over the last fortnight, we have heard a lot about being a disparate sort of community in many senses—that we are not bringing people together to work more effectively for better outcomes. Who do you work with to—

Mr Guy: We work with the industry training council—Vince Ball from the industry training council. We provide them with funding for—virtually a school liaison officer.

MRS BURKE: Yes. I used to be one, so I am well aware of what those are.

Mr Guy: So through the industry training council. The training authority itself—we do not do a lot of that, but we do fund people who have more expertise in it than we have. We are only a small office of three people.

MRS BURKE: Maybe I could be so bold as to make a suggestion: could you look to the future and bring together more of these groups—for the want of a better word—in a forum-type situation where you can really start to communicate and work more effectively rather than duplicate effort? Minister?

Mr Barr: I was going to highlight the Breakthrough 500 initiative.

MRS BURKE: I think that was another Liberal initiative, wasn't it?

Mr Barr: Indeed.

MRS BURKE: Was it the 1,000?

MR STEFANIAK: Yes, I think it was 1,000.

MRS BURKE: And it is all good; it is excellent.

MR STEFANIAK: And you cut it back to 500.

Mr Barr: We are having a “yours is bigger than ours” conversation, are we?

MRS BURKE: No, I did not say that, minister.

Mr Barr: Surely we have gone beyond that now.

MRS BURKE: I did not say that. I think it is great; I agree with you.

Mr Barr: No; leave it to Bill to say that.

MRS BURKE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Thank you for coming back, Mr Guy and officials, and thank you, minister, for staying longer for us.

Mr Barr: So that is it? You do not need to talk to me anymore?

THE CHAIR: We do not need to talk to you anymore.

Mr Barr: That will be a collective relief for all of us, I am sure.

THE CHAIR: The committee will come back at 2.30 this afternoon for the commissioner for the environment.

Meeting adjourned from 12.44 to 2.32 pm.

Appearance:

Office of the Commissioner for the Environment
Stinson, Mr Darro, Commissioner

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, and welcome to the 2007 estimates hearings into the budget. We have this afternoon Mr Darro Stinson, the Commissioner for the Environment in the ACT. Mr Stinson, before we begin I will read out the witness card to 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 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.

Thanks for coming in, Mr Stinson. Are there any opening comments you would like to make to the committee before we begin questions?

Mr Stinson: I am here at your pleasure. That is fine.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much then. Dr Foskey?

DR FOSKEY: I just realised that because you are here without a minister some of our questions are probably not appropriately directed to you, but we will have to bear with that.

THE CHAIR: If there are ones that should be answered directly by the minister perhaps we will put them on notice.

DR FOSKEY: Yes. I do not know whether you can answer this, but the top of page 299 of budget paper 4 says “Output class to cease after 2006-07”. I am curious as to what that means. Can you shed any light on that?

Mr Stinson: I am afraid I cannot.

DR FOSKEY: No? Well, we will have to ask that of the Chief Minister.

DR FOSKEY: Could you please report on the progress of the state of the environment report?

Mr Stinson: Certainly. I started this position at the end of May, and for the past eight weeks we have been moving quickly to try to meet the deadline to deliver at the end of December 2007. So we are working hard on that. I have one meeting after today's session and I will have met with all the heads of agencies to inform them of our requirements to collect information that we require. So we are well on the way. We have engaged a number of writers and are putting together reference groups that will give us advice with respect to the indicators that we will report on in the SOE coming up.

DR FOSKEY: Are you still working part-time to do all that?

Mr Stinson: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: So, two days a week?

Mr Stinson: In my capacity as the commissioner my statutory responsibilities, which include the SOE, are two days a week. However, I have been employed for an additional one day a week to look at broadening the future role of the commissioner. So they have asked me to look at some things around that, and I have been doing that as well.

DR FOSKEY: Commissioner for environment and sustainability perhaps? Perhaps that is why the output class will cease.

Mr Stinson: There are a couple of possibilities and to my knowledge no decisions have been taken on that. I hope to have my report to the minister by 10 August.

DR FOSKEY: Have you been given extra funds? It sounded to me like you are engaging some outside people to help with the state of the environment report. You said writers and so on. Does that all come out of the funding of \$435,000?

Mr Stinson: Yes, it does.

DR FOSKEY: I have more questions but I might let someone else have a go.

