



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2008-2009

(Reference: Appropriation Bill 2008-2009)

Members:

**MS M PORTER (The Chair)
MRS V DUNNE (The Deputy Chair)
MR M GENTLEMAN
MS K MACDONALD
MR B SMYTH**

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

WEDNESDAY, 28 MAY 2008

**Secretary to the committee:
Dr S Lilburn (Ph: 6205 0490)**

By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the committee office of the Legislative Assembly (Ph: 6205 0127).

APPEARANCES

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services	833
Department of Territory and Municipal Services	927

The committee met at 8.32 am.

Appearances:

Gallagher, Ms Katy, Minister for Health, Minister for Children and Young People,
Minister for Disability and Community Services, Minister for Women

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services

Lambert, Ms Sandra, Chief Executive

Hehir, Mr Martin, Deputy Chief Executive

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Director Finance, Finance & Budget

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Senior Director, Governance Advocacy & Community
Policy

Mitchell, Ms Megan, Executive Director, Office for Children Youth and Family
Support

Duggan, Mr Frank, Senior Director, Office for Children Youth and Family
Support

Harwood, Mr Neil, Director, ATISIS

Wyles, Mr Paul, Director, Youth Directorate

Kitchen, Ms Jenny, Director, Service and Sector Development

Pappas, Ms Helen, Senior Manager, Early Intervention and Prevention Services

Collett, Mr David, Director, Asset Management

Ford, Ms Lois, Executive Director, Disability ACT

Whale, Mr Andrew, Director, Disability ACT

Hayes, Ms Roslyn, Senior Manager, Therapy Services

Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Director, Housing ACT

THE CHAIR: Welcome to the Select Committee on Estimates 2008-2009. You are all familiar with the yellow card and the privilege information that is contained within it?

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

THE CHAIR: For the record, I move:

That the statement be incorporated in *Hansard*.

The statement read as follows:

Privilege statement

To be read at the commencement of a hearing and reiterated as necessary for new witnesses

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.

THE CHAIR: Did you want to make any opening remarks in this area, minister?

Ms Gallagher: I will make a few opening comments. I thank the committee for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I also thank the committee for commencing early so that we can hopefully fit what we need to in the earlier part of the day.

This department covers an enormous area in terms of delivery of services to the ACT community. It covers disability, in relation to my portfolio, in the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support and in community services. It does not sound like a great deal when you say it like that but, in terms of the impact on families in the ACT, next to health and education, this is probably the most important department.

We build on last year's budget in relation to disability services. The injection of money that we saw in last year's budget has increased this year, and we have seen that money allocated in terms of areas of greatest need. That is really going into individual support; it is going into accommodation; it is going into community access; it is going into extra respite care—all areas where we know families are in need.

Of course, the negotiations on the commonwealth-state disability agreement are continuing and, hopefully, we will have some resolution to that soon and we will see our money, the \$15 million that we injected in last year's budget, matched by the commonwealth. That is what we were told would happen, and that is what we hope will happen. We hope that we will have that money and, again, apply it through an allocation process to those with priority need.

This budget includes, in relation to disability and through therapy, the commencement of a specialised children and young people's equipment loans service. That is a new program for us, and we are going to see how it goes this year. But I think that will meet another area of need within the disability community on provision of equipment for short-term use by families. I am really pleased to have got that up through the budget process.

The budget has a number of other initiatives for this department. They relate to

community services as well. Of course, there is the large capital injection of \$24.6 million into the community facilities on former school sites. It also has some money to progress the design of a third child and family centre, in west Belconnen, and a number of upgrade programs for existing community facilities, including the building of a community centre in Forde.

The areas within the Office of Children, Youth and Family Support, which we will progress this year on top of our existing business of course, include the integrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support service. That is going to be an extension of a program we have been running and will allow us to get to more families. It is already showing some very good results. It is done in conjunction with education and health. So we look forward to being able to expand that. Time will prove that to be a very effective program.

We have also got some money to commence the policy work on the working with vulnerable people check. That work will then transfer to JACS, I understand, but we will be doing that policy work in the first instance.

There is also some money in the budget for concessions on water. That was our first response to the concessions review that was instigated by Dr Deb Foskey through a motion of hers in the Assembly. We undertook to review our concessions regime. The review really said our concessions were good but they needed to be standardised. Eligibility needed to be standardised and we needed to keep pace with, I think, some of the cost increases.

What the government has done is respond in relation to the water concessions in this first instance. In my report to the Assembly, I said we would be doing further work this year to have a look and make sure that our concessions were keeping pace and that we were standardising eligibility and making it easy for people to understand what concessions they were eligible for. I know, chair, you have written to me several times on this matter.

There is more to say, but I am sure we can do that in response to questions. But all the officials are here ready, willing and able to answer questions that I cannot answer. We will be as helpful as we can.

THE CHAIR: Minister, on page 185 of budget paper 4, the first dot point under the priorities talks about continuing to strengthen the integration of the various areas within the department. From time to time in other hearings, not this estimates hearings but other committee hearings, we have heard from witnesses about how important this integration is and how difficult it is when departments work in isolation from one another. Could you inform the committee how this is going?

Ms Gallagher: Sure. In relation to all of those areas, I can think of several families who probably cross each one of those areas—disability, housing, children, youth, family, therapy, multicultural and community services—in some way. I think the benefits of having them together mean the executive structure, of course, begins across the board.

If there is a family in need—and really the business of this department is responding

to families and families in need—we are able to respond across the department. For example, if we have concerns raised by someone in the community about a child—they may be from another cultural background—the care and protection people are able to liaise with the multicultural unit to see whether there are issues they need to be aware of in terms of the culturally appropriate responses. If the child protection issue is that there is a problem with the housing, the housing area can kick in.

It has got some very nice synergies, this department. It is a big department. I think it is one of those areas where you can be criticised for having all of these things together because of the magnitude and the importance of all of them but my experience—and having been a minister where these elements have sat under other departments—is that we are getting much better outcomes for families now that we are all under the one roof, so to speak. You might want to expand on that.

Ms Lambert. The first thing I would say is that this is something you have got to keep working at; you can never say, “Right, we are integrated and it is finished.” It is one of the things that I have asked my audit and review committee in particular to look at over the next year, particularly in front-line delivery, to see where we can still work on it.

Having said that, the minister has talked about several issues where we have worked really hard together. Another area would be the youth area, for instance, where we have been able to combine quite often multicultural youth with mainstream youth programs and then with youth at risk as well. The youth homelessness work is co-chaired by the woman from the Youth Coalition, Meredith Hunter, and Paul Wyles, who is the director of youth in the office. So we actually do make those connections as much as we can.

There are a range of issues through case studies. Last Christmas we had a terrible incident with a family from a particular community. It happened at 4 o’clock on Christmas Eve. It was a really difficult situation. We did have to remove children. The way we then supported the family on that was actually to make sure we made those connections into the multicultural community so that there was support from the community for the family as well. You can do that always across government, but the fact that it was all in the one portfolio meant we could respond really quickly and do the best we could at the time for the whole family, not just the children. That is one specific example.

Another example would be our priority housing allocation. People from the care and protection areas sit on that panel. They are able to bring their expertise and knowledge to bear when we are housing families that are at risk of coming into the child protection system and give us advice about the best way to house those families, where they might best be housed and so on. That, again, works across government.

Indeed, one of the things we have done in the public housing rental assistance program is give children a priority. You will see—I am sure we will talk about it when we are with Minister Hargreaves on Friday—the work on children and public housing as we think about the rights of children in all of our housing processes as well.

Having it all together has alerted us, I think, to the various issues that we have. I met

with the community regional services officers last week, and at that meeting we had Companion House talk about the issues and the ways they would like to work with the community sector more in relation to the needs of refugees who have been traumatised. It does not happen just within the department; we actually try to make those connections across the community services that we fund as well.

There are many, many examples that I could give you. But I would also reiterate: I can see examples, from where I sit, of where it does not work as well as it should. When that happens, we do look at it and think, “What could we have done better in this circumstance?”

MRS DUNNE: Minister, I would like your views about the extent to which the services in DHCS click with education. In the past, care and protection and youth and family services were co-located with education, and that has changed. It also seems that one of the key elements of recognising when children are in need of intervention comes through the schools. How do you coordinate with the schools generally and, more specifically, how will you coordinate with the schools in relation to the P-2 schools?

Ms Gallagher: We are going to have a very close relationship with the P-2 schools. We are working with education to finalise our response there, but we will be able to offer some outreach-type services from child and family services into those schools. They have not been finalised yet, to my knowledge, but we are in close discussion with education on that.

In relation to care and protection and our response to schools, you are right: teachers are mandated reporters; so we do get a lot of concerns raised through schools. We have been working, certainly since Vardon, to improve our liaison and response to schools. One of the major criticisms that came through from the schools was that they never heard back about concerns they had raised and reports they had given. We have worked through that in terms of being able to provide responses. I think that has strengthened the relationship a lot.

I have not had any concerns raised with me by education on that for some time now, probably a couple of years. I know Sandra and Michele work very closely as chief executives and meet regularly. I hand over to you, Sandra, but, from my point of view, it works very well.

Ms Lambert: One of the things I did when I was given this responsibility was start a committee called the interagency collaborative committee. That has all agencies on it. We have all formally signed a document which details our roles and responsibilities. Education, of course, is part of that. We continue to meet. That committee continues to meet.

At the practical level, with education, the senior executive and the DET senior executive meet probably now about every six weeks almost and we work through issues. Underneath that level of interaction, particularly in terms of care and protection, there are meetings at director level. All the children in my care have individual education plans that are worked on in conjunction with us.

While, again, communication is always an issue that you have to keep working on, we do get things communicated. If the schools do feel there is a hitch, they get in touch with us and we know. That direct communication, I have at executive level, and then the communication we have at all levels underneath that works as best it can. But, again, I would say, in these areas, you are always reliant on the quality of communication and you have to keep working at it. So we do have a close and strong connection with education. We have a close and strong connection with health.

In relation to the P-2 schools, there is a governing committee of that work. I sit on that, as does the chief executive of health, Michele Bruniges. The chief executive of education chairs that. We had a meeting just last week. We contributed to the design, after our experience with the design, of the child and family centres, and we are just working on how we will work to make sure not only the services that I direct that are my responsibility in terms of departmental responsibilities but the community services also will be involved. In fact, at the regional meeting last week, the head of Communities@Work was saying she had been directly involved in some of the consultation. So, in relation to the P-2, we are working very closely with education.

MR SMYTH: Minister, I see you have got charge of substantial moneys for the establishment of the three community centres and the regional halls. How were the Cook, Melrose and Weston sites chosen to accommodate the community organisations, and can you detail the nine neighbourhood halls and why they were chosen?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, sure. I have got the nine neighbourhood halls. If I start with the regional community hubs, they were chosen based on their location across the city and the capacity to house community organisations. In Cook and Melrose, they already accommodate a number of community organisations. So that was part of our thinking.

In relation to Weston, their demand for community organisations to have accommodation was pretty high. There was not enough space in Melrose and Cook to accommodate everybody. We are not even going to be able to accommodate everybody who wants this space anyway. I sought another school to be made available. Weston, in terms of location, was seen to be the best option and in the best condition to move forward for that to house community organisations.

The nine halls, in the second part of your question, are at Hall, Tharwa, Holt, Cook, Melrose, Weston, south Tuggeranong, which is yet to be determined, Griffith and Village Creek.

MR SMYTH: The three facilities at Cook, Melrose and Weston, will they have a special focus or will it just be community groups at large?

Ms Gallagher: The idea that we have gone out with is that Cook be an arts and cultural hub. That already has a dance school, I think, a ballet school. At Chifley, it is health and wellbeing. That was, again, mindful of existing tenants with the YMCA there. At Weston, the idea is that it is a general community services hub.

Really that was an attempt by me—again mindful of the existing tenants but also

trying to send a signal to the community organisations, particularly, say, if you are an arts or a cultural organisation—to show that our intention at this stage is that you might like to apply for a place at Cook and to be able to streamline their applications on that.

This is a community services sector, and I have been taking about this for some time. We need to offer the community services sector some opportunities to save some money on efficiency of their business. The idea is that like-minded organisations, if they are co-located, might be able to share administration staff or work or facilities and, if they are able to save some money, they are then able to reinvest that extra money back into what they do best. That is really the idea.

I have not seen the applications that have come in. We called for expressions of interest on 12 May, I think. That closes on 20 June. I have not seen any of those applications come through yet. If we cannot accommodate them into such strict packages, then we just need to look at how we manage that. But that is the intention at the moment.

MR SMYTH: On the south Tuggeranong facility, is that Calwell or Theodore? Is it over at Lanyon? How south in Tuggeranong are we going?

Ms Gallagher: I think there are different views about this. My understanding is Calwell is one of the areas. Conder is another, is it?

Mr Hehir: Conder-Banks.

Ms Gallagher: Conder-Banks is the other area.

THE CHAIR: Ms MacDonald has a supplementary.

MS MacDONALD: I just want to follow on from the comments about the different community hubs. I know that the YMCA at Melrose have put in a fairly extensive submission with regard to doing rehabilitation for especially aged and disabled people and already have a gym operating there which, not exclusively, focuses on the aged and disabled and has specialised equipment for aged and disabled. How much of the plan that they have actually put together, which is a very extensive plan and in my opinion a very good plan, will be taken into consideration?

Ms Overton-Clarke: What we are doing as part of this process is writing to all the consortia that have previously applied in various shapes and guises. A number of organisations did get together but have subsequently found other space or other partners. So we are using this process now to be very clear and transparent about what we are doing. As the minister said, it is a public expression of interest. Through the process last year, some organisations were putting in applications. Others were waiting in case there was a public process. We felt that this was the best way to have transparency around the whole process.

In terms of the consortia, the Y consortia, we will be looking at who they have offered to partner with and seeing if those are existing partners that they want to go forward with. There is also an organisation that may be locating in there, transferring from

Weston, which is Warehouse Circus. We need to look at all existing tenants and work out exactly what it is that we want to go forward with. But, certainly, as the minister has said, one of the reasons that we looked at Melrose-Chifley as being health and wellbeing is because of exactly the Y having an extensive relationship there already with a number of partners. So we need to look at exactly the space that they are using, what they intend to use, who they want to partner with. This very open process is to go back to all of those organisations, including those currently on the waiting list, and to ask them if they want to put forward something.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Just on the expenditure, there is \$22.5 million over the two years to refurbish and build these facilities. Most of the nine community halls, I assume, are going into old schools?

Ms Gallagher: There is a mix of refurbished and new ones. There are three new ones to be built.

MRS DUNNE: Where are they?

MR SMYTH: South Tuggeranong will be new—

Ms Gallagher: South Tuggeranong, Griffith and Village Creek. Hall, Tharwa, Holt and Cook are refurbished, I think, both through the preschool. Hall and Tharwa are through the school.

Ms Lambert: Cook is the only preschool.

Ms Gallagher: With Melrose and Weston, it will be within the regional community facility.

MRS DUNNE: Could I just follow up on that. There is an assembly hall already at Cook primary school. There is no preschool at Cook.

Ms Lambert: There is a preschool at Cook.

MRS DUNNE: There is a preschool?

Ms Lambert: Yes, as well as the hall. At this stage, what we are looking to do is to include the hall as part of the tenanted-out space. We will be asking organisations if they want to go into the hall at Cook.

Ms Gallagher: If that is appropriate.

Ms Lambert: Yes. So, at this stage, we are looking at the hall within the school as being part of a tenanted out area.

MRS DUNNE: So it is not going to become a community hall. If it is going to be tenanted out—

Ms Gallagher: It may be.

Ms Lambert: It depends how it wants to be used.

Ms Gallagher: We just have to see because it is a special space, so we are just not sure. We will just have to wait and see what the applications are. There is the Cook preschool and that—

Ms Lambert: Which is closer to the shops.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, which is across the oval, and that is the intention of it being the hall.

MR SMYTH: So the new sites: Tuggeranong we have not determined. Griffith will go where?

Ms Gallagher: My understanding is that—I am not sure if that has been finalised yet—there is a block of land near the shops.

MR SMYTH: Do we have a block and section number for that?

Mr Collett: An extensive planning study was undertaken by planning and land management approximately six years ago, which looked at the use of the area around the O'Connell Centre and the former Griffith school. There was a significant amount of public consultation in that process and a site was identified through that process at the northern end of the Griffith shops and behind the new residential development on the former service station site. I am not sure that it has a descriptor as yet, but its configuration is reflected in the new territory plan.

MR SMYTH: And Village Creek will be where?

Mr Collett: Village Creek will be as part of the site.

MR SMYTH: As part of what site?

Mr Collett: The Village Creek school site.

MR SMYTH: So on that site, okay. Minister, there are quite specific figures in the budget paper. Can we have a breakdown against the 12 construction projects as to what cost is associated with each and the time frame?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, sure. We have that now if you want that. That is being provided because it does include, of course, the community parts which are going to be in a number of locations as well, so we can table that.

THE CHAIR: Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: Good morning, minister; good morning, officials. On page 185, budget paper 4, under "Priorities", the second dot point refers to "the next stage priorities under *Challenge 2014*". Can you tell us where you are up to there through

some of that next stage?

Ms Ford: *Challenge 2014*, as you know, is the overarching aspirational document that has guided the planning under future directions and relates back to the funding that has been ongoing since 2000-04, but taking into account 2002. Where we are at the moment with that is that we have undertaken an extensive review of our disability services, or an oversight of our disability services, to look at where we need to go for the next iteration of our future directions.

The recommendations from that review were 12 and they looked at access to information, the establishment of priorities and decision making, the service delivery models, the service relationships and sector development. So there are 12 recommendations related to that. Those recommendations have gone to our strategic oversight group, which is our joint governance reference group which has both the senior departmental people from across ACT government as well as community members on it, and the next piece of work that we will be undertaking to inform the planning for moving towards challenge 2014 will be looking at what are the key strategic priorities for the next five years, what work has already been undertaken, what areas need to be addressed into the future and what will be some of the key indicators that we will be looking for, and moving along with that.

That is on the service delivery side. As you know, *Challenge 2014* is not just a government document; it is about how community and business perform as well. So that is our service delivery end of the work and we will continue doing that, but alongside how business, sports, arts and the general community deliver to people with disability. BLITS, the Business Leaders—Innovation, Thoughts, Solutions group, which is working closely with business, sports and arts, have a range of strategies for interfacing and those are progressing at the moment. Some of those are ones that you would already know about, such as the inclusion awards, a high profile event every year which encourages and supports businesses that have shown, without any prompting, that they are delivering to people with disabilities as customer suppliers, employers and employees. They are working closely with businesses in terms of raising the profile of people's disability through a range of business activities.

In the sports arena, we are starting to engage with quite a few sporting bodies to start raising the profile of people with disabilities—not our elite athletes but people with disabilities in the community who rarely get access to sporting activities and for whom access to sport and recreational venues is very difficult. So we have been working with a range of those.

Also in the arts world we have been working closely with areas like the Canberra Theatre and promoting, either through the inclusion awards or through small activities in schools, our own local artists and giving them a lot of profile and opportunity. With the schools, we have been working closely through the ambassador in schools program, which is a Disability Advisory Council initiative which is working with schoolchildren to raise the profile.

We are now looking at another way of interacting with schools, through the three to 17-year-olds, to look at how they interact with people with disabilities, because they will carry those behaviours through life.

We are working closely with the health and justice areas through a range of formal service provision and informal service. So there are quite a lot of activities with that. The Disability Advisory Council undertake a scorecard of the progress towards meeting the challenge on a two-yearly basis. One year they look at how government is progressing and in the next year they look at how business and community are progressing. So they are just commencing their scoping for this next part of the scorecard.

We examine very closely how we are going, what we are doing. We do it in a very public and transparent way. There is a long way to go—there always is—but the last iteration of the scorecard, particularly the citizen jury approach to it, won international acclaim as government being extremely open and transparent about its business and being willing to be looked at and critiqued on how well or not they are doing and advice on areas that needed to be improved.

That scorecard yielded some very good information about the fact that we were moving towards raising the profile of people, the presence and participation of people with disability in a whole range of areas. It had areas that we still need to work on, which are the areas that we have addressed over the last year.

Is there anything further you would like to know about that?

MR GENTLEMAN: I was pleased to hear of your work with the arts. I did some work with the Mental Health Foundation last week and the arts people there were very pleased with the outcomes from the budget. They said that there needed to be a lot more in the future, but it was good to see some extra effort going there for people with disabilities.

Ms Lambert: I think one of the big challenges in implementing 2014 is that, as Lois said at the beginning, it is an aspirational document. It is also under the auspices of the Disability Advisory Council, but it is really about the rest of the community stepping up to the mark in terms of people with disabilities. It is about inclusion. It is not something that government can mandate. We can encourage it, but it is about raising awareness in areas outside government and the business community—but much more broadly than that. Ms Ford went through a whole range of those where people with disabilities are seen as mainstream rather than as separate and are treated as mainstream. That is the real big challenge with that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. There are a couple of supplementaries. First Mrs Burke and then Dr Foskey.

MRS BURKE: I hope the minister can assure the committee, firstly, that the scorecard will receive a lot more acknowledgement than it did last time. I know that there was some concern from the council. My question, though, is in relation to priorities—page 185, the second dot point. In terms of this budget, minister, how much is set aside for the implementation of the next stage priorities under challenge 2014?

MR GENTLEMAN: I just asked that question.

MRS BURKE: You have got the amount of money. I need to know what money has been allocated, what funding has been allocated.

Ms Gallagher: I do not know if someone can disaggregate that.

Ms Ford: We do not disaggregate at all under that. We may well do that in the next iteration of it, but it is unhelpful to disaggregate when you are working across four strategies and the primary need for funding is around individual support. For Disability ACT we work in a variety of ways—through our own department and by working closely with the community and with families, individuals—to implement a range of activities to raise awareness et cetera. But the primary dollars go towards supporting people with disability, and it is that support and the different ways in which we do it which assists people to integrate into the community. I would be concerned to see us starting to delve into it and try to work out the impact.

MRS BURKE: What amount of money are we talking about—a ballpark figure?

Ms Ford: Our total budget?

MRS BURKE: The money that is going to be apportioned to the next stage priorities.

Ms Ford: We already have a base budget of \$62 million—I think it is \$62 million—but then on top of that there is any additional funding that comes through.

MRS DUNNE: What are the other possible sources of additional money that might come through?

Ms Gallagher: We are negotiating on the commonwealth-state-territory disability agreement as well.

Ms Ford: Sponsorship is another area that we look at.

MRS DUNNE: Sponsorship from?

Ms Ford: From businesses, from different groups, from philanthropic trusts.

Ms Lambert: For instance, the inclusion awards attract significant sponsorship from the private sector.

Ms Ford: Additionally, there are areas such as home and community care. With other areas of generic service delivery that people with disability rightfully should be accessing, we need to work to ensure that they are able to access those areas—community organisations, generic services in the community and such like.

MRS DUNNE: I want to follow up on those points when it is convenient.

THE CHAIR: We will follow up on those points with Mrs Dunne and then we will go to Dr Foskey.

MRS DUNNE: I understand and appreciate the aims of this, but do you get to a stage where individuals with individual care packages have so many people working on their case that it is hard to coordinate the services that they are being given? I have an instance—it does not necessarily directly refer to your area—where people are juggling nine care providers. Just doing that becomes a task of work in itself. How do you get around that?

Ms Ford: With our individual support packages, we did considerable consultation on whether people wanted to continue to get the individual funding or whether they would prefer us to purchase through community agencies and work with those community agencies to provide the flexibility. Overwhelmingly, people voted for the continuation of individual support packages. It gave them more flexibility and gave them the opportunity to create the type of arrangements around themselves that best suited their lifestyle.

Whilst I absolutely appreciate that the purchasing power of any package of that size is not going to yield the sort of hopes and aspirations that the person might have in the long term, what we have done with our individual support funding is allocate it through one agency. There is a percentage of those dollars that go towards the coordination of the services on behalf of that person. The percentage usually is an administrative percentage of around 10 per cent, which is actually very good. That is to provide coordination—anything from five hours a week to 10 hours a month, and sometimes more depending on what the person's needs are.

In the nature of the business, some people need an enormous amount of support at the beginning while they are putting their arrangements in place and then less support as those arrangements are in place and those arrangements stabilise. So it is averaged out. That is in our public policy on ISPs—that administrative component—and that is factored in to how we fund those packages.

So yes, people do have to. I guess the very nature of any disability, which we would love to be able to change, is that people do have to interact with a whole range of providers to get the support that they require. Sometimes it is one provider but four or five different workers over the course of the week. They may be getting a considerable amount of support or they may be getting some home help and personal care support in the home and then during the day going to an activity or a service where they require a different type of support to engage in that or an evening activity where they need another different type of support. At the weekend there are different staff. That is the very nature of disability. That is what people are challenged with every single day—having to interact with people that sometimes they do not know. It is something that we do not have to do.

MRS BURKE: Just as a sup to that, on that line—has any money from the individual support services been transferred to individual support packages? Have you switched the funding or moved the funding?

Ms Ford: No, no. It is all individual support packages.

MRS BURKE: So no money has been transferred in terms of individual support services and moved to individual support packages?

Ms Ford: Do you mean into our service? With people who have been in our service for some time historically who maybe had a very small package but were receiving 24-hour support, those packages have been converted from an individual arrangement to a block funding arrangement. We also negotiate that in the non-government sector. If a person has chosen a particular provider and that is who they want to get their services from, we can negotiate with them to convert the package into block funding if they wish. But it is on the understanding that, if that person should choose to leave that service, we need to retract that. That makes economic sense; it makes economic good sense and stops any multiple transactions that might happen.

MRS DUNNE: Can you tell me, Ms Ford, if there is an upper limit on any individual package?

Ms Ford: We have an upper limit in our policy of 125, of which the 25,000—

MRS DUNNE: Annually?

Ms Ford: Annually, yes. That figure was arrived at through the costing of sharing 24-hour supported accommodation with two other people. That would be daytime support and an overnight sleepover. However, from time to time we do allocate larger packages if that is required. For example, if a person requires additional support to be able to stay within their own home or to have secure tenure—or if they require, which some people do, as you would be aware, considerable additional support because of the complexity of their disability—from time to time we allocate a higher package, particularly in areas where there is a behavioural problem and it cannot entirely be predicted how much support they are going to need and when they are going to need it.

MRS DUNNE: How many people are on support packages and therefore what would the average cost be?

Ms Ford: We have got 191 people receiving support packages. That is considerably more over the last four or five years. The average cost is around \$60,000 if it is averaged out. Some people can receive as little as \$7,000; some people receive \$20,000 or \$30,000. If you average all of the costs out, it is about \$60,000 on average.

MRS DUNNE: Do you have an idea of the level of unmet demand?

Ms Ford: We do have an idea of the level of unmet demand; we have it in the precis of our funding plan, which is on our website. That calculates the level to be approximately \$8 million at this point; I think it is about that. That is pretty accurate with our figures. But bear in mind that when we talk about unmet demand we are talking about what people identify as their unmet demand and additional demand. That does not mean that that is a group of people who have no support at all. Quite a lot of people have some level of support, but they require more support or they are wanting to move from their current arrangements. They may be living with family, be adolescent or the family is getting older and they are wanting and needing to move into supported accommodation.

MRS DUNNE: That is unmet demand in dollar terms. In people terms how many are

we talking about?

Ms Ford: The figure does change, based on how we can accommodate people, but at the moment I would say that on average we would have about 60 to 65 people who are requiring additional support or are needing to have support. We would have about 60 people at the moment. That is our known demand; that is out of our last funding round. There are more people. We weekly go through it. Particularly, for example, as we have moved into young people in residential aged care—as that has become part of our brief and portfolio—there is a group of people that previously were not eligible for disability support who are now eligible, and they are people that we add into our numbers.

MRS BURKE: Sorry, can I seek a clarification? That \$8 million is before assessment?

Ms Ford: Sorry?

MRS BURKE: The \$8 million estimated on that need was before assessment, did you say?

Ms Ford: Before assessment, yes.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey has a supplementary.

DR FOSKEY: In relation to funding directly for people with a disability, it would be understood that there are also quite a number of people who are being looked after by unpaid people—their family members or others. I cannot see very much in this budget—perhaps not anything—for carers and carer advocacy. I am wondering if this is the area where we would look for it. How did the ACT government come to the decision that carers and their needs were not a priority for additional funding in this budget, given that their wellbeing influences the wellbeing of people with a disability?

Ms Gallagher: There is a range of issues here. I had a read through Dee McGrath's analysis of the budget just yesterday when I received it, and I can see that they are pretty critical of it, but it does ignore a range of initiatives that have started and are ongoing in relation to caring for carers. Also, in relation to disability, much of the in-home support, community access support and respite care support is actually direct support for carers, and that does not necessarily have a separate line in the budget.

There is criticism from a lot of areas when you do not put things in the budget. It really is about the priorities that you have that you need to deal with each year. A budget is only for one year. This year there was not a specific carer initiative even though in the previous budget there has been recognition of that. It is really just weighing up priorities. This year the priority for me was to get an equipment loan service up for people caring for a child with a disability, because the cost of having to buy a wheelchair every two years as the child grows is considerable. I felt that there was a role for government to establish a scheme where parents could borrow that equipment and give it back—not have to purchase that. It is not that there is nothing in here; it is just about the way the initiatives are articulated and about priorities on a year-by-year basis. That is always difficult and you are always going to cop criticism

from the people that did not get what they want.

DR FOSKEY: But you do acknowledge that there might be grounds for that criticism?

Ms Gallagher: I acknowledge that there is always more that can be done. For example, in the 2004-05 budget, \$830,000 was provided to implement the caring for carers policy. In the 2004-05 budget there was not an initiative for equipment for kids with a disability. These are yearly documents. It is about priorities, and it is up to me to determine how we implement that. I acknowledge that you will always get criticism from groups that feel they have not got what they want, but that is the job. If we could give money to everybody with respect to their budget submissions, we would, but we would have a lot of problems around how we manage our budget.

DR FOSKEY: It is just that carers are often people who, through family and other connections, will do the work. Even if they are not getting support, they will do the work, and that allows a lot of pressure to be put on them. I think that is often pushed a little too far by governments.

Ms Gallagher: I think that is right. Carers do an incredible job and they do it largely unpaid and unrecognised. But if you look at some of the initiatives in this area, such as the integrated family support initiative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, that is going directly to carers. That is an initiative that is targeted at carers, at parents looking after their children, but it is where we can go in directly. The equipment loan service is an example of where we are trying to go straight to the heart of the issues that families are telling us about.

Some of the criticism has been around not funding extra staff for Carers ACT. In my priorities this year, I had \$200,000 to respond to that or \$200,000 to put into buying wheelchairs and other equipment, such as communication equipment. This year, that was my priority. I will stand to be criticised for it, but I think we need to go straight to the issues that have come to me. When we look at the money that we put into disability this year, from the new money—and it is increasing by \$1 million this year; it started at \$3 million and rises to \$4 million—there are 60 new individual support packages, 15,000 hours of community access support, and 1,100 hours of flexible respite. That goes directly to those people who are doing it the hardest, and that is what those initiatives are about.

MR GENTLEMAN: The key concern from Carers ACT was about respite care—in particular, in-home respite care. Can you tell us what your priority is in that area for carers?

Ms Gallagher: Certainly, in the new money, and it might be reflected—

Ms Lambert: It is in budget paper 4, page 194.

Ms Gallagher: The money we put into disability last year was to purchase an additional 750 respite bed nights. As we have heard, there is a level of unmet need. Disability did this work; they have published this work, to their great credit, because it is not normal for organisations to publish what they know they are not able to get to.

Part of the reason we did that work and have been so public about it is to up the ante nationally—and I think other states are doing this now—about the level of unmet need that exists in our community and having to have a response to it.

We were told by the previous commonwealth government that if we put some extra money into disability services they would match that money. We had that commitment from the previous government. The current government has honoured that commitment. As I said, we are in the final stages of negotiating that outcome. In fact, I am chairing a meeting in Sydney on Friday of disability ministers across the country. I am hopeful that when we have that money matched there will be a further injection of this magnitude into the ACT so that we will be able to respond very adequately to the level of unmet need we have.

We cannot take our eye off the ball because every year more children are born with a disability and every year more children leave school with a disability. It is just going to keep growing. We need to keep being honest about the data because that is the only way that you get treasuries and departments of finance to accept that there is a need in the community that has to be responded to.

Ms Lambert: I think it is important to separate out Carers ACT from carers more broadly. A lot of the money that we provide actually goes to carers. It does not necessarily go to the peak body, Carers ACT. This government introduced a caring for carers policy. We reviewed that policy at the end of last year. It received significant positive comment from the community. A lot of the dollars that we put in under that policy—and the minister has mentioned the quantum of that—went to things like practical skill development, family friendly workplaces, and a whole range of initiatives that were broader and which enabled people to think about how carers could be supported more broadly.

Some of that money did go to Carers ACT, but there is a broad range of activity in caring for people who need to be cared for. There is a broad range of activities for those people that we need to work with. A carers recognition amendment bill was tabled in and passed by the Assembly, so there has been some very formal recognition of the multiple roles that people play. Ms Overton-Clarke can talk in more detail about it because she shepherded that policy through, but it has been a significant and effective policy. We are looking at the next stages of that now. The funding has just concluded in this financial year.

DR FOSKEY: I hope you did not get the impression, Ms Lambert, that Carers ACT was complaining about their funding.

Ms Lambert: No, I just wanted to separate the two out. We do fund Carers ACT but we also fund a range of other activities.

Ms Gallagher: Another initiative is the strengthening the community initiative. A proportion of that money goes to the Canberra Men's Centre, which supports men, and men who are in caring roles. There is also the West Belconnen Child and Family Support Service. Again, that funding will go directly to carers in the community to provide extra capacity, whether it be through a play group or the extension of a parenting class. We were able to successfully navigate all of those initiatives through

this budget process and they have been targeted to help those who are in a caring role.

MR SMYTH: One of the officers mentioned earlier what I guess you would call succession planning, as younger people want to leave home and as parents get older. Eventually we all have to prepare for our death. Is there money specifically in the budget or is there a program in the budget that allows for that, given that, as you said, more and more people are being born with a disability, they survive their early years and they live much longer? What does the government do and how much money does it put into that sort of succession planning?

Ms Gallagher: I give credit to Disability ACT for doing this. They are often a very difficult group to support, particularly parents who have been caring for their children for 50 years. In fact, Carers ACT run a respite house that is targeted at older carers and their adult children with a disability. At the commencement of that program it was very difficult to get that respite care taken up. People had always been doing this, so they did not feel they were entitled to have that support out of the home.