MR STEFANIAK: What is the staffing profile for the office? How many staff did you have last financial year and how many do you have this year? I am also interested in the initial budget. How will the office accommodate any increases you might need during the following year? Maybe you do not need it.

Mr Stinson: There is a part-time commissioner two days a week. And then there are two full-time employees in the office. As we ramp up with respect to the writing of the state of the environment report, which we have just started, we start to bring on additional contract writers. So, that will vary anywhere from two to six, depending on how agencies are able to respond with the information we require. So, between now and December that number would vary.

MR STEFANIAK: Right. If I understand, you are not going to have the report out until December?

Mr Stinson: That is correct. The reporting period ended 30 June, and I am obligated to deliver it to the minister six months thereafter: the end of December.

MR STEFANIAK: What is the cost of authorising, publishing and disseminating the report?

Mr Stinson: My understanding is several years ago the funding would come two years before the reporting period for the SOE. However, I believe it was Joe Baker, two commissioners ago, who suggested that the money be spread over the four-year period because there is work ongoing. So the total budget is in the neighbourhood of \$435,000 and that is the budget for the year. That is the wages, accommodation, IT and the preparation of the report.

MR STEFANIAK: So is the report within budget? Do you anticipate that it is not going to be a problem?

Mr Stinson: I am going to endeavour to deliver it on budget. We did have some funds rolled over from last year that will assist us in delivering it.

MR STEFANIAK: Does the report include any new elements, such as, for example, but not limited to, climate change, in that you make recommendations as to how our region might respond to those new elements?

Mr Stinson: I think there are two aspects to that. Yes, there are indicators related to climate change. The indicators from the last state of the environment report will not change this year. The whole impetus of a state of the environment report is to show the trend, so we are not going to adjust the indicators. However, the other piece associated with the SOE is the recently released regional state of the environment report that was done for the regional leaders. I think the two of them meld quite nicely regionally, external to the ACT, and certainly with what we come up with at the end of December I think they will marry quite nicely.

MR STEFANIAK: How many copies of the report will be printed? What would you envisage printing this time? It is available electronically, is it?

Mr Stinson: Yes, it does go on the website, and that is what we try to encourage. However, we will gauge the interest in paper copies and try to keep them to the minimum.

MR STEFANIAK: How many would you have printed?

Mr Stinson: I believe the last SOE was in the neighbourhood of 100, but I would have to check on that.

MR STEFANIAK: We would get that here, would we?

Mr Stinson: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: I do not believe there were any hard copies last time.

MR STEFANIAK: No, I cannot recall it. I would love one, I must say.

Mr Stinson: I will confirm that.

MR STEFANIAK: If you would.

Mr Stinson: And if you would like a paper copy, I will make sure you get one.

MR STEFANIAK: That would be fantastic. Just one final thing before other people have a go. How will the availability of the report be publicised? How will you tell people that this is available on the web or you can get a copy at such and such or see a copy at such and such?

Mr Stinson: I am anticipating that in the lead-up to the release I would do a little bit of media notification that it is coming up, with a media release associated with it upon my delivering it to the minister. We will endeavour to make sure it gets as wide a distribution as possible. We deal with all of the agencies and I am quite sure that they are all going to be interested, as well as many of the stakeholders that have an input in it, especially through the reference groups, university et cetera.

MR STEFANIAK: So, basically, the hard copy is sent to the minister, but the rest of it is on the web so you just encourage people to go to the web to get it?

Mr Stinson: That is correct.

MR STEFANIAK: So you do not have a distribution list for hard copies as such?

Mr Stinson: Not that I am aware of.

THE CHAIR: Mr Stinson, you touched on the regional state of the environment report. Would you be able to provide some of the findings that have come out of that one?

Mr Stinson: Off the top of my head there are a couple. I just made a presentation to the regional leaders forum two weeks ago, and a number of key elements came out of that for the shires in the area. Some of the big ones were some of the obvious things around drought and water quality and quantity. But the other interesting component that came out of it was the change in land uses associated with the drought. The drought was believed to be driving some of the land use changes—different kinds of crops, different grazing opportunities, those kinds of things—in some of those rural areas.

The other one that was quite predominant was the impact that fire has had on the natural environment and the natural ecosystems in the region. We all know it is there and it is happening regularly but the impact it was having on the land was significant, and is highlighted in the report as well.