It is about targeting those families. There is a group called Stepping Stones, which is a group of older parents who are looking for an innovative model of support for their adult children. That is being funded through the new money in the budget. So I think it is about knowing who we need to get to, prioritising the need, understanding the cost and then working with those families to come up with a model that is going to be suitable for them. Many of them do not want a traditional-type group house. If their children have independent needs and skills, they want those maintained. We have done a lot of work on trying to meet the individual needs of those families and their children.

Ms Ford: There is quite a wide range of activities. We need to bear in mind that assisting families to plan for their future is incorporated into every activity we do. We encourage community providers to have that utmost in their minds. We work closely with education to understand, support and start early planning. In addition we have the mature carers funding, which has gone to three organisations. That is about \$1.7 million, and that is specifically targeted towards supporting older adults to start doing their planning. A lot of older adults are not used to having other people supporting their kids and they do not particularly want to; their life is kind of sorted out. We have found that quite a lot over the last couple of years. But they do need assistance to plan for the future, they do need respite and they do need to start engaging with services. So considerable funding goes into that.

There is the local area coordination program, for which there is \$500,000. That is within the community and it is targeting people who may or may not be formally engaged with the services. We are getting them to target younger and younger, to assist families to start doing their long-term planning. We encourage and support the development of a variety of tools to help families to do that.

We have our own individual response team. Disability ACT has reconfigured its services over the last four years to prioritise the access, priority, eligibility and planning for families. Through that service there is a range of coordinated work being done with, say, Stepping Stones, and with a range of family-governed type arrangements to assist families to do their long-term planning. About \$150,000—I

would need to check the exact figure—goes to small initiatives to assist families to get a plan. There is the path network, which is a network of families through Belconnen Community Services, which we fund, who go out and work with other families and help them to plan for their long-term future—not just what you need from funding but who you engage. There are a whole lot of models for working with that.

We fund a program called “fly”, which is a program we have initiated this year. It works with families and assists them to look at the whole range of what they need into the future. That is a very small initiative that we will be building on. We fund or sponsor families to go to a range of activities. There is a workshop happening at the moment—a 10-day workshop over two weeks. It is a very intensive workshop which assists families to start doing their long-term planning and to build a plan for themselves. We sponsor people to go along to those. There is the considerable amount of work that we do with Housing ACT in planning the accommodation, housing and tenancy needs of people in the long term.

We have now got to the stage, which is pleasing to see, where we are having groups of families coming to us with their plans already set. So they are saying, “These are the type of supported housing arrangements that we want, this is the support we need into the future and this is when we will need it.” So when we are talking about people with unmet need, a proportion of those people are signalling to us, “In two years or three years, this is what we are wanting to do.” That is a considerable change from five years ago, when people would be turning up on the doorstep, so to speak. We still have the breakdown of natural family support, and everything else which is in our funding plan, but we have quite a wide range of activities to assist people and quite a lot of our funding goes towards it. The ones that we can quantify are the ones I have referred to.

The other part of it is the planning that goes with every individual support package. When an application comes in for those people that are prioritised, a funded support plan is done through an intensive assessment period. It does not just look at what you need right here and now; it looks at what you are going to need into the future. That is coordinated through our individual response team, along with a range of those other activities that I mentioned.

Ms Lambert: At the Disability Advisory Council meeting last night, there was talk about the scheme that was set up by the commonwealth government around establishing trusts. I understand there is now a review of that scheme. It has been a commonwealth government initiative but we have kept up our dialogue with parents about this. It has been quite difficult for parents to access it, so they are now providing a review of it, which will be good, because that is a good model to be looked at a bit further, and it is one that parents are interested in. That is not our responsibility but it is something that we have talked to parents about as part of talking about the future.

MR SMYTH: Can you take on notice and give us a summary of the dollars against each of those programs that can be used to make sure that succession planning is successful?

Ms Lambert: Yes, sure.

MS MacDONALD: With respect to the issue of in-home respite, I think there has been a bit of a focus recently on the issue of carers and funding for that in the federal budget. There has also been some discussion about the difficulty in finding appropriately qualified people to provide in-home respite. Is that still an issue for us here in the ACT?

Ms Gallagher: I think it is, just in relation to the workforce shortage of personal carers across the country. At times we, as an employer of personal carers, struggle to fill all the shifts that we need to fill.

Mr Whale: Workforce across the whole community sector—disability is no different—is a huge problem nationally and internationally. In the ACT we are leading the way nationally with some of the initiatives we are trying. We released a workforce strategy paper back in 2007 and set up a workforce working group, which is co-chaired with the sector. It is a sector-wide group; it is not a government group. That is doing a number of things. It is liaising with the national workforce group, and it has been, as part of the negotiations for the CSTDA both with the former and current commonwealth governments, identified as a policy priority. So it is getting the attention that it deserves at that level.

About three weeks ago, that workforce working group hosted its first sector-wide forum, which was very well attended by executives and chief executives of organisations across the sector in the ACT. It will look at initiatives and try to tackle issues where there can be more synergies. You can look at the *Canberra Times* on one weekend and you will see seven different ads for the same job across seven different organisations. There were discussions around what sort of pooling and resourcing can be done to better meet those initiatives.

There has been talk with institutions, such as schools, tertiary institutions and universities, about training and better identifying potential courses and strategies for attracting highly qualified staff, as well developing courses around certification IV for disability workers. We continue to fund certification IV disability courses right across the sector. We directly fund five non-government places as part of trying to develop the sector each year, and we have been doing that for the past few years.

Within Disability ACT we have done a number of things. We have revised our whole recruitment strategy to make it much more streamlined, and we are trying to make it less bureaucratic. We also try and advertise a bit wider and a bit broader. For example, working as in-home carers or working in a respite facility or working in a group home situation, the person that turns to the government block advertising to look at public service jobs may not be the person you are really targeting. We want a range of people. For example, it may be appropriate work on some days for retired people as well as people working through university. It is a whole spectrum of people that we are trying to attract, so we are looking at different ways of approaching the community and trying to bring those people in, including from outside of the ACT.

We are also working with the international program that is looking overseas at the moment to see if there are positions that can be filled at the specialist level, particularly psychiatry and areas such as that. We are feeding some of those initiatives that we are attempting back to the national level, because they are closely following

what we have done and, in some ways, they are seeing us as leading some of the initiatives and testing some of these approaches.

In short, it is very difficult finding those staff. The range of alternative approaches we are taking to recruit staff and the increased training we are providing right across the sector, not just in government, we think is moving towards trying to meet those needs. It is one of our biggest challenges on a day-to-day basis. I spend time every day of my working life in this job trying to deal with staffing issues around numbers and qualifications.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth has a question and then Mrs Dunne, but I just have a supplementary to that. With regard to volunteer numbers across the sector, I am aware that far fewer volunteers are available on a day-to-day basis now; it is more episodic. Volunteers just want distinct time frames—maybe three months—and then want to go on to something else, such as travel et cetera.

You were saying something about sometimes people with disabilities have a different person come to visit them every day, and this is something that we would certainly like to avoid as far as the volunteer workforce is concerned, I am sure.

I note the initiative about checks for working with vulnerable people, and some of the community groups that came before us were wanting to get a little bit more detail about how that is going to work, because they did not want it to dissuade volunteers to work in the area or to make it more complicated to recruit volunteers. I was wondering if we could have a little bit more information on that, because that is a really important part of the workforce.

Ms Lambert: It is an important part of the workforce, and one of the things that have been occurring around Australia has been a range of schemes developed to look at the ways you can protect the people that are being cared for. We have been looking at some of those; some of them are relatively recent. They are finding that they have got some issues and so on, so part of the policy work is to conclude, if you like, an examination and then analysis of what is occurring nationally and to work out something which applies in the ACT. As the minister said earlier, we do the policy work around that, then we hand it over to JACS.

There are a range of schemes. Some of them are blanket schemes whereby you register everybody who can work with children or with vulnerable people. Some of them are schemes where you deregister particular people. It is about finding the right balance and thinking about what is actually going to work in the ACT. But Ms Whitten can give you more detail.

Ms Whitten: Ms Lambert talked about some of the work we have been doing, and that arose from the Vardon report, where there was a recommendation in relation to developing a system similar to Queensland and New South Wales specifically around working with children and young people. Since that time, a number of reference groups have been established with the community and government involved, particularly around working with children and young people. That then informed an interdepartmental committee in relation to how that would work across government. So we have been successful in this budget to do some more policy work with a focus

on vulnerable people.

In terms of other jurisdictions, New South Wales and Queensland have had their system in place for seven years in terms of children and young people. In Western Australia they have established a system which is based—

THE CHAIR: I am sorry, you might have to speak up, Ms Whitten.

Ms Whitten: In Western Australia the system, in terms of screening for people who work with children and young people, is based in the child protection department. In Victoria their system is based in their Department of Justice, and in South Australia it is in families and communities. The Northern Territory is just passing legislation, and it is possible that their system will be established not only in health but also with the police, so there are different models in different states.

What we are going to do for the next 12 months is just refine that model for this jurisdiction and do that policy work in our department in conjunction with Justice and Community Safety, with the actual system operated from the Office of Regulatory Services from 2008-09.

Ms Lambert: As part of that work, though, we will be talking with people who will be affected by it. That is a key part of the work. As part of the development to date, we have certainly involved some community groups. We did have that focus primarily on children but, as we have done that work and as I meet with people in the community, particularly some of the community groups like the refugee association and so on, they have raised with me the issue of extending that definition. We need now to consult a bit more broadly around that. So the groups that you are referring to would, I hope, be talked to as we work through this policy.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Ms Gallagher: I should add that across government and in fact across a number of non-government agencies they already do quite substantial checking before they employ staff. If you look in most of those areas where we would be looking to legislate, if that is the way forward, the processes are already in place. This would be about mandating the process.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, obviously there are some cross-portfolio issues with your health responsibilities as well, but I am told a gentleman who has a mild intellectual disability, was also recovering from substance-abuse problems and was also a patient of Mental Health ACT—I think you are aware of the case—recently poured petrol over himself and set himself alight. Given an individual who is potentially in the care of three arms of the government, how was this allowed to happen, and what contact was made with the crisis and assessment team or Disability ACT before this event occurred?

Ms Gallagher: I actually think this covered just Mental Health ACT. I do not believe he was under—I certainly have not been advised to that effect—any care through

Disability ACT. I am reluctant to go to individual matters in a forum like this, because I am actually bound by some confidentiality. That is how I like to conduct myself anyway.

My understanding is a bit different to yours, Mr Smyth. Again, without wanting to go to individuals and what individuals said to each other, my understanding is based on a review of the response of the CAT team, and that is that the response would not have changed, even knowing what had happened. When they had a cold and hard look at the conversation and the agreed action from that conversation, which was that the police attend, and the police did attend, the outcome would not have changed.

I think it is an extremely tragic circumstance, and it is not always black and white. I have taken intense interest in this from the day I was made aware of it, which I think was the day following the incident. I have asked that ACT Health work with ACT Policing to make sure there is no gap in any response, and that, if there is not a formal process around referral between CAT and ACT Policing, that that be looked at. I have also sought a clinical review about the response from CAT.

You can imagine that in a circumstance like this with such a tragic result there are individuals who work within Mental Health ACT who have been extremely traumatised by this. These cases are just never, ever black and white. When I have looked at the response—the agreed response at the time—which was for a welfare visit from the police, and that did occur and it was the police that found this individual, even if CAT had gone out that night, if that had been the decision taken—they do go out at night as it is a 24/7 service—the outcome for that individual would not have changed. They would not have got there any faster than the police.

MR SMYTH: So were there CAT officers available to attend?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, there were.

MR SMYTH: Would not the CAT officers back up the police normally in a case like this?

Ms Gallagher: My understanding is that the decision taken was that a welfare visit from the police should occur in the first instance, and that was what happened.

MR SMYTH: My understanding is that the individual has now incurred an enormous number of physical injuries that may include losing his fingers. What process will now be put in place to bring him back, because I assume he will end up in care under the assistance of Disability ACT?

Ms Gallagher: That is right. As you know, he is in the burns unit. Health will be working with the hospital in Sydney to bring that individual home. Appropriate support has been made available, as happens normally with patients in this situation.

MR SMYTH: Is there a written report against the review that was carried out?

Ms Gallagher: I have not received formal written advice, but I am happy to provide that to you on a confidential basis, Mr Smyth. I think we can all learn from this, and

that is what I would be looking for. I am happy to discuss it with you when I get that information.

MR SMYTH: At this stage, the individual was not known to Disability ACT?

Ms Gallagher: No.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, you have another question?

MRS DUNNE: Yes, a different question, chair.

THE CHAIR: We will then go to Mr Gentleman next and then Mrs Burke.

MRS DUNNE: Under capital works in BP 5 at page 58, there is a feasibility study to investigate accommodation needs for people with highly challenging and violent behaviours. Could somebody tell me more about that? What gap are we aiming to fill with this initiative?

Ms Ford: We have a small number of young people and adults who currently either reside with us or reside in the community sector, particularly young people who need intensive support as they mature and adults who need a range of quite flexible types of supports. These are people who have multiple disabilities; it could be neurological, it could be physical combined with intellectual, or it could be a mental dysfunction. Usually that is progressive, so their needs are changing as they grow older. It is mainly younger people, but their needs are changing as they grow older. They need a particular type of response. They need real stability of tenure and stability of response.

The housing and supported living arrangements are really important to how we do this. This feasibility study is using the assessment of those individuals to design a range of contemporary accommodation or housing arrangements for their long-term support.

MRS DUNNE: So where are these people currently? It is to meet the needs of a current client base. So where are they?

Ms Ford: They are currently either with us or with a very small, small number of non-government organisations.

MRS DUNNE: So where are they currently residing?

Ms Ford: That is what I said: they are either in our supported accommodation or in respite, or living with their families with intensive support, or in a very small number of non-government organisations.

MRS DUNNE: So where are—

Ms Gallagher: They might be in that group house.

Ms Ford: Sorry, you mean—

Ms Gallagher: They might be in a flat.

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Ms Gallagher: With multiple supports around them. What we do not have is a special purpose-built facility.

MRS DUNNE: Where are the community organisations who would be providing that assistance?

Ms Ford: Who are the community organisations?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Ms Ford: Marymead would be one of them.

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Ms Ford: It is mainly Marymead, but some of the other organisations have identified people. Usually, what happens is that, when people have very challenging, complex behaviours, they work very closely with us and either those people transition back to us for a time or we start to negotiate and look at other arrangements for them. But this is really focusing on having a fairly specialised approach for a considered period of time.

MRS DUNNE: Is one of those facilities Rose Cottage House?

Ms Ford: I am not aware of Rose Cottage House.

MRS DUNNE: It is down—

MR SMYTH: We refurbished Rose Cottage House, near Macarthur—

Mr Hehir: It is the Symonston respite.

Ms Gallagher: The respite, yes; we have refurbished it.

Ms Ford: The Symonston respite. No, the Symonston respite is purpose built for people who have a dual disability—intellectual and a mental dysfunction—and who are at risk of or come into contact with the criminal justice system and who need a very specialised approach over a long period of time. Generally, they are young people or adults.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. That is a highly specialised centre?

Ms Ford: Yes, highly specialised. Symonston respite is not long term. A person may stay there for up to a year or two, but it is not considered to be long term. That is considered to be an intensive therapeutic environment, whereas what we are looking at with this feasibility study is for young people for a home for life, really.

MRS DUNNE: So, with the Symonston respite centre, what advice did disability

services give to the government about the quite proximate location of a data centre and power station to that site?

Ms Gallagher: The advice provided to me was that the centre would have to move if that project went ahead, and I agreed. If it had gone ahead in its form, it would have had to move, and we would have been expecting the consortium to pay all the costs relating to its relocation and re-establishment in another site. Because of the change, the consortium's change, we will have to now look at what that smaller centre means and whether or not we will still have to move.

MRS DUNNE: Do you have an idea of the dollars that it would cost to relocate that centre?

Ms Gallagher: I would say, off the top of my head—we have just spent \$1.6 million doing that facility up—that my expectation is that it would be a minimum of a couple of million dollars.

MRS DUNNE: You had discussions with the consortium about an agreement—

Ms Gallagher: We had not got to that stage formally, but that was where we were heading.

MRS DUNNE: So had it or had it not been flagged with the consortium?

Mr Hehir: My understanding is that at officer level there was discussion around that and certainly some officials from ActewAGL acknowledged that it was likely that they would need to pay for the costs of relocating that facility.

MRS DUNNE: Have you had any thoughts, Mr Hehir—or anyone else—as to where that facility might be moved?

Ms Gallagher: It had not got to that stage.

Mr Hehir: We had not reached that sort of level of planning at that point. We had had initial conversations only in terms of what the impact was. We are still seeking clarification on what the impact of the revised plan would be.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I understand that.

Mr Hehir: We will have a look at that, but we would be fairly selective in where we would go.

MRS DUNNE: How long have you known that it was on the cards that this facility might move because of the development nearby?

Mr Hehir: Our consultation occurred when the planning authority advised us as part of the DA process. We are their closest neighbour.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, I do not think I understood that.

THE CHAIR: It was part of the DA process.

MRS DUNNE: You only became aware of this when the DA was—

Mr Hehir: We were formally advised by the Planning and Land Authority as part of the DA process.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. Did you know before the DA was published?

Ms Gallagher: It was as public as it has been, you know.