Another interesting factor in most of the areas adjacent to the ACT was an ageing population with a reduction in the young people leaving the rural areas. So, there was quite a significant change in some areas. Not so much on the south coast. In those shires there seemed to be an increase, but certainly in the rural areas, ageing population, decreasing younger population in the area. So those are a few of the highlights we identified.

THE CHAIR: Has there been any change to environmental awareness amongst the population?

Mr Stinson: That was one of the other items that came out in the RFL as well. A strong indication about a sense of awareness and behaviour change right across the region, people understanding how to use water—water conservation but also how to use water—in a different way was quite predominant. However, there seemed to be an increased awareness of the other environmental factors that we all face and the challenges we face, which was very encouraging, coming out of that presentation. Three of the shires have taken up the office of the commissioner’s offer from two weeks ago of a full briefing on that, and I anticipate that we will probably endeavour to engage a few more over the coming months.

THE CHAIR: Good. Ms Porter?

MS PORTER: You mentioned maybe a change in types of cropping and other rural industries in response to the change in our climate as such. Would they be more water-friendly types of industries or cropping that people are getting engaged in?

Mr Stinson: I would like to say that but I am not convinced that is the case.

MS PORTER: You are not convinced it is necessarily so?

Mr Stinson: I think in some cases they were looking towards, for example, forestry plantation kinds of opportunities, where if we have a bad year in water it is not as detrimental as it is to a green crop. That is one example. I would be hesitant to draw that conclusion.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke?

MRS BURKE: Good afternoon, Mr Stinson, and thank you for appearing this afternoon. Page 285 of budget paper 4 says, in your output description, “investigation of complaints by Ministerial direction”—and on page 299 you note that there were none—“or where a Territory agency’s actions would have a substantial impact on the environment”. It is the latter one I want to refer to. How many complaints were dealt with during 2006-07, and how many of those reached outcomes that satisfied the complainants?

Mr Stinson: The numbers are a little bit misleading, because the role that the office of the commissioner plays with respect to the complaint is that the complaint comes in and the commissioner and the office endeavour to try to solve the issue before it becomes a full-blown, official, formal complaint. I honestly could not tell you how

many of those there were. I can tell you that in the past eight weeks I have had four, and the four of them were satisfactorily dealt with without any formal complaint being levied. There were two formal complaints with respect to the dragway proposal, and they were still on the books when I came in at the end of May. I have since responded to them and they have been resolved satisfactorily.

MRS BURKE: You may need to take this on notice, but it might help the committee if you could give us a picture of those complaints and the general nature of those complaints over perhaps the last 12 months. Was there any emphasis on any particular agency or department? Finally—you may be able to tell me this now, but you may need to take it on notice—what are the resource requirements, including cost, to investigate and resolve the complaints? What sort of impact does that have on you as a commissioner?

Mr Stinson: I could probably answer the latter. As to the budget that is in place right now for a part-time commissioner and two full-time staff members, it would be difficult to do the job if there were a number of complaints and/or requests for investigation. My view is that if I were asked to do that right now I would then be requesting resources in order to fulfil that part of my responsibility.

MRS BURKE: Right, so the current workload is up to the maximum output. What would take you over the top?

Mr Stinson: If, for example, the office of the commissioner or the minister requested an investigation into an agency's actions with respect to the impact it is having on the environment, that would require careful consideration associated with resourcing and my capability to fulfil that at this point.

MRS BURKE: There are no current budgetary constraints on you to complete the works that you have in hand at the moment.

Mr Stinson: We did have some rollover from last year that is going to allow us, I believe, to deliver on the SOE report. So, barring any investigations or other things—

MRS BURKE: So you are working on a rollover to complete this year's workload, basically.

Mr Stinson: That's correct.

MRS BURKE: And what amount would that be?

Mr Stinson: It is \$435,000.

MR STEFANIAK: How much was the rollover?

DR FOSKEY: It was \$6,000, I think. That's what it looks like.

MRS BURKE: No, the estimated outcome was \$435,000 and the budget was \$435,000.

Mr Stinson: I will have to take that on notice. It was under \$100,000.

DR FOSKEY: Mr Stinson, I am interested in your experience for the office of commissioner. I understand that you are an interim commissioner; is that right?