MRS DUNNE: I am asking officials, minister, whether they had been thinking before the publication of the DA in late February about whether or not there was a need to address this issue. When did they first become aware? I think Mr Collett knows the answer to the question.

Mr Collett: We were aware of it through the press and through informal discussions. It was only when the DA was lodged and the environmental assessment was started that we became aware of the final configuration and the location. It is my understanding that there had been some discussion about the location and that a range of sites within the general area had been discussed—

DR FOSKEY: Sorry, Mr Collett; you said “environmental assessment”.

Mr Collett: There was an environmental assessment undertaken by the Planning and Land Authority as well as a DA.

MRS BURKE: We seem to be unravelling more and more about this every day.

DR FOSKEY: I was not aware of that, but anyway—

MRS DUNNE: That is interesting. We will just mark that for another day. What is the problem with the Symonston respite service being so closely located to this proposed development? Why would you feel the need to move it?

Mr Collett: The suggestion about the move came, as the deputy chief executive has noted, in discussions with the staff from the Chief Minister’s Department who have had a role in it, and with ActewAGL at officer level when we sought more information.

MRS BURKE: What was the timing?

MRS DUNNE: Which staff in the Chief Minister’s Department?

Mr Collett: Ross McKay.

MRS BURKE: What was the timing of that? Have you got some time frames here? It just seems we are unravelling more and more as the days go by. I said to you at the

beginning, minister, that I was concerned about your lack of knowledge of what was going on. Can you give us some time lines?

Mr Collett: With respect, this is a normal planning process.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I know. I just want to know how you fit into it.

Ms Gallagher: Normal, yes.

Mr Collett: As one would expect, there is discussion about development applications throughout the ACT with the extensive portfolio both in terms of public housing and also the assets of the department. We keep an eye on that and we are aware generally of what is going on. As these things reach fruition, we become more involved and the process eventually becomes formalised. My staff are not in a position where they can have discussions in detail with every proponent who is considering having a development.

MRS BURKE: I thought you said you heard about it in the press—

THE CHAIR: Excuse me, Mrs Burke.

MRS BURKE: Well, I—

THE CHAIR: No, Mrs Burke, you will let the witness answer the question.

Ms Gallagher: Yes. If I can answer Mrs Dunne's question, which was what was the problem: the problem identified was that this respite unit was the closest neighbour by, I think, a couple of hundred metres from the proposed facility. That was the issue that was identified. We can go round and round and round, but the appropriate measures and response were in place; that is, we were aware of the proposed development, which has now changed and supports my point that I made on Friday or Thursday last week about assessments and when do they occur.

Disability had advised me that, because of the extremely close co-location or the facility being built next to this, that it would be most appropriate, if it was to go ahead in the form that it was before yesterday, that that facility would have to move. We were putting in place the necessary processes to start that off should the development be approved in its current form, which it was not. So now we have to go and do another process and have a look at what that means.

MRS DUNNE: When were you advised that this was a possibility, minister?

Ms Gallagher: When was I advised what was a possibility?

MRS DUNNE: That you might have to move the facility?

Ms Gallagher: It was in a conversation I had. I cannot give you the exact date. It was a verbal conversation over a month, maybe six weeks, ago.

MRS DUNNE. Okay. Mr Collett, how often, in your experience of managing the

assets of a large department, have you had to contemplate shifting a facility because of the interaction with a development nearby?

Mr Collett: As the minister has explained, the proposal that the facility be relocated was a way of addressing the issues of the impact—

MRS DUNNE: But how often have you encountered that—

Mr Collett: Sorry; I was answering the question. It came from the proponents, not from us.

MRS DUNNE: The proponents suggested that you might move?

Mr Collett: ActewAGL, as I said in my answer to Mrs Burke's question, was one of the suggestions that was made by ActewAGL to my officers when they were discussing and trying to get a better understanding of what the scale of the development was and what its potential impacts might be on an adjoining land use.

MRS DUNNE: When was that?

Mr Collett: Over the last four to six weeks.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. My actual question was: how often have you encountered a situation where you have actually had to contemplate moving a facility because of a development next door?

Ms Gallagher: I can understand why you are trying to ask that question, but is it relevant at all, this discussion?

MRS DUNNE: Mr Collett said it was routine. I am trying to work out how routinely does the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services—

Ms Gallagher: I think he said the process was routine. If it is appropriate as a response—

MRS DUNNE: It is a simple question, minister—

Ms Gallagher: Yes, I understand it.

MRS DUNNE: Have you thought about this before? Have you encountered this situation before where you have had to contemplate moving a facility?

Ms Gallagher: I imagine Mr Collett might want to—

Mr Hehir: We certainly have had to have a think about it previously.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Mr Hehir: There is a centre in Civic which runs occasional childcare. There is quite a bit of construction activity next door, and they are building quite a large building there.

It is something we contemplated at the time, whether we actually needed to do a relocation or a temporary relocation. It does occur. It would only occur with very large-scale projects. In terms of the majority of our business, which is predominantly residential properties, it is not a significant issue for us. But in more commercial areas and/or close to a significant infrastructure project we would certainly have a look at that.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Ms Gallagher: The Rocks would be another example.

Mr Hehir: Exactly. We will need to have facilities there taken away as well. It would not occur very frequently, but it would—

MRS DUNNE: It is not unique?

Mr Hehir: No.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

Mr Collett: Those deliberations will also occur when we are looking at whether we refurbish existing facilities or relocate them.

MR SMYTH: This will not take long. Minister, we heard yesterday that the LDA, when they went to offer these blocks to the proponents, there was a cabinet submission that cabinet agreed to. Normally before a submission goes to cabinet there is coordination comment asked for from various departments. Did disability offer comment on the proposal for cabinet's consideration?

Ms Gallagher: I will have to take that on notice and have a look back at this. I understand I was on maternity leave at the time that went to cabinet, so I am just not across the detail. If I could take that on notice we will provide it to you.

THE CHAIR: We were just being reminded that Clare Holland House was moved.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MRS BURKE: Chair, I have another question, not on the—

THE CHAIR: We are going to go to the next output class now, Mrs Burke, because—

MRS BURKE: I have been waiting patiently, chair.

MS MacDONALD: We have a whole lot of other areas that we have to get to.

THE CHAIR: Yes, we just—

MRS BURKE: I have been waiting patiently.

DR FOSKEY: Yes, I just have one more question.

THE CHAIR: Just the therapy service, that is all, which is in with disability. I am not going away from disability.

DR FOSKEY: Right, but I just have a quick general question.

MR SMYTH: Would it be reasonable to do overview until 10.30 and then have morning tea?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I do not think—

MR SMYTH: It takes questions out of other areas anyway.

MRS BURKE: I just have one question.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

MRS BURKE: Minister, it has been put to me by consumers and senior people in the disability services sector that we have in the ACT the worst disability equipment scheme in the country. Other than the well-received funding—and I applaud the government for that—in terms of children and young people's equipment loans scheme, what new funding is there in this budget to expand the ACT equipment scheme?

Ms Gallagher: That is under health; the ACT equipment loans service is run by health. I do not have officers here that can expand on that, but there is not any money in the budget for the ACT equipment loans service, other than general indexation and CPI increases. It is unfunded under the ACT health portfolio. This will be the first time that we have run an equipment loans service, and we will be working with health to look at how they run theirs.

I can get you some information on this separately because we are reviewing—the review is almost finished—the equipment loans service. There are different eligibility criteria and different jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions, it is an entitlement scheme but it is means tested. Here it is a universal scheme and not means tested. That seems to change some of the flavours of the scheme and also people's entitlement to equipment. I have not moved to the way of wanting to introduce means testing yet, but that is part of the review that has had a look at this. I will get you some information about that.

I have not heard that it is the worst in the country. The equipment loans service we run is really short-term loans of equipment. It is funded through the health portfolio. So there may be some criticism of disability clients who may need other things. We do have the quality of life grants that try to get to some of that need. I just see the equipment loans service for children as the beginning of what we would want to do in disability. But I do not want to create two things, one in health and one in disability.

MRS BURKE: Thank you for that. I was not so much going on the eligibility criteria. If you have a look, for example, at New South Wales—and I have looked around the country at what is available—we offer 10 areas of classifications of what you can hire and borrow; in New South Wales it is 16 areas and they have 74 aids available. They have got nine pages, which is well documented. We could probably learn from what is going on.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, I think we can.

MRS BURKE: We have a third of a page in the ACT. It has been raised with me by people with a disability. I respect that it comes out of health. I would ask that—

Ms Gallagher: We are having a look at it as part of that. It is almost finished. I was briefed about it on Monday. It might have just come across my desk, the written brief. It encompasses things such as the domiciliary oxygen scheme, which is part of that as well, which we are wanting to have a look at. Sandra just reminds me that I am referring that formally to the Disability Advisory Committee for their advice to me on it.

MRS BURKE: A supplementary to that, and a final one: it has been put to me that people who have a disability and require a wheelchair and require a wheelchair seating assessment have to wait 12 to 18 months.

Ms Gallagher: I will have to chase up on that because, again, I think that would come under health. I will take some advice on that.

DR FOSKEY: It has come to my attention that, following the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, the ACT government is having discussions on the impact of that ratification on its own work. I have been told that the community is not being invited to have input into those discussions. I wonder whether you could give clarification.

Ms Gallagher: Sure. I think Mrs Burke wrote to me about this yesterday.

MS MacDONALD: We were all copied in.

DR FOSKEY: Yes, we were all copied in.

MRS BURKE: Yes, everybody got it.

Ms Gallagher: Okay. I need to take some advice on that. I was aware we were looking at the impact of ratifying the convention, but I cannot believe that we would not be consulting with the community. I just cannot believe we would not be. So I want to get some advice on that.

Ms Ford: I certainly know that the disability commissioner has held two forums on the United Nations convention and sought advice and input into those forums. David Heckendorf, who is on our team as a senior policy officer, who has a disability, has coordinated a group that is getting advice on the United Nations. It feeds into a cross-government interdepartmental group that is hosted through the Chief

Minister's, which both Ms Crebbin and Mr Heckendorf feed into from their consultations. I also am surprised that people feel that they are not having avenues for—

Ms Gallagher: If that is the case, if they feel that they are not, we need to go back and do some more work on that.

Ms Lambert: If you can give us guidance as to who might feel they have not had the opportunity—

Ms Gallagher: People with Disabilities Inc.

Ms Lambert: Certainly Advocacy for Inclusion have been very involved in it, and they have a group that meets monthly.

MRS BURKE: How does that work, then? Do you contact everybody or is it up to them to get in touch with you?

Ms Lambert: Through our information service, we have a broadcast email that goes to all the organisations. As well, I meet with all of the peak bodies quarterly. Through that, I find out whether there any areas where they feel they are not getting input or ways in which we can improve or information that they require. We also make links with them. For example, with the convention, we would advise those peak bodies to talk to the commissioner because she is highly involved in it at the moment. She also meets with those groups.

MRS BURKE: Perhaps we can see whether People with Disabilities are on that listing.

Ms Ford: They would definitely be on ours.

Ms Lambert: They are on ours, for sure. They are definitely on ours.

MRS BURKE: I do not know what happened there.

Ms Lambert: Also, the Disability Advisory Council has been briefed, and that has representation from People with Disabilities on it.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, there has been a breakdown at some point; so we need to respond.

MRS DUNNE: At page 186 of BP4, you talk about providing increased support to children and families in west Belconnen. I welcome that, as one of the local members, in general terms. I would like to drill down into it.

Minister, you may be aware that UnitingCare Kippax presented to the committee late last week in relation to services and the gaps in service in west Belconnen. UnitingCare Kippax highlighted particular problems—the lack of access to health facilities for people who do not have access to a private vehicle; the time it takes to travel to a specialist appointment at either Cavalry or Deakin, where most of the specialist doctors are located; the lack of coordinated services for youth; and the

difficulty that people who do not have access to private transport have in getting to the services that are provided.

One that really struck home with me is Dunlop, because it has no community facilities of any sort. There is a playgroup in the park that is operated through Belconnen Community Services, but it can only run when there is good weather, which means it runs in the summer and on dry days and not at all during the winter. There is no alternative location for that playgroup on bad weather days. It is disruptive and it is not a particularly full service. With the \$845,000 in this budget, how do you see those needs being addressed in west Belconnen?

Ms Gallagher: Certainly there is \$200,000 that is going straight to UnitingCare Kippax, I understand, to respond to the areas that they have identified to the government. We also have the money for the design of the child and family centre—

MRS DUNNE: That is included in that \$845,000?

Ms Gallagher: No. Some of the \$845,000—I am just looking for the line in the budget paper that has \$845,000—is rolled in. It is a bit confusing. The money that is rolled in there is for the community portable long service leave fund that starts in 2009-10. It is about \$600,000. Let me just understand this. I think west Belconnen is separate to that. The \$200,000 is a separate line item. The \$845,000 is over the four years. I get it. That is to go to UnitingCare Kippax.

MRS DUNNE: That is the money for UnitingCare Kippax?

Ms Gallagher: That is; sorry.

MRS DUNNE: Is that in any way tied to what they can do with it?

Ms Gallagher: They have provided a submission to us. We would, through the contract negotiations with them, tie them down to particular things. But that would be pretty much dictated by them. They do a fantastic job out there. We work very closely with them. It would not be as if we would be imposing something on them that was not one of their priorities. It is very much driven by UnitingCare Kippax, from where I sit.

The idea on the child and family centre, too, which is separate to that—

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I wanted to go to that.

Ms Gallagher: It is for design. What I am hoping that we can establish here with UnitingCare Kippax is a model that works and does not replicate what they are doing, because you could say that they are running a child and family centre out there that they have established themselves. We would like some location for a government presence on some of the other things we do with child and family centres, whether that be, as you say, dealing with some of those transport issues, bringing housing there, bringing care and protection there in a less statutory role. What we want to nut out this year and work with UnitingCare Kippax on is how we can build up some government services there that work with them and complement them rather than be in

competition with them.

Mr Hehir: In addition, a major focus of their presentation was on transport, particularly for people who do not have it. In the second appropriation last year, there is also a scheme, which was then titled the seniors transport services, which is going out to community services to operate. In the negotiations on that we have broadened it well and truly beyond just seniors.

It will be a service that will be available to assist people with that access to the specialist services. It will cross boundaries in that it will do the travel out to Deakin, if that is necessary, or to Cavalry. It will operate from within the Belconnen region. It will move from Dunlop to Cavalry perfectly happily. That is actually a scheme that was in the second appropriation last year.

MRS DUNNE: Can I ask you to hold that thought because I would like to go to that, but I want to concentrate a little bit on the child and family services for a minute, with the committee's indulgence. I welcome the comments that you have made, minister, about doing this in consultation with people who are already on the ground out there.

The other question that I have is: how will the child and family centre interact with the proposed P-2 school at Southern Cross? To step back a little bit, how do you envisage the already existing child and family centre at Tuggeranong will interact with the P-2 school at Isabella Plains? What thinking has gone into that?

Ms Gallagher: We have done quite a lot of thinking on that. Ms Pappas can talk us through it. If I could just say this on the issue about a location: Southern Cross was not in the right spot for us for some of the families who want to get to the west Belconnen child and family centre. It was, just in terms of transport to it, more difficult if we were wanting to reach out and be in a major shopping area and things like that. That was largely the decision in pursuing it.

We did look at the having the third child and family centre at Southern Cross. When we looked at the data, when we looked at where we had our families in need, it was probably half a suburb in the wrong direction. I will leave it to Helen, but we have been working very closely on that.

Ms Lambert: I will start, if I may, and say that one of the really big successes of the child and family centres has been the capacity for drop in, which is why they have worked so well in the town centres where we have got them. So that was a very key feature in our thinking about the model.

Having said that, Belconnen Community Services is very active in that region, too; so we want to work with them on the ground as well. At the moment, Ms Pappas, who runs the early intervention area in the department, actually has been working with Belconnen in an outreach capacity, especially with some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. So we have got strong connections into that community already.

The first model in Gungahlin was quite different then from the model that we established in Tuggeranong, because we looked at Tuggeranong and said, "What will work on the ground there? It is an established community. There are lots of services

there. We will follow a similar process and work through that with the Belconnen community services, all of them, and the west Belconnen ones.”

Also, Helen has been involved in the discussions on the P-2 school quite directly. She can tell you about that in detail. But the way we will basically be involved with the P-2 schools will be with outreach from the child and family centres. I hand over to Helen.

Ms Pappas: The context around the P-2 schools and the child and family centres and how they work together will really depend on what the school identifies as the needs of their community. We will be working together with the schools to get a sense of what it is that the families need in those communities, deliver some programs on site at the schools, look at doing early-morning sessions and evening sessions in order to facilitate contact into programs for various parents—parents who work and parents who do not work—and also run some programs from the child and family centre, from the centre itself. So it is trying to provide flexibility of service, depending on the needs of that community and what they identify as their priorities.

MRS DUNNE: For instance, there are four proposed P-2 schools. There is Southern Cross, which I presume will establish some sort of relationship with the proposed new one in Kippax. The other three are essentially south of the lake—not counting the cooperative school; I am not quite sure how that fits into that arrangement. The other three are south of the lake. Will they essentially all form some sort of association with the Tuggeranong child and family centre?

Ms Pappas: Certainly the Narrabundah school will have a strong connection with the Gungahlin centre, because of the connection with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander project that is running from that centre. So there will be quite significant outreach into that P-2 school. The Isabella Plains P-2 will have a very close connection to the Tuggeranong centre. With the Lyons school, we are working with Woden community services and have had some initial conversations with Woden about what it is that we can do jointly at the Lyons school.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

Ms Lambert: As I mentioned in our annual report estimates, one of the things that the child and family centres have done is package up a number of their programs and provide them to the community services as well, so they have seeded programs in the regional community services centre. They have not just worked on keeping them for themselves to run; they have actually trained other people to run them and encouraged the other services to run those programs too. That is why Woden will probably have a very close connection with Lyons.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Hehir, I hope you have been holding that thought. The flexible transport on demand—how is that looking to pan out?

Mr Hehir: We have got five or six contracts signed at the moment. Those services should be operational very soon. It was negotiated on an individual basis with each of the community services. From discussion with them, my understanding is that they identified that it would be appropriate to broaden it just beyond seniors, that there

were other people in the community who would need it. My understanding is that it will operate in a very similar fashion to the HACC transport services that they have but will travel quite broadly if required.

Probably the detail is better answered by Ms Whitten, but my understanding is that it is the same sort of arrangement in terms of a phone call into the community service and they will have a look and advise you of the time that a service may be available.

MRS DUNNE: So it will be demand responsive to some extent? It is designed to be a demand-responsive transport system? It is not being run by a transport company? It is being run by community services?

Mr Hehir: That is right.

Ms Lambert: Yes, the five regional community service organisations.

Mr Hehir: Six.

Ms Lambert: Six, sorry.

MRS DUNNE: So there will be six contracts?

Mr Hehir: Six.

MRS DUNNE: What assistance is being given to those community service organisations to run a demand-responsive transport system?

Mr Hehir: They are being provided with the transport vehicles and the fuel for those vehicles, so that is all done through ACTION. They are being paid for the services of the drivers and I think there is also a small admin component. There was training provided to the drivers to make sure they were licensed to drive the buses.

MRS DUNNE: What sort of vehicles?

Ms Whitten: Minibuses, which have been provided by ACTION.

MRS DUNNE: How many seats?

Ms Whitten: Six. Contracts have been entered into with five of the six regional services—

MRS DUNNE: So they are not wheelchair accessible?

Ms Whitten: Yes, they are going to be wheelchair accessible.

MRS DUNNE: I suppose the question I was asking Mr Hehir was this: providing demand-responsive public transport is highly specialised and quite difficult in terms of timetabling and scheduling, so what assistance is being given to Woden community service or Belconnen community service to help someone who does the scheduling? Suppose somebody rings up and says, “I live in Macgregor and do this and want to do

this and this and this,” and somebody else rings from Dunlop. How do you do the scheduling to meet that and what assistance is being given?

Ms Whitten: The regional services do have experience in this in terms of the HACC program. The negotiations with each of the regional services are built on that existing experience. That has involved our department as well as ACTION. Essentially, we are just supporting in terms of their own experience as well. So the conditions in the contracts have been informed by their views as well.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, I did not hear all that.

Ms Whitten: Sorry. The conditions in the contracts have been informed by the experience that each of the regional community services can bring to the partnership.

MRS DUNNE: We are building on the HACC service?

Ms Whitten: No; they are separate schemes.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I know they are separate, but we are not going to be replicating what the HACC service does?

Ms Lambert: Not entirely, no. It is the model that they have used. That is why the regionals were chosen as the groups to run this. It is an extension, if you like. It is an extension in the sense that they are already quite experienced at working out where people are in their areas. They are very close to the ground. They have been working through the process of this in an interdepartmental sense with us and ACTION.

I met with them last week and asked them how it was going. They were very pleased with the progress so far, but were very keen to stay in touch so that we can stay informed about the issues you have just raised—how this is working, what the issues are that you are facing. We are making sure that they stay in touch with ACTION as well so that there is that ongoing support for them. But they feel quite confident at starting the scheme and working it through. We have had many discussions with them up until this point.

Ms Gallagher: We should keep an eye on it.

Ms Lambert: We will.

Ms Gallagher: We need to keep an eye on it to make sure it actually meets the need. The need that was identified in the first instance was dealing with a group that were not eligible for HACC.

THE CHAIR: Ms MacDonald, you have a supplementary?

MS MacDONALD: I have a couple of supplementaries. Yes, the minibuses are going to be wheelchair accessible, but there are a lot of people who are mobility impaired but not in wheelchairs. Will it be easy for them to get onto the minibuses?

Ms Whitten: They will be operated by one driver, so they would be there to assist—

MS MacDONALD: Sorry, I cannot hear.

Ms Whitten: The minibuses will be operated by a single driver, so the assistance that would be available for people to get onto the buses would be the driver plus anybody else who might be with an individual at that time.

MS MacDONALD: Right. The reason I am asking about it is this. I was aware of it, but I did not actually think about it. The other day I met a lady who is still in her own home and has got mobility issues. She keeps her car because getting down the hill to the bus to get to the shops is okay but getting back up from the bus with the shopping is not an option for her. She was saying to me that she keeps her car because of that. She has a son who lives reasonably close by, so there are other options. My question is this. I really should have thought about this at the time and said to her that this is going to be coming. How will you advertise it for people who are not necessarily in contact with community services?

Ms Lambert: We are going to rely on them to publicise it. We will be really keen to hear of stories like that, if those things are not working. It is a trial for the first six months. We will work closely with them. As I said, I meet with them regularly as well. It is their responsibility, though, to get in touch with people and advertise the service and so on.

Ms Whitten: The buses will be signed with the individual logos of each of the regional community services, so in a sense they will become their own advertisement as well.

MS MacDONALD: Okay.

THE CHAIR: We will go to morning tea.

Meeting adjourned from 10.36 to 11.05 am.

THE CHAIR: So we might get onto output class 1.2 services, and Mr Smyth has a question.

MR SMYTH: Mr Gentleman can go first.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thanks, chair. Minister, page 195 of budget paper 4 shows that the hours for therapy services provided have risen to 53,000. There is a note there, but can you just tell me what you hope to see achieved with those extra hours provided?

Ms Gallagher: That increase on the target and the estimated outcome is from finalising the model that is used in Therapy ACT, and it also shows that staff retention, recruitment and retention, is going very well. Our ability to fill more positions has meant that we have got more hours to provide to families right across the board. That is for assessments, it is for discussions with families and for appropriate interventions.

MR GENTLEMAN: So what sort of work have you been able to put into retention to keep staff on board?

Ms Gallagher: I am sure Roslyn Hayes can answer that better than I, but I know that they have been doing a lot of work at Therapy ACT to keep staff. The allied health area is a particular area of international workforce shortage. We have to be a good employer to keep people, otherwise they can go to any number of vacant positions around the city and get work straight away.

Ms Hayes: Currently, our vacancy rate is very low. It is around six per cent at the moment, which is about the lowest it has ever been. As the minister said, I think that a key reason for that is the flexibility of our work practices. We have 112 staff all together, of whom 105 are women, and many of them are in their life stage of having either babies or young children. The flexibility of our work arrangements allows people to work part time to fit in with their childcare arrangements and to take additional leave over school holidays. I think that certainly helps to make us an employer of choice for many of the allied health professionals.

Also, I think the fact that Therapy ACT provides such a variety of work for people—from newborn babies and premature babies through to people who are 65—across a variety of different disability and developmental delays means that it is quite an interesting place for the therapists to work. We try and market that as well.

Ms Lambert: One of the other things I could add to that is that when we were doing our surveys when we first formed as an organisation and were asking why people moved on, one of the reasons was, in Therapy in particular, the facilities that people were in. We have been able to invest through government assistance significant dollars in the Holder site and then in the site at Belconnen. That has also been a feature, I think. When people are working directly with clients one on one, they like to work in circumstances that support that environment, particularly when you are working with people who are elderly and vulnerable or young and vulnerable. I think that has been a key factor for us as well in terms of retaining some of those staff.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Burke has a question.

MRS BURKE: On that same page, the accountability indicators, looking at the client satisfaction survey, we are at 85 per cent and remaining consistent. What areas, minister, would you feel that we are perhaps not meeting or are falling down on? What is coming out through those client surveys?

Ms Gallagher: I think the satisfaction rate is very high for intervention and therapy services. I think the biggest and really the only complaints I have had are around the time that people have had to wait for assessments and the fact that they expected more from Therapy because they did not have an understanding of the role that Therapy plays. I think they are the only two areas where I have had concerns raised with me by people who have used Therapy. Maybe it is in the name, Therapy ACT, but some people think the organisation becomes the therapy provider rather than the organisation that equips the parents and enables connections to happen for that ongoing therapy to occur.

The other one of course is around demand for the service. If there were an area I would have liked to have done more for in this budget, it would have been around

enhancing or increasing some of the capacity of the organisation to respond to that demand. I was not able to do that this year, but it is certainly something that—

MRS BURKE: What demand would that be?

Ms Gallagher: Just demand for assessments really, whether that be a speech assessment or an IT assessment or a physio assessment. We are seeing demand continue to grow, like we are seeing in other areas of health. That is an area that we need to keep focussed on. Some of the areas which we may be able to deal with in the immediate time is some of the commonwealth promises around allocations. They have made a promise of \$190 million around autism support. Of course, the commonwealth-state and territory disability agreement is hopefully nearing the end of that process. That may allow some capacity to deal with some of the demand we are seeing.

MRS BURKE: Thank you. On a supplementary then, you talked about autism there. We have not yet seen the finer details on that from the feds. What amount of early intervention does the ACT government provide for an infant who is diagnosed with autism currently?

Ms Gallagher: It crosses this portfolio and education, and we work closely together. There are early intervention preschools, for example, which take on children who have a range of special needs. Autism is one of them, and Therapy is the other provider. I am sure Ros can talk about it in more detail than I can, but there is a range of early intervention mechanisms.

MRS BURKE: What about the amount of hours that are allocated from a program to early intervention.

Ms Gallagher: From Therapy's point of view, I imagine that is probably difficult to answer, because it would vary depending on the needs of the child. I imagine the hours for the early intervention preschools are easy to advise on, because there are set hours for that.

Ms Hayes: That is correct. Once people have been assessed, we provide a parent support and a family support education information series of sessions to help people know how to respond and learn about the sorts of things they can do themselves. We help develop an individual plan for each child, so the amount of therapy and the kinds of therapeutic interventions will vary from child to child according to whether they need speech therapy or OT or whether the family needs social work support services. As the minister said, most children with autism would be referred to one of the department of education's early intervention playgroups or learning units.

So the number of hours of direct therapy that they get will depend on their need and our capacity, plus what they get from the preschool, plus the amount of input that we put into assisting parents by helping them develop a home program and providing most of the therapies. The best practice is to provide the therapies in situ—that is, the normal home environment, school environment or preschool environment. The work that we do is really aimed at helping those people to use every opportunity, whether it is driving in the car to preschool or whether it is at home in the bath, for encouraging

the kinds of behaviours that you want to see.

MRS BURKE: What level are you are aware of? The federal health department, for example, would advise the program for a child with autism. Do you know much about the specifications and what their standard might be?

Ms Hayes: The sort of thing I was just talking about is what is included in that best practice. It is a family-focused, environmentally-focused intervention program that does not take a child out of his or her normal environment into a kind of therapy room but uses everyday opportunities. They talk about up to 20 hours, that being focused around using whatever opportunity you can to intervene with the child.

MRS BURKE: Are we delivering that level of hours in the ACT, to your knowledge?

Ms Hayes: Not through therapists, but, as I say, you have to see those hours as being from schoolteachers, from preschool teachers, from therapists and from parents. Across the whole spectrum, that is where the hours are done.

MR SMYTH: Just following up on that, in therapy services, I note the budget has gone up \$945,000 this year. Is that just to provide the extra hours of service, or are there other programs?

Ms Hayes: That is basically in relation to the equipment services.

MR SMYTH: So the extra \$945,000 is for the equipment services?

Ms Lambert: It is my understanding that it is some indexation as well.

MR SMYTH: Some what?

Ms Lambert: Indexation, which always occurs.

MR SMYTH: How do you afford the extra 4,000 hours of service then?

Ms Gallagher: We were always funded; it was just they were not being delivered through staff vacancies. That is my understanding.

Ms Lambert: That is correct.

Ms Gallagher: So we have had a number of vacancies, and we have been working on filling those vacancies. We are now at a really good level; our vacancy rate is very low, and we can provide more hours because of that.

MR SMYTH: The equipment service costs are how much extra?

Ms Gallagher: It is \$608,000.

MR SMYTH: What else will make up the \$945,000?

Ms Gallagher: Indexation.

Ms Lambert: I will just call my chief financial officer up; he can answer this in detail.

Mr Hubbard: Which numbers are you referring to, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: I am on page 191 of budget paper 4: output 1.2, therapy services.

Mr Hubbard: What you see there is essentially the budget pretty well only growing by indexation of both the admin side, at about three per cent, and salaries at about four per cent. The additional funding that you will see there is \$304,000 for the equipment loan on the recurrent side and \$304,000 that you actually see on the capital side.

MR SMYTH: So \$304,000 is recurrent?

Mr Hubbard: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Okay, that would explain it.

Mr Hubbard: It is one of the beauties of accounting. The accounting policy does have that line between 5,000; items below 5,000 go into recurrent and above 5,000 they go onto the balance sheet.

MR SMYTH: It is interesting that, if you then go to page 195 and the accountability indicators, the average cost per hour of therapy services to an individual or a group is \$199.28. If you multiply that by 53,000 hours, it actually comes to \$10,561,840, which of course would mean you do not have the 300K for the equipment service.

Mr Hubbard: Could you go through that again?

MR SMYTH: In budget paper 4, page 195, the target this year is 53,000 hours. The average cost is going to be \$199.28.

Mr Hubbard: Correct, yes.

MR SMYTH: A multiplied by B equals \$10,561,840, if my maths is right, which leaves you with about \$1,000 to provide the equipment service which you have just said will cost \$304,000 in recurrent terms.

Mr Hubbard: The actual numerator that we are using for that number is 10,562,000 divided by 53, which gives us 199.28.

MR SMYTH: That is right, but that is hours of service provided. So how do you fund the equipment service?

Mr Hubbard: That is actually included in that budget. It is in supplies and services.

MR SMYTH: So it is included as a service.

Mr Hubbard: It is basically a total cost of the whole service, and that is what we

divide the denominator by.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, you had a supplementary question.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I am confused, minister, because you said that the increase in hours was because you had more staff, that you had been funded for these hours in the past but you had not been able to deliver them. But if you go back through the previous budget papers, the 2006-07 estimated outcome was \$9,096,000. The 2007-08 budget was \$9.453 million and the outcome was \$9.526 million. Now we have this increase to \$10.1 million of which \$300,000 is for equipment services. So we have got a very small increase.

I am trying to work out, if we did not have staff to deliver the hours, why the estimated outcomes are so relatively high. You are saying we are delivering more hours within the budget, we have not been able to deliver those hours in the past, but the estimated outcome is relatively high if you have not been delivering the hours of service. Can someone explain why there is a gradual increase from 2006-07 through the estimated outcomes for that year, through the estimated outcomes for this year and into the next financial year, which does not equate with the minister's statement that we are suddenly delivering more hours because we were funded for it in the past but we were not able to deliver it. What were we doing with the money if we were not delivering hours because we did not have staff?

Mr Hubbard: You have budget targets, so you are dealing with budgets, and then you have an estimated outcome for 2007-08. With respect to the actual total cost of the service—and this is the numerator to get that 196.27—we expect their spend at this stage to be about \$9.6 million. We then use what we believe to be the estimated outcome of the hours for this year, which is 49,000. When you do that division, you get the figure of 196.27. With the recruitment, the target we are setting—and that is not to say that is exactly where we are going to land—for next year is going to be 53,000 hours. As I explained to Mr Smyth, that is based on our budget for next year of \$10.562 million.

MRS DUNNE: Mr Hubbard, you are delivering 49,000 hours with \$9.526 million, or you now say \$9.6 million.

Mr Hubbard: \$9.617 million.

MRS DUNNE: And you are going to deliver another 53,000 hours, not counting the \$300,000 for—

Mr Hubbard: No, and counting the \$300,000—the total cost, yes.

MRS DUNNE: And counting. I know how you get to—

Ms Gallagher: The estimated outcome for this year is 53,000, not 49,000; that is the problem.

MRS DUNNE: I see; that is the problem.

Ms Lambert: And that estimated outcome is a result of the increased staffing capacity.

MRS DUNNE: Have you had that increased staffing capacity all year?

Ms Hayes: The capacity has been there. We have been building up the staff, but the actual number of staff—

MRS DUNNE: You now have live bodies.

Ms Hayes: That is correct, yes.

MRS DUNNE: Have you had those all year?

Ms Hayes: No. There have been ups and downs. For example, because of our workforce, maternity leave is a big factor for us. We currently have seven staff on maternity leave. The coming and going of people is variable, and of course some of the time we are paying those people to be on leave.

MS MacDONALD: You said seven?

Ms Hayes: Seven babies this year.

MS MacDONALD: Out of how many?

Ms Hayes: Out of 100 staff; they are quite productive.

MR SMYTH: Mr Hubbard, if I divide \$9,617,000 by 53,000 hours of service, I get a unit cost of \$181. If you multiply 53,000 by 196, it is actually \$10.4 million, which means either therapy services have blown their budget or you are not delivering it for the unit cost.

Mr Hubbard: Can I get back to you? I will just do that calculation.

MR SMYTH: It is actually \$10.4 million which means either disability or therapy services have blown their budget or you are not delivering it for the unit cost.