Mr Stinson: That's correct.

DR FOSKEY: But you are employed till the delivery of the state of the environment report.

Mr Stinson: My current contract is until the end of August of this year, with the option for that to be extended.

DR FOSKEY: I was just wondering about what qualifications you have that made you interested in the position, your experience and beliefs.

Mr Stinson: I spent 30 years of my career in natural resource management in Canada and Australia. My most recent experience in Australia has been with the director of the Environment Protection Authority for 15 months in the ACT. I have run protected areas programs roughly half the size of Queensland in Canada. I have worked with aquatic and terrestrial protected areas in Canada. Since coming to Australia, I have worked with the commonwealth national parks as a consultant on a number of issues around tourism and protected areas in the Northern Territory. My education background is in forestry, with some environmental studies along the way.

DR FOSKEY: Do you work elsewhere for the ACT government on the two days when you are not employed as the commissioner?

Mr Stinson: No, I do not. The opportunity had presented itself but I saw that as a conflict of interest, given my role in this job.

DR FOSKEY: That's your decision. I was also wondering if it would be possible for us to get a hard copy of the state of the region report. Are there any hard copies of that around?

Mr Stinson: Yes, I can do that.

DR FOSKEY: My officers would love one.

THE CHAIR: If there is an electronic copy, perhaps you could send it to the secretary and we can distribute it in that way.

Mr Stinson: I do have CDs which I could very quickly get to your office.

DR FOSKEY: That would be good, all the colours and the pretty pictures.

THE CHAIR: And we are not wasting paper.

DR FOSKEY: I'm interested in what topics the reference groups have for the state of the environment report. Also, I don't know if you can give us the details of who you

have got either chairing them or as members of those reference groups.

Mr Stinson: The reference groups have not been struck yet. One of the things I'm trying to do in the short term in order to deliver is if the indicators have not changed substantially from the last reporting period, then there is a question in my mind as to the value of having a reference group in the traditional sense of what the reference groups have done in the past. So we are looking at whether we may be able to do something that would just speed up the process a little bit without compromising the interpretation of that data. That is yet to be determined. I have not made a decision on that. That will only depend if there is a particular indicator where the data has not changed substantially. I can think of a couple off the top of my head that might fall into that category.

DR FOSKEY: All the data already exists. You don't have to go and set up particular studies and processes to find the data. Governments are already reporting on these things.

Mr Stinson: It's just a matter of when the agencies have that information available. Depending on what it is we are asking for, some of it takes up to six or seven weeks before we are able to access it. What I've been talking to heads of agencies about for the last three or four weeks is determining that. Each of the indicators essentially has a reference group and depending on what the indicator is determines the size and the complexity of that indicator. For example, catchments have a much larger reference group just because of the variability. Community wellbeing has a large reference group as well, whereas some of the others are two or three individuals.

DR FOSKEY: What is the role of the reference groups? You have the data from the agencies, you have the writers and you have yourself with your overseeing role. What do the reference groups actually do?

Mr Stinson: The reference groups are giving me advice in terms of their interpretation of the data. They are looking at the data and giving me their interpretation of what the data means in comparison with the data from the last reporting period.

DR FOSKEY: It's a peer review process.

Mr Stinson: Exactly. It's peer review as well as getting expert advice.

MR STEFANIAK: The report is on the web. Do you actually sell the report?

Mr Stinson: No.

MR STEFANIAK: Are the report's recommendations only recommendations? Can you actually force any organisation, group or agency to take up those recommendations, or are they just recommendations?

Mr Stinson: The office of the commissioner is not in a position to enforce them if they choose not to take them up. All I can do is report in the next reporting period that nothing was done on a particular recommendation.

MR STEFANIAK: What has been the attitudinal trend over, say, the last five years in terms of the uptake of your recommendations; in other words, of government agencies over, say, the years since 2001-02 actually taking up your recommendations? Do you keep data on that?

Mr Stinson: Yes, we do and we will report on that in the annual report this year as well.

MR STEFANIAK: Is that in last year's annual report as well?

Mr Stinson: I'm assuming it is. However, I would have to take it on notice to confirm that.

DR FOSKEY: It is.

MR STEFANIAK: If you could, fine. I understand there have been no investigations in the current financial year. Typically, how many investigations which you initiate would occur each financial year, given that there were none in 2006-07?