THE CHAIR: Okay, Mr Hubbard has taken that on notice.

MRS DUNNE: There is one more point that I want to clear up. Ms Hayes, if we are delivering 53,000 hours this year, and you have not been fully staffed all year, and the minister is saying we are fully fuelled up and ready to go, why are we only delivering 53,000 hours next year?

Ms Gallagher: Because we would expect some vacancies.

Ms Hayes: We would expect some vacancies. I already know of several vacancies. We are currently recruiting for some of those positions but we cannot be sure of successfully getting the professional staff that we need. We might optimistically hope to exceed that target, but realistically, if we look at staff turnover and the number of

maternity leave people coming up within the next few months, we know that we will still have vacancy rates, and there will still be turnover. So if we can maintain the next 12 months as we have for this 12 months, that would be a good outcome.

MRS DUNNE: Could you take this on notice: what is the staff turnover rate in Therapy ACT and what has it been for, say, the last three years?

Ms Hayes: It is currently about 6.5 per cent, but I have not got it for the last three years.

MRS DUNNE: That is quite good then.

MRS BURKE: Minister, have you recently written to the Autism and Aspergers Group of the ACT to say that the ACT government is currently the major provider of services for children with autism?

Ms Gallagher: I have written to them recently, I believe. I cannot recall exactly what that letter contained, but I seem to recall that.

MRS BURKE: How many children with autism under the age of six years are currently accessing intervention services through Therapy ACT? Would you have that information?

Ms Gallagher: I imagine we could get that, if Ros does not have it off the top of her head.

Ms Hayes: I cannot give you the actual breakdown—under six, did you say?

MRS BURKE: Yes, under six years.

Ms Hayes: We are currently providing services to 206 children with autism.

MRS BURKE: I am happy for you to take it on notice if you want to disaggregate or give me a breakdown.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, sure.

MRS BURKE: On the back of that, you might want to take this on notice: how much intervention does Therapy ACT provide for each child?

Ms Gallagher: For each of those 200?

Mrs Burke: No, the under six years.

Ms Hayes: For each child?

Ms Gallagher: It would be about that 200.

MRS BURKE: Do you reckon 200 would be under six?

Ms Hayes: No.

Ms Gallagher: So that is from nought to whatever. I imagine a big proportion of them are under six. We will take it on notice and do what we can to be helpful. But I am not sure I can go—

Ms Hayes: In terms of hours per child?

MRS BURKE: How much intervention does Therapy ACT provide for each child under six years of age—how many hours?

Ms Gallagher: We will do what we can.

Mr Hubbard: Would that be acceptable as an average?

Ms Gallagher: We will do what we can without breaching confidentiality and all the rest of it.

MRS BURKE: Hours of service would be—

Ms Gallagher: Yes, we will be as helpful as we can.

MRS BURKE: How much consultation does Therapy ACT provide for each child?

Ms Lambert: Each child under six, so we are talking about the same brief?

MRS BURKE: All under six, the same cohort, yes. What measures of intervention effectiveness are reported and what do those reports show? I have some more but I will put them on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, Mrs Burke.

Ms Gallagher: You will not get that within five days.

MRS BURKE: No.

Ms Gallagher: For that level of questioning, we are going to have to free up an officer for a long time to answer those sorts of questions. You are just going to have to be patient with that. I will provide it as soon as I can, but it will not be within five days.

THE CHAIR: No, we note that.

Ms Gallagher: And it will not be if we have to ring every parent and ask them if we can provide the details of their hours of therapy and consultation either.

MRS BURKE: I am not asking you to name names; I respect that. It is just hours.

Ms Gallagher: No, but if we are reporting each individual child there is a responsibility for us to contact the parents and say, “We have been asked to provide

your child's hours and type of support in a public forum in a de-identifying way." It is quite a lot of work.

THE CHAIR: Yes, we understand that. Thank you very much for taking those on notice. Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Strategic indicators 1 and 2 relate mainly to output classes 1.1 and 1.2, I guess.

Ms Gallagher: Can you give me the page?

MR SMYTH: Page 188, budget paper 4.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MR SMYTH: I notice that the numbers in both are flat. The number of service users by service type assessed does not change for this year and the next three years, and the number of clients accessing services goes up only 70 in the next three years. Is there a reason—

Ms Gallagher: Strategic indicator 2 and 1?

MR SMYTH: Yes. Is there a reason that 1 is flat and 2—

Ms Gallagher: One is flat because the funding is fully allocated.

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Ms Gallagher: For both of those, it is not to say that the populations remain static. They are not the same individuals being counted. We currently have 3,477 funded spots, and that is under strategic indicator 1. With strategic indicator 2, half of those will be continuing clients and half of them will be new, so there is turnover within that, but that is what the funding allows for it to do.

MR SMYTH: Where do the people who leave the service go? Are they people who go interstate? Are they people who just leave the services?

Ms Gallagher: For strategic indicator 2?

MR SMYTH: Yes. Are there exit surveys as to why people leave the service or does the funding just run out?

Ms Gallagher: No. With disability, it is normally—there is some very small interstate change. I cannot think of one recently going out of the ACT. But, for example, a number of people who were part of that number—a few people—passed away. So that would change. Plus it is the new money as well which has increased that. But it is different—

Ms Hayes: For Therapy ACT, which is 1.2, there is quite a considerable turnover in the number of people, individuals, being serviced in each year. That is because this is

a service that has a large focus on early intervention and children with developmental delay, so quite a large proportion of our individual clients are children who are getting therapy and intervention to assist with their delay. Many of them will catch up and, once they start school, will no longer require further therapeutic interventions. Some come in and out.

At a stage in life, say at two or three, when they are learning to speak, they might get some speech intervention. They may then be discharged from our service. They may come back into our service when they are five or six for some other intervention. There is a considerable turnover in our client population.

MR SMYTH: All right. Going back to page 195, it says “Client satisfaction with therapy service as measured by annual survey” and gives the figure of 85 per cent. How many people are surveyed, how many people respond and how is the survey conducted?

Ms Hayes: This year, we distributed 310 client satisfaction surveys; 276 of those were returned, which gives us an 89 per cent return rate, which we were very happy with. Essentially the methodology we use for that is to capture people as they come into the waiting room. We actually hand them the survey and ask them to fill it in there and then. That gives us a fairly good response rate. That is conducted over a period of a month—basically in the month of March but a little bit into April as well, to get the last ones back.

MR SMYTH: So it is conducted in house and the results are collated in house?

Ms Hayes: The completed survey forms are put in a box and then they go off to our research and data section in the city.

Ms Lambert: Which is an independent section that reports directly to me on those matters.

MR SMYTH: But given that the number of clients is up in the 4,000 mark, is 300 an adequate sample? Does it cover all the different sorts of groups that would use the various services? We are talking about the people who come in. Is there a group who miss out simply because they do not access it regularly?

Ms Hayes: The reports indicate that it is a valid sample number. As well as the ones in the waiting room, we also take them on home visits. If therapists are going out to see people at home who do not come in, they will take them with them. With adult clients that we service who are in accommodation facilities, they are very often completed by the carer or the parent in those facilities. We basically have six teams; we try to get reasonable numbers across each of those six teams in terms of responses.

MR SMYTH: So you are sampling right across the board, not just those who front up at a given time?

Ms Hayes: No.

MRS DUNNE: I want to follow up on this indicator. It has changed from last year.

You have now included Therapy ACT's early childhood intervention clients. It seems that there are 787 children in that group. Can you explain why you changed the indicator and what groups make up that 3,477?

Ms Gallagher: That is Disability ACT, I think.

Ms Hayes: The note is under strategic indicator 1.

MRS DUNNE: Last year, the figure was 2,680 for the budget and 2,690 in the outyears.

Ms Hayes: That has to do with the number of clients with completed forms for the commonwealth-state-territory disability agreement.

Mr Hehir: A large part is about consistency of data. We have a number of different reports that we do, so the ROGS data—

MRS DUNNE: Sorry?

Mr Hehir: Report on government services data.

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Hehir: There are reports required under the CSTDA. AIHW do collections. We are trying to make sure that our data is consistent to all of those sources. It just makes sense when you are doing comparisons. You can get very confused when you are talking to the Australian government when they look at one set of figures here and another set of figures there; you can spend a lot of time explaining it. So just for consistency purposes and ensuring that comparisons are valid, particularly within the report on government services, we do make sure that we pick up all the information.

MRS DUNNE: When it was 2,690, who was in the cohort? Who was in the group? And where have the other 780-odd come from?

Mr Hehir: Lois may be better able to answer on the data for that, but primarily it would be people within group homes, people requiring individual support packages, people accessing respite services and people accessing in-home respite. They would be the broad range of clients that would be in that first figure.

MRS DUNNE: I think that answers that. Where do the other 787 who have come in this year come from?

Ms Hayes: They are clients of Therapy ACT.

MRS DUNNE: It implies that they are early childhood clients.

Mr Hehir: That is right. The older clients of Therapy ACT are—

MRS DUNNE: The older clients have already been counted?

Mr Hehir: Yes, that is right.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

MRS BURKE: I have one more.

THE CHAIR: Yes, just one; then we will go to the next output class.

MRS BURKE: This is a run on the autism issues. Can you identify what funding the ACT government currently provides to Autism Asperger ACT?

Ms Gallagher: We do not. That is something that I have taken some advice on from the department. They have written to me. They have sought some funding. They have drawn to my attention that we are the only state or territory that does not provide money for their peak organisation. I am taking some advice on that.

MRS BURKE: I was going to ask how we compare to other states and territories.

Ms Gallagher: I think you know, by the sound of your question.

MRS BURKE: I do now.

Ms Gallagher: I think someone else has been writing those. We are looking at it.

THE CHAIR: Has Mr Hubbard got the number that he took on notice?

Mr Hubbard: Mr Smyth, you were right on the calculations there. We should have used 53,000. What we have done is used 49,000 as the numerator; that is what has given us the 196. If you use the 53,000 as the numerator, it brings the total cost per individual down to 181.46.

MR SMYTH: So it is just—

MRS BURKE: So how does that move the target?

MR SMYTH: That is if you manipulate the numbers. The options are that they have blown the budget, they have delivered only 49,000 hours of service or the unit cost has to drop to 181. Your reaction is that the number is going to come down?

Mr Hubbard: Yes. We go to the area to get their estimated outcome of service delivery. Therapy are telling us that, because they have had an increase in staffing, that is the hours of service that they have delivered and they estimate they will deliver by the end of the year. Based on that pro rata from where we are now, they are going to 53,000—and on the total cost.

MR SMYTH: It therefore leads to another question. You estimated that at 49,000 hours of service it will cost you \$198 per hour. You have actually put more staff on, or you have kept staff, so you have been able to deliver 53,000. But the cost has dropped almost 10 per cent, to \$181. Then it is going to rise almost 10 per cent in the outyear to deliver the same level of service. That just does not make sense.

Mr Hubbard: It does make sense in the sense that the actual budget has gone up. The major ingredients that have pushed that budget up in the outyear are the four per cent increase in the salaries. You would appreciate that therapy is a salary-driven service. Their relatively smaller admin budget has also gone up by about three per cent. The total of those takes the budget up to, for next year, for therapy, \$10.56 million. But then you would divide it by the 53 and you do get the—

MR SMYTH: So wages have gone up four per cent and admin has gone up three per cent. That is seven per cent; this is a 10 per cent increase.

Mr Hehir: There is also the \$312,000 for the expensing of the equipment loan service items.

THE CHAIR: Let us go to the next output class, output 2.1, early intervention.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, if I could bring you to page 195 of budget paper 4. There are an increased number of parenting sessions. There is a note there too. Can you tell us what you hope to achieve with the increased number of sessions?

Ms Gallagher: These have been very popular at the child and family centres. One of the key areas that we work on is supporting parents in a non-statutory way to learn skills about parenting. As everyone around this table would know, they do not come automatically. So this is a very important part of the child and family centre's business. I will let Helen add to this. As a group, they are constantly looking at ways to meet the needs of parents in a variety of formats and programs.

Ms Pappas: Certainly they are hugely popular parenting sessions. It seems parents are more prepared and more willing to come to group sessions than individual work sessions, which has been an interesting trend that we have seen.

The increase has really been about our ability to get corporate sponsorship for some of these programs. An example of that would be the Venus program. Fernwood Women's Health Centre, who have a corporate responsibility program called the Venus program, approached us and asked would we be prepared to work with them to target isolated families in the community who might like to participate. That is a 12-week program where women get their gym gear, they get their shoes, they get 12 weeks worth of exercise at the gym for an hour and then, on top of that, they get an hour of a topic which might be about returning to work; it might be about financial management; it might be about various things, depending on what that group of women feel they need to hear about.

It is an excellent program and that has expanded quite significantly. It started at the Gungahlin Fernwood gym and it has now expanded through to Belconnen and to Civic. We are in negotiations with Tuggeranong as well.

MRS DUNNE: In relation to strategic indicator 3, the number of families accessing services, I presume this relates to this output class.

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: What we are seeing over the budget and as you back cast as well is an increase of five families a year, every year. How do we come up with a figure like that? When you take into consideration, for instance, the interventions and the money going to a place like west Belconnen, the opening of the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, this sort of baby-step increment seems odd.

Ms Gallagher: This is just our child and family centres; so it is only based on the two of them, Tuggeranong and Gungahlin.

MRS DUNNE: So it is only based on those two?

Ms Gallagher: Yes. It is just throughput with a bit of growth in there.

MRS DUNNE: Five per year?

Ms Gallagher: Those would not be the same 760. Without a large injection of a new program, it is about continuing to grow.

MRS DUNNE: But Gungahlin is growing by more than five families a year. We have 500 or 600 families a year. It seems odd that the indicator is so—

Ms Gallagher: Yes, but without a specific initiative to increase the centre's staffing, we could not be doing much more than that. They are fully operational now. And Tuggeranong. What they are saying is that we can maintain this workload with perhaps a few more families a year. We will keep watching and monitoring it, but the next growth in child and family centres will be to a new population, not to extending Gungahlin.

MRS DUNNE: So you are not counting in that the services provided by NGOs at all?

Ms Gallagher: No.

MRS DUNNE: So that is just through the families?

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: I still think that is a modest increase.

Ms Gallagher: Four per cent of the population are accessing those.

MRS DUNNE: The idea that you can predict in a place like Gungahlin that through these avenues you are only going to access 15 more families—

Ms Gallagher: Seven hundred and seventy families a year, which will be new families.

MRS DUNNE: That is going to increase by 15 over the outyears of the budget.

Ms Gallagher: We have had this discussion in a number of areas. This is where

things are at as of this budget. If you are going to support my working for extra funding for the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre so that we can increase that, that would be great.

MRS DUNNE: It seems that there is not any growth built into the process to take into account that the population in Gungahlin is increasing at a faster rate than that would indicate. It is baby central after all, at the moment.

Ms Gallagher: It is. I guess this is a snapshot in time. As of this year's budget, this is what we are saying we can do. But it does go over a four-year period. I take your point, but I guess these documents are about saying what you can do with the money available and that is the money available to them at this point in time.

MRS DUNNE: We discussed it in relation to the emerging centre in west Belconnen, but what steps are being taken to ensure that the Gungahlin and Tuggeranong child and family centres work in concert with all those NGOs out there—the community service, the Y, Vinnies and all of those?

Ms Gallagher: There has been a lot of work done on that. Of course when we entered the child and family centre world a few years ago there was some resistance from the community sector about government coming to an area that was traditionally community sector driven. So at the beginning of this whole process we had to work very closely with the NGO sector so that they did not feel we were in competition with them but also that we were not going to come and take over what they were doing.

Now I think we are at a point where we have very good relationships with the community sector, particularly the local ones, to work together. That has really been a credit to the team at the child and family centres who create those links in their own workplace.

I set the scene by meeting with community organisations early in the piece. I know Sandra has followed up with her work with the regional directors. But we can set the global scene. The actual how it works and when it works will happen in the day-to-day workplace and that is what the child and family centres do. There are very close relationships, I would say. I do not know whether you want to add anything.

THE CHAIR: You mentioned a couple of times, in your overview in the beginning and then throughout the morning before morning tea, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support services. I am not sure whether I can ask for more detail about that here. I was interested, with regard to the new family centre for west Belconnen, in whether or not there would be some integration between those two programs because of the high Indigenous population that is out there.

Ms Lambert: We can probably answer that in two parts. Neil Harwood is the director of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services in the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support. Helen is also doing some work directly. In fact, we have just had quite a success recently in partnership with one of the big community service organisations, which Helen might want to tell the committee about.

Ms Pappas: The Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, along with some of the key partners in the Gungahlin region, have developed a project which they have called growing healthy families. It is specifically about engaging with Indigenous or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and trying to understand what is it that those families require from this service.

Most recently, the Smith Family certainly were successful in receiving some money through the commonwealth to establish an Indigenous parenting support service and that will be done in partnership with the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre. That will allow us to expand the services to that community in Gungahlin, in west Belconnen and certainly over in Narrabundah.

Ms Lambert: My advice is that we have been working very closely with the Koori preschools and for the first time we have a P&C association attached to those preschools, which is of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. So that is quite a significant change.

Mr Harwood: The only thing that I will add to what has already been said is that, through our case management practices with families, one of the things we will be looking at is trying to link Indigenous families into the existing services that are around Canberra—so linking families into the child and family centres in both Gungahlin and Tuggeranong.

THE CHAIR: And the new one in west Belconnen. It is my understanding there is a high Indigenous population in the west Belconnen area?

Mr Harwood: Yes, that is right. We will be linking them into those services in that area as well.

MR SESELJA: Just a supplementary on that. You mentioned the family centre in Gungahlin. There was some concern expressed to me by a constituent in relation to the parking arrangements there. I may be confusing the facilities, but was there a boom gate in front of the car park there? There were concerns about disabled access to the youth centre as a result. Have those issues been resolved?

Ms Pappas: Certainly the car park is accessible to people who need to use it and there is disabled parking there. People are able to get access to it by pressing a button, and then the boom gate is raised for them. The reason the boom gate was placed there was that there were some incidents involving kids. There are quite a significant number of families that use that centre. There were lots of kids in the car park and people were tearing through that car park. There were some near misses with some kids nearly being hit by people who did not realise that there were kids in that area. The boom gate was a precautionary measure. People who require access to the bus and to the disabled parking have access to that.

MRS DUNNE: Do they know about that?

Ms Pappas: They do.

MRS DUNNE: Because the boom gate is a bit of a disincentive. Most people see one

and think, “I can’t use that.”

Ms Pappas: It was about stopping people who were doing their shopping from parking there—people who did not really know that there were kids in that area and did not take precautions to drive slowly. The boom gate is lifted at the end of each working day and on weekends, so it is accessible—

MR SESELJA: So those using the youth centre can have access to that car park?

Ms Pappas: They can. We have been over to the youth centre and to the library and we have advised them that at any point they could tell their clientele that they could use that car park. There is also additional car parking in front of the youth centre specifically for people with disabilities.

MR SESELJA: Isn’t that additional car parking a dirt car park?

Ms Pappas: No. It is at the front. There are a couple of spaces at the front, on the main street.

THE CHAIR: We will go to the next output class, 2.2, child, youth and family support.

MRS DUNNE: I have some fairly routine questions—this is really to take on notice—in relation to the number of childcare centres in the ACT and what type they are: whether they are community, not for profit or run by government agencies.

Ms Gallagher: We can answer that. Seventy per cent of them are community based here. The exact number we can give you now.

MRS DUNNE: How many workplace-based childcare centres are there?

Ms Kitchen: We have got 102 long day care centres, of which 64 are run by the community sector and the remaining ones by private and corporate organisations. I would need to take on notice the number of work-based centres that we have.

MRS DUNNE: This is probably a difficult question, but are there waiting lists in particular areas—for particular classifications of children or in particular geographic areas?

Ms Gallagher: This is the source of a lot of angst for everyone. Everyone runs their own waiting lists so there are waiting lists in a number of centres. There are some centres without a waiting list and with space available. The big pressure is in babies rooms. It is the under-twos where the pressure is.

MRS DUNNE: Are there any geographic areas where there are perceived needs?

Ms Kitchen: In the inner north and the central business district we would have higher needs. We would have oversupply in some areas in pockets of southern Tuggeranong, but that would be some of the demographics. Gungahlin is becoming an increasing area of need.

MRS DUNNE: Gungahlin is becoming an increasing area of?

Ms Kitchen: Of demand.

Ms Gallagher: For the inner north it is difficult to say if it is geographically based or about work and convenience. As you know, people drive their kids. But there is pressure around the central area, and it is for babies, largely. Individuals who might be looking for day care only on a Thursday and a Friday might not be able to get that because of the way the centre's bookings are taken. But there is pressure for babies.

I met with Maxine McKew yesterday to talk about this and make sure that we were working with federal Labor. They have got some quite significant interest in programs around childcare. The future is not going to be about places; it is going to be around staffing. That is our big area of concern in childcare. We have the highest rate of exemptions provided for qualified staff anywhere in the country here—30 per cent, I think. It is quite high.

MRS DUNNE: On a related issue—Ms Kitchen's area would be aware of this and the minister may be—I became aware of an application for someone to run a home business as a childcare centre in a home in a Belconnen suburb. Apparently there are previous models for this where you might have up to 15 children in a private home. I have always been a big fan of home-based childcare. My children always went to family day care. This seemed to be a step up from that. What policies are there that would support such an application?

Ms Gallagher: It would be licensed. What would we license?

MRS DUNNE: Yes, but what is the government's policy in relation to what could be called sort of boutique childcare centres. It is not home-based childcare in the classic family day care sense? What is the government policy in relation to this and do you see this as a change in the provision of service? I was quite surprised to see the proposal.

Ms Kitchen: Our licensing conditions cover family day care, as you say. We also cover some in-home care, but that is provided through those family day care schemes. We do not, at this stage, license nannies or the operators that you have just mentioned. It would not be possible to do that within our licensing system.

MRS DUNNE: I understood that there was a similar set-up in a Tuggeranong suburb run by the same organisation.

Ms Kitchen: If it was a private business wanting to apply for a licence to run as a children's services operator, they would come to us and we would assess them like any other childcare centre. But either it would have to be under a long day care centre licence, in which case the building would have to comply with every single aspect of a long day care licence, or they would need to comply with family day care regulations and be part of a family day care scheme.

MRS DUNNE: My understanding is that these are not family day care centres.

Ms Gallagher: But they are operational? Is that what you are saying?

MRS DUNNE: They are. One at least is operational.

Mr Hehir: I am certainly aware that Communities@Work have a centre in a residential location. I am not sure that I would describe it as a high—

Ms Kitchen: It is a long day care licence.

Mr Hehir: It is long day care in a residential setting. Childcare is able to be operated within the residential setting subject to particular requirements being met. My understanding of the one that I am aware of is that it is operated by Communities@Work and that it is in a residential setting.

MRS DUNNE: Madam Chair, perhaps Ms Kitchen, Mr Hehir and I might have a conversation about this.

Ms Gallagher: We need to find out if there is one, as you say.

MRS DUNNE: It just seemed unusual.

Ms Gallagher: From the government's point of view, we would have significant concerns around private in-home care arrangements for up to 15 children.

MRS DUNNE: I am pleased to hear that.

Ms Kitchen: Could I just answer the question you asked before? We have got eight work-based childcare centres operating at the moment.

MRS DUNNE: Are they providing a service which is essentially aimed at the people who work in that workplace?

Ms Kitchen: Yes.

Ms Gallagher: They usually allocate it through priority listing; anyone else is down at the bottom.

MR SESELJA: I want to go to the Gungahlin youth centre. Minister, can you or one of the officials tell us what are the current funding levels, specifically, how many full-time equivalent staff there are, what is the ratio of staff to regular clients and how that compares to other youth centres around town?

Ms Gallagher: We will have to take it on notice. We can give you the global budget, but we will have to speak with the organisation that runs the Gungahlin youth service about how many staff they employ. We give them a grant; they employ staff.

MR SESELJA: You do not know what the amount of that grant is?

Ms Gallagher: I imagine that we can get it for you in the next few minutes; that is no

problem. But on the rest of your question, we would have to go and speak with the NGO that runs it.

MRS DUNNE: Is this where we ask questions about strategic indicator 7?

THE CHAIR: What page?

MRS DUNNE: Page 189.

Ms Gallagher: No. That is related to accountability indicator 4—4.1.

MRS DUNNE: It was just a bit unclear.

Ms Gallagher: I am happy to traverse through.

MRS DUNNE: It is just that some of the descriptions of output class 2—

Ms Gallagher: Yes, that is right. It is. I thought that myself. Output 2.2 probably—and then following to output 4.1.

THE CHAIR: We could go to 4.1 now.

MRS DUNNE: I do not want to force people on if they are—

MS MacDONALD: I am happy to move on to it because I have got some questions in that area.

THE CHAIR: We will go to 4.1 and then you can ask your questions.

MRS DUNNE: I can ask my question, and this way it will be a valid question. It is strategic indicator 7. Mr Wyles might need to be here. I want to ask about the recidivism rates. The indicators are pretty much flatlining. I think this is probably a question for Mr Wyles. When we talk about 45 per cent or 42 per cent, how many people are we talking about? How many sentenced youths are we talking about?

Mr Wyles: As Mrs Dunne suggests, we are talking about quite different numbers, clearly, between custody and community orders. In custody, we are talking about young people who reoffend within a two-year period and then are sentenced by the court. So we are talking about fairly small numbers. To get to, say, 39 per cent, we would be talking of an average of seven young people in that category out of a total population in custody of 18.

MRS DUNNE: So we are talking of a maximum of 20 people in custody?

Mr Wyles: The distinction is the sentence versus the remand as well.

MRS DUNNE: The other young people on community-based orders, how many people are we talking about there?

Mr Wyles: I do not have the number specifically but on community-based orders you

are talking, in an annual period, between 150 and 200 young people. So it is a big number.

MRS DUNNE: And the measure is the same—sentenced and reoffending over a two-year period.

Mr Wyles: Over a two-year period and placed on a community-based order.

MRS DUNNE: What happens if someone graduates from a community-based order to a custodial sentence? Where does their recidivism rate fit?

Mr Wyles: They will be captured, I suppose, in one or other of the categories—either resentenced within a two-year period or on a community-based order.

MRS DUNNE: Correct me if I am wrong—I may have misinterpreted what you said—but the recidivism rate for young people on community-based orders is if they reoffend and are sentenced to another community-based order?

Mr Wyles: Within a two-year period.

MRS DUNNE: However, if they reoffend and are sentenced to a custodial service period, where does that figure—

Mr Wyles: We may count them if they have had a previous custodial sentence within that two-year period but if it is their first custodial period they would not be counted.

MR SESELJA: Just a clarification on Mr Wyles' answer to Mrs Dunne: you talked about the number of young people receiving community-based orders being of the order of 150 to 200. The accountability indicators talk about 615. This is at page 198 of BP4. Is that a different measure or are we talking about the same measure?

Ms Lambert: This is about recidivism rates.

MR SESELJA: No. Mrs Dunne asked how many young people we are talking about in terms of—

Mr Wyles: There may be multiple orders. I am sorry; I am talking about the number of children. That probably is a correction. With recidivism, you are effectively talking about the rates of young people. For one young person, there may be six orders; there may be several.

MR SESELJA: This indicates the number of young people rather than the number of orders. There may be a simple explanation but I just wanted to say those numbers do not match up.

MRS DUNNE: That 615 does not match up with the 150 to 200 that you were talking about.

Mr Wyles: One young person may receive several orders at a time.

MR SESELJA: But this measure talks about the number of young people rather than the number of orders.

THE CHAIR: Mr Hehir, did you have something to clarify?

Mr Hehir: I think we might take that on notice and clarify that, if that is all right. I am certainly aware that at any point in time we will have in the order of 150 to 200 young people on orders. There will be some transition over a year. We will just need to clarify that.

MR SESELJA: That would be useful; thank you.

THE CHAIR: My supplementary is with regard to the same page, 198. I was very pleased to be able to visit Bimberi, which was still under construction at the time of my visit with the rest of the Standing Committee on Education, Training and Young People. It was very good to be able to have a look at that centre. Congratulations to everyone involved; it is great step up, I would suggest, from what we currently have at Quamby. The target for 2008-09, compared to the target for 2007-08, shows a rise. Is that a normal increase in costs?

Ms Gallagher: The estimated outcome this year is 6,400. Usually we update it each year. It is totally out of our control. That is what happens.

THE CHAIR: It is average cost per custody day?

Ms Gallagher: The average cost? I thought you were talking about the number of custody days.

THE CHAIR: No.

MRS DUNNE: There is extra depreciation because you have got a new building. Is that right?

THE CHAIR: There is not a note to it.

MRS DUNNE: There is a note. It has got to do with depreciation because you have got a brand new building.

THE CHAIR: That makes sense. It is a wonderful building. When will it open?

MRS DUNNE: September.

MR SESELJA: What is the rate of depreciation for Bimberi? It may be listed somewhere else.

Mr Hehir: It is about \$1 million a year. So the depreciation rate will be about 2½ per cent, which is pretty standard for a building like this.

MR SESELJA: What is the total cost now? I think at the last estimates we had \$42½ million for Bimberi. Is that still the case?

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MR SESELJA: That will not be exceeded?

Ms Gallagher: No.

MS MacDONALD: I want to ask about a totally different area. I do confess self-interest in this area before I ask the question. I want to ask about the adoption unit and services. There was going to be a review of the act. Given that the federal government has set up—I forgot what it is called—a working party on adoption, I was wondering what progress was being made in terms of discussions between the ACT and the commonwealth and other states and the commonwealth on the issue of adoptions.

Ms Mitchell: Can I take the opportunity to let the committee know that Gungahlin Youth Services was funded to the total of \$207,234 in 2007-08 and that is for three years. The Adoption Act would have been reviewed in the ACT context.

The commonwealth has established new resources to lead and manage inter-country adoption programs and establish new programs, and that is the right place to do that. They are also now moving into areas such as harmonisation, criteria and ROGS as well. We are working with them and contribute to both the policy and the operational changes. They meet on a regular basis.

MS MacDONALD: And the review of the local act?

Ms Kitchen: The consultation paper was produced last year after a lot of talk with various groups and parents in the community and there were a range of issues that came out of that paper. A number of those are going to be recommended as amendments. A number of amendments are going to be considered in the cabinet submission for government and that should be progressed later this year. We would look at having that legislation implemented early next year.

MS MacDONALD: It will not happen before the election, then?

Ms Kitchen: No.

MR GENTLEMAN: I want to come back to Bimberi, if I could. I had the opportunity to visit with the committee, too. I thought it was a fantastic service we are providing for our young people in Canberra. But I did want to ask about the staffing program and how that is going. Where are you up to with providing staff for the centre?

Mr Wyles: We have about 35 positions to recruit, permanent and casual, for Bimberi. We have invested in a fairly substantial recruitment program. Some of you may have seen the advertisements we have been placing through the *Canberra Times* and regional papers.

Some of the early success of that program is that we have been able to cast the net

more broadly and consider people who may have experience in volunteering or coaching. Certainly from the first round of interviews and the second round which is currently underway, we seem to be attracting a broad field, and we are very positive about the people we will get on staff.

It is probably worth saying that we have invested also in psychometric testing, and this ensures that we get, I suppose, the right people for the job. This is a complex environment to work in, very high-needs young people. The testing is done through a company in Melbourne. That allows us to structure the interview so that we can work and ensure the best fit of people coming into the service.

MR GENTLEMAN: Are most of these people coming from the ACT?

Mr Wyles: Some, and some regionally. We have had a real focus; we have run information sessions in Goulburn, Yass and Cooma and we have advertised extensively in regional papers. So we have picked up some people outside the ACT.

MR GENTLEMAN: And are you starting to plan for the transition over, the staff transition over?

Mr Wyles: We are. There is substantial work currently on commissioning and we are developing a transitional plan. So the challenges really on that will be that we will be having to operate for a short time two sites simultaneously. As the building is delivered to us at the end of June, there will be a couple of months where we will be doing a range of testing systems and scenario-based training and testing of staff. Then, through September, we will be working with our colleagues in health and education to ensure that we can cover two sites, with a view, probably by the end of September, to moving completely to Bimberi.

MR GENTLEMAN: Will the physical security setup at Bimberi be a lot different from Quamby?

Mr Wyles: The physical security, yes.

Mr Collett: The security system will be significantly enhanced over that of Quamby. We have got a three-zone security system and an internal fence to demark the start of an exclusion zone. It is energised and will have its own protection system as part of that process. There will be a quarantine zone, which is free of plant material and which will be based on a movement detection system. Then there is an external 5-metre high expanded metal fence which is supported by microphonics. One of the things that we have tried to achieve in planning the new centre is to give more flexibility to the operating staff in managing young people by having a very secure external perimeter in which the staff can have confidence.

MR SESELJA: Are you able to tell us about microphonics? What does that mean?

Mr Collett: It means that if there is a contact with the external fence, the sound of that contact is picked up by sensors. The fence is zoned; a series of camera surveillance points, which includes both light sources and pan zoom cameras, would then focus on the zone from which the alarm was raised. The cameras cover both the

internal and the external side of the fence. The operating staff in the control room would be able to get some visual advice about what was happening and would instruct the staff to respond as appropriate.

MR SESELJA: You talked about the first layer being energised. Do you mean an electric fence in that circumstance, or what do you mean by energised?

Mr Collett: It has an electric component to it. Unlike the facility at Quamby where the wires are on the inside fence, the energised wires on the internal fence at Bimberi are on the exclusion zone side. It would be impossible for the staff or a young person to make contact with those wires unless they first climbed up the fence and were trying to go across the fence and into the exclusion zone.

THE CHAIR: Mr Seselja, you had some additional questions on Bimberi. Do you want to ask those now?

MR SESELJA: Yes, if I could. What was the total cost of the fencing facilities? We heard, I think, that the cost of the Alexander Maconochie Centre fence was \$15 million. How does it compare to that?

Mr Collett: I would need to take that on notice. That contract will now be completed, so we would be able to provide the final figure for that.

MRS DUNNE: Perhaps you could provide it as cost per metre?

THE CHAIR: Yes, it does not make much sense unless—

Ms Gallagher: We can give you the length of the fence and the cost.

Mr Collett: A rate per metre.

MS MacDONALD: Following on from that, the fence at Bimberi would not cost anywhere near the amount of the fence at the AMC, though, because it is a different—

Mr SESELJA: It is a lot smaller for a start.

MS MacDONALD: It is a different level of security, as well.

MR SESELJA: This is in three layers.

Mr Collett: It is substantially less than \$15 million.

MR SESELJA: I would assume so.

THE CHAIR: Mr Seselja, what is your other question?

MR SESELJA: Yes, just a quick one. Some \$42.5 million is the total cost of the facility. How does that compare to recently completed youth detention facilities around the country? Has there been a comparison done by the department?

Mr Collett: There has been a comparison done. There has not been a direct comparison done, but the cost plan was prepared initially by a local firm, Rider Levett Bucknell, which looked at a range of other facilities. The budget was established on that basis. The cost plan for the design was prepared by subconsultants to the architects, a Sydney-based firm which has worked on a whole range of correction facilities in the various jurisdictions over the last 20 years. The costs are consistent with that.

Earlier in the process, in order to ensure that we brought the project in on budget, we went through two separate value management and value engineering workshops, including both those consultants, and at that time comparisons were done with equivalent centres. It is hard to find an exact match. As you would understand, different jurisdictions have different configurations for their centres—these things are not built all that often—so it was necessary to draw comparisons from some expansions from other centres and also from completed facilities in the adult corrections centre. Certainly, those costs are entirely consistent with the other costs.

MR SESELJA: Are you able to table that comparison for us or provide that on notice?

Mr Collett: It was part of the value engineering exercise, and it was used to generate the rates for comparison. There is not a stand-alone document that makes a comparison.

MR SESELJA: There is nothing held by the department that has any sort of comparison then?

Mr Collett: Not on the total facility, no.

MR SESELJA: But there were some comparisons done, you said. Those comparisons are presumably on a file somewhere?

Ms Gallagher: We will have a look at what we can provide you with, Zed.

MR SESELJA: That would be great.

Ms Gallagher: There is no problem with that; whatever is not commercial in confidence. We would have to look at the contracts of who did the value management studies.

MR SESELJA: Sure.

Mr Wyles: We can say that we did look at other jurisdictions, and one recent example—probably the most recently built youth detention centre in the country—is the Juniperina centre for young women at Lidcombe in New South Wales. That is a 38-bed facility, and that came in at about \$36 million. That is probably four years old now.

MR SESELJA: Just one other from me on this. A while ago there was a call from the Gungahlin community council to share some of the facilities at certain times. Has

there been any progress on that? Has that been ruled out, or is that still being considered?

Ms Gallagher: I think initially there were thoughts around some of the recreation facilities. The centre does have some excellent recreational facilities, both indoor and outdoor. For these young people, we would like this to be a rehabilitation centre for them. The suggestions are still on the table. The issue with the pool was raised with me, I think, and it is not a very substantial pool. I have been out and had a look at it, and I imagine the committee did as well. I think it is a two-lane, 10-metre pool.

Mr Collett: No, it is 20 metres.

Ms Gallagher: It would not service the Gungahlin community. But there may be some other opportunities there. The Gungahlin community council and the community as a whole have been enormously welcoming of Bimberi, and I think that we should repay that with whatever connections we can make with them.

THE CHAIR: Mr Gentleman, you had a supplementary?

MR GENTLEMAN: Thanks, chair. My question goes back to where I was going before. I asked you first about the staffing set up and then the physical security. I understand there is an ability to integrate staff better with the residents of the new centre than is the current case at Quamby.

Ms Gallagher: Sure. This has been built with the help of all the experts in the field. The design has been really focused on maximising opportunities for young people and supporting staff to do their work well. Quamby is not a nice place to be, whether you are working there or living there. And this centre, as you would have seen from your tour of it, is going to dramatically improve it for the workers and also for the young people.

Some of the way the residential units have been configured allows for staff to have better visual access within the units when they are in there. Also, the positioning of the security cameras means that someone who is monitoring those cameras has a better ability to look after everybody at the one time. I am very hopeful that this centre will do what we are hoping it will do—provide a real focus on rehabilitation for young people. That is why we built such a good school out there. That is why we built such good health consultation rooms as part of this exercise. That is why we have got a town square approach. We are trying to continue a bit of a normal day-to-day life for these young people.

I think the money we have spent on this place, for the number of young people we will be working with, will pay off. I am very hopeful of that, and part of the answer to that is looking after the staff and supporting the staff as they do their, at times, very stressful and difficult job.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, you have a question?

MR SMYTH: Yes. What is the current average length of stay at Quamby?

Mr Wyles: For remandees, it is 13 days, and I think it is 17 days for sentenced. Averages are a bit of a difficult figure, because clearly, for sentenced, we may get people for 12 months or 18 months while those with backdated sentences would serve very little time.

MR SMYTH: All right, so it is 13 and 17 days. I notice, minister, in budget paper 4, page 189, strategic indicator 7—I think it was touched on but I do not know if that question was answered—the recidivist rates for sentencing young people in custody for the next three years are the same and then they drop from 45 to 42 per cent in the fourth year, which is a drop of three per cent. Given that it is such a short stay, why do we not see a reduction earlier, given you have just said you are building a rehabilitation facility?

Ms Gallagher: We try to answer this every year. This does relate to a small number of young people who are repeat returners to our facilities.

Mr Collett: Some of those will probably age out of our system. The other thing is that we have got a couple of evidence-based tools that we are implementing across community-based and detention services—a risk assessment tool and a cognitive behavioural skills program. We think they will have a good impact, but it may take a bit longer, particularly, as the minister suggested, for the hard-end young people who come through the system.

MR SMYTH: So in raw numbers, what does 45 per cent equal?

MRS DUNNE: About 10. Sorry, that was the bit that I asked about, but I forgot to ask that question, so thanks for that.

Ms Lambert: We really grapple with these indicators, and I know I share with the committee the same issues of interest in data. I ask about this one all the time, and we based that on the best available national data. But I would have to say that the data collections in this area are very young, and jurisdictions are really only now starting to get together and look at what are reasonable benchmarks.

What you see here reflects what we think is comparable nationally, but we have still got work to do on that. The Australian juvenile justice administrators are actually working pretty hard with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to try to find some benchmarks in this area and to work out what is best practice and what you need to be aiming for and working towards.

MR SMYTH: But how many have we got on community-based orders, and what is the average?

Ms Mitchell: At any one time we have between 150 to 200.

MR SMYTH: But you are seeing an impact where your targets are dropping down. How can you achieve it in one and not the other?

Mr Wyles: Young people sentenced on community orders are at the lighter end, really. Our hope and our experience are that we can have more impact, as I have

suggested, with those sorts of tools. Our staff have been trained by the development package on the cognitive skills program out of Victoria. They have embraced that—they are working actively with young people—and our hope is that in the community setting we will certainly be able to get young people out of the youth justice system.

Mr Hehir: There are two other parts to this answer. One of the issues is the very small numbers. The volatility from one child or one young person is a change of five or six or seven per cent. When you are working with such small numbers, it is very difficult to use percentage indicators. It is much better with a much larger population size. The other side of that is, over time, as you actually do get better results with community youth justice, particularly with those young people where you are getting positive results, they are not entering the system.

What I am struggling to say is that there is a certain group who would go through and then have one experience and then come out and not go back in because they are at the softer end, even though they have got into a sentenced position. As you work successfully with them in the community, they are the ones who will not go into the system. There is a bit of interplay between those two measures where we just do not know how it is going to play out at the moment. Given the complexity, the small numbers and the interactions, it really is a case of looking and seeing whether we get better national data and also what our data starts to show us over time.

THE CHAIR: We are going to go to another break now.

Ms Gallagher: I think we have got an answer around this home-based childcare centre. There is a Montessori House of Learning licensed under the long-day care centre conditions for a maximum of 20 placements. It has been open since 1999. There has been an application by the same operator for a service in Dunlop. It is currently with ACTPLA, I understand.

MRS DUNNE: But it also has to be licensed by your department as well.

Ms Gallagher: That is what I said. It is licensed as a long-day care centre, so it does have a licence to operate a childcare centre.

MRS DUNNE: The one in Dunlop?

Ms Gallagher: No, the application for the licence for childcare has not got to us.

MS MacDONALD: Where is the other one located again?

Ms Gallagher: In Tuggeranong.

MRS DUNNE: One of those Tuggeranong southern suburbs, I think.

Ms Gallagher: But before they could do anything, yes, they would need a licence.

THE CHAIR: So we will go to our second break, minister.

Meeting adjourned from 12.34 pm to 12.53 pm.

THE CHAIR: We will move to 4.2.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, there appears to be a \$2 million reduction in funding for care and protection services. Can you explain that?

Ms Gallagher: We cannot explain it because there has not been any cut to the funding in care and protection.

MRS DUNNE: What is the difference between 42.111 and 40.019?

Ms Gallagher: Oh, GPO.

Mr Hubbard: What page is that one on?

Ms Gallagher: On 193.

MRS DUNNE: Page 193.

Mr Hubbard: I will do that one.

MRS DUNNE: I was pretty sure there would be an answer.

Mr Hubbard: What has happened here is that throughout this budget year we have done a bit of a restructure of the office itself. As you appreciate, the office came over from education. Over the last couple of years, we have reorganised their funding. The emphasis from my point of view is that with the area responsible for a particular service, the funding has to go into that output.

MRS DUNNE: I could not agree more.

Mr Hubbard: As you can see in 4.2, there is a drop from 42 down to 40. That extra \$2 million has actually gone up to 4.1, child and young people's services. There was a bit of a restructure within that group; therefore, the funding was moved around appropriately.

MRS DUNNE: So there is not any reduction?

Mr Hubbard: No. If you look at the total output class up at the top, you will see that the funding has gone up.

MRS DUNNE: It has gone up marginally, yes. What has moved out? How have we realigned the funding? What have we done to realign the funding?

Mr Hubbard: I am not sure of the detail of which services moved where.

Ms Gallagher: It is for contingencies—foster care and contingencies.

Ms Lambert: It is essentially the contingencies, the payments to foster carers.

MRS DUNNE: The payments to foster carers do not come out of care and protection; they come out of the—

Ms Gallagher: This is the additional payments.

Mr Hubbard: Foster care is basically an out-of-home care.

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Hubbard: Rather than the care and protection group.

Ms Mitchell: It comes under subsidies—additional one-off payments for extra costs that come through. They are significant every year, so they have been moved into this output class from where they were previously.

MRS DUNNE: So if I want to ask questions about foster carers, I have to ask under 4.1?

Ms Gallagher: No.

MRS DUNNE: We can be flexible.

Ms Gallagher: It is just where the payments are made and the decision is taken. That is under the whole umbrella of the area rather than just in care and protection.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Ms Gallagher: Just relating to contingencies. They are not a standard payment, but they are a big part—a couple of million dollars.

Mr Hubbard: It is a couple of million. The other significant thing that did move was the youth and family grants program for the funding of some of the NGOs. They also shifted out of the care and protection umbrella and moved up.

MRS DUNNE: Why is that?

Ms Lambert: That area is the area that manages the grants and programs; we have tried to put like with like.

MRS DUNNE: Which area? The children, youth and—

Ms Lambert: One of the areas that sit under that manages the contracting out of our services, manages the payments to NGOs and so on. It was all put together in that particular area.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Ms Lambert: It is service and sector development.

Ms Mitchell: Service and sector development and the youth directorate manage those

programs for youth and family support programs, which are less focused on the highly at-risk end of the client base.

THE CHAIR: On page 199 of budget paper 4, there is an accountability indicator under 4.2, indicator c, which relates to the number of child protection reports received and proceeding to appraisal. I note that there is a quite considerable increase in the target. The note at the bottom says that this is an indicator that reflects the latest data available and current trends. Is this a current trend across the whole of Australia? Is this what we are seeing?

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

Ms Mitchell: Could I answer that, please?

THE CHAIR: If the minister wants you to, I am sure you can.

Ms Gallagher: It depends what your answer is, Megan.

Ms Mitchell: From previous years, this figure has trended down. It has come from a higher point of substantiations in 2005-06, of 1,300, around there. It has actually come down. But this is what we think it will track at and stabilise as over time.

THE CHAIR: Thanks. And my question about the trend? It talks about the trend. I was wondering if that was an Australia-wide trend or if it is a trend—

Ms Mitchell: Each jurisdiction is different. The trend to increasing numbers of reports is replicable around Australia—also, increased complexity of cases and more substantiations. We probably do better in that area than many other jurisdictions, which would have a higher proportion of substantiations.

MRS DUNNE: I have a supplementary on that.

MR SMYTH: I have one as well.

MRS DUNNE: Just taking those two accountability indicators “a” and “c” together, there is an expected increase in this budget for reports but no expected increase in substantiation. How do we accommodate that notion?

Ms Mitchell: That is right. What we are seeing is a particular level of high risk in the community that is basically pretty stable. We will get more reports, partly because we have a mandatory reporting system, and we have increased community awareness of children at risk in the community. People will report, and people continue to report. We need to respond to those.

The issue, then, is: of those reports, which ones are of a kind that is serious enough to substantiate and take statutory intervention? That does not mean that we do not do other things. In fact, we have introduced a differential response, and a number of other states are going in this direction too. We are able to take information received in reports as concerns and assess and support numbers of families who, on the face of it, do not need to proceed down to a strict statutory intervention. We are able to assess,

support and refer those families to other services.

Ms Lambert: An example of those services would be working with the community services sector on what we call the integrated family support program, which is separate from the Indigenous program, which is also part of this. That is where we have services wrapped around a family to help them with their parenting and support. Child and family centres play a role in this as well, particularly for those parents who fall just under our threshold. We engage them through the child and family centres and through specific parenting programs. It is not that those families do not get attended to or seen to. The response is not just the statutory response.

In the past, the temptation was to try and do everything statutorily. You would be well aware that we work on an evidence-based system and we have to meet the threshold that the courts set as well. What we have now is a series of responses when those reports come in. We expect the reports to continue to trend up, as the community is even more aware, and at particular times we will get spikes in reports as well. We get spikes before Christmas. We often get spikes when other jurisdictions' matters are drawn attention to. What we have really worked on is a differential response as families that do not need to be in the statutory process are not.

Mr Hehir: In terms of the evidence base for that, this is the first year of the assessment and support role. However, this project was based on evidence coming out of Victoria, where they did stabilise their substantiations. That is what we are basing that flatlining on. Even though you still get reports coming in, the evidence is that with that differential response you do actually flatline. Certainly that is the evidence from Victoria to date on substantiations.

Ms Gallagher: Just to add to that, the point is that we are trying to focus on those families we are most worried about in the statutory sense. What might be useful is that—and I have not talked about this with DHCS—it has created a gap in how we are reporting in the budget papers. We are not reporting against our assessment and support role, which we should pick up and do. If that is a big part of work—

Mr Duggan: We are running a data set in work, and we are looking very clearly at how many of those have already been dealt with in the differential approach. Our figures to date since we introduced the policy have seen about 650 families that we have engaged with this different approach. That has really linked them into a different response earlier in the intervention where we know there are issues for the family but they do not need a statutory intervention. As the chief executive said, we are referring people off into a range of community-based and government-based services.

MRS DUNNE: Could someone could give me an exposition about the relationship between that 760 and the 505 in accountability indicator d. They are the children who are in the care of the chief executive?

Ms Lambert: That is right.

MRS DUNNE: That indicates to me a substantial proportion of the children of substantiated reports. Do they actually end up with children in the care of the—

Ms Gallagher: They may.

Ms Lambert: They may.

MRS DUNNE: What proportion? It is not 505, because some of those children may have been in care for a long time. What proportion of substantiated cases would end up in the care of the—

Ms Mitchell: We would have to take that on notice. It would fluctuate—

Ms Gallagher: Daily. There is a variety, too. Sandra might have shared parental responsibility or there may be children on supervision orders. There is a range within that number of children. I take your point and I will see how helpful we can be around comparing the 760 to the 505.

Ms Mitchell: The vast majority, where there is a substantiated risk of harm and there is nobody willing or able to care for the child, which is why we substantiate, would end up in some kind of alternative care arrangement for at least a period of time. It could be a short period of time while the family gets its act together or it could be a longer period of time in the care of the chief executive. There are a variety of arrangements that could occur.

MRS DUNNE: What is the threshold, in rough terms, for putting someone in the care of the chief executive?

Ms Lambert: For a start, it is an evidentiary system. We cannot just swoop in and take children. We can take emergency action, but when we take that action we have to go into court very quickly to justify that action. So to a certain extent the threshold is set by the court. We will go there with a very carefully prepared case when we think that we need to take the children into my care, or into the care of the territory. Frank, you might want to add some more.

Mr Duggan: Yes. The two processes we follow are these. There is emergency action where there is significant risk to the child and no-one is able or willing to care for the child at that period in time. The second process is where we are engaged with the family, and what we undertake now is a very comprehensive child protection assessment report. We will have that through an assessment review committee, who will look at what the issues are pertaining to that family.

If we make the decision to present that information to the court, we go to the court, we present our information and then the court will adjudicate on that. So we are prepared and the family is prepared. What is the right decision? The court adjudicates in respect of those children.

Ms Lambert: We will get orders to keep those children after the emergency orders while we go through our processes of assessment.

Mr Duggan: In an emergency action, we need to present to the court within two days. We put up our case. We may seek interim orders in that situation. If we have not been able to locate another family member, we will look for interim orders and then we

will have a period between us and the court to present our evidence to the court.

Ms Mitchell: It is set out in the legislation quite clearly what the domains of abuse are that we can cover. It is basically neglect, physical abuse, emotional abuse—now a more expanded criterion—and sexual abuse, which is the least likely abuse category.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, you had a supplementary?

MR SMYTH: Yes