Mr Stinson: My understanding is that there was only one. There was none in the time Rosemary Purdie was in the position. I believe there was only one when Joe Baker was the commissioner.

MR STEFANIAK: What was the general nature of the two investigations you have referred to? There have only ever been two.

Mr Stinson: There has only been one that I'm aware of.

DR FOSKEY: For five months or so we were without a Commissioner for the Environment.

Mr Stinson: That's correct.

DR FOSKEY: Was there a backlog of work, a backlog of issues?

Mr Stinson: There were a number of things that essentially the SOE had not progressed as far along as it could have.

DR FOSKEY: That's a worry.

Mr Stinson: That and the future role of the office are the two things that I have been focusing on in the last eight weeks.

DR FOSKEY: Something that I have generally raised when we have had the Commissioner for the Environment before us and that I am wondering if you can see what we can do about it is promoting the commissioner. I know there is a website. We have raised issues about the website a couple of times. Do you think that there is a role for promoting the Office of the Commissioner for the Environment so that people would know that they actually could contact it if they had a complaint?

Mr Stinson: I think there is an advocacy role from my discussions with my predecessor as an example. With only being two days a week, if you stick your hand up and say, “Here I am,” then the expectation is that there will be an uptake. In the capacity to deliver you then create expectations that in the last several years would not be realised simply because of the part-time commissioner and the resourcing associated with it. One of the things I have been asked to look at as part of the future role is more of an advocacy role that might see a full-time commissioner down the road. There are no decisions being made on that, but I am hopeful that’s where it is going.

DR FOSKEY: That is what you are looking into and what you will report on. You hand the state of the environment report to the minister in December. Are you able to make it public at the same time as you hand it to the minister or does it then go through the process of the government making it public?

Mr Stinson: I make it known that I have passed the report on to the minister at the end of December 2007. It’s my understanding that the government has an opportunity to respond to the recommendations, but that is my report at the end of December.

MRS BURKE: Do you follow up on those recommendations? I am just thinking of how other commissioners and offices work in that same role. If you made some recommendations to the government, would you follow them through? Do you give them a time limit? What do you do as a process there?

Mr Stinson: The commissioner is not in a position to enforce the recommendations that are put in place. However, I think the role of the commissioner is to encourage those things to occur. The government, in its response to the recommendations, indicate whether they are in support of the recommendations. There are four other models of the commissioner that I have been using to look at what the future role might be and there are varying degrees of encouragement, everything from enforcement in one particular jurisdiction to an area where the progress is measured, not in a punitive manner but in a manner that would encourage—

MRS BURKE: “Encouragement” is a good word. I like that word.

Mr Stinson: Yes, to move it along, I guess, in terms of that that gets measured gets managed.

MRS BURKE: I am trying to see what sort of interaction and play there is between once you have done your report and recommendations, passed them on to the government and they come here through due process. You follow up and then what?

THE CHAIR: There is the government response.

MRS BURKE: There is the government response, yes. How do you track and follow that? Who talks to whom? Do you talk to the minister?

Mr Stinson: With respect to the recommendations, once they come back there is ongoing dialogue with several of the agencies; quite closely, in fact. As to movement

on those recommendations, again it's the commissioner's ability to encourage them to make it happen. However, if the government of the day has endorsed those recommendations, for the most part those are taken up by the agencies.

MRS BURKE: I am concerned to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks. Something could be of key importance and everybody could assume that somebody else is doing something about it.

Mr Stinson: Yes, I see where you are coming from. The only other mechanism there is with respect to the annual report. The commissioner does report on the progress associated with the recommendations.

MRS BURKE: Do you track and follow how the recommendations are going?

Mr Stinson: On a yearly basis, yes.

MRS BURKE: By government or agencies, and then report on that, and then write back to the minister.

Mr Stinson: Yes, as part of the annual report process. The office of the commissioner is in the position that, if there was a recommendation that was not being acted on and was having an impact within the legislation, there is the ability then to initiate an investigation. So the commissioner does have that authority within the act.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, Mr Stinson, for coming in and sharing your time with us. We will get a copy of the transcript to you for checking as soon as we can. If there are any questions on notice, we would appreciate a response within five days.

The committee adjourned at 3.05 pm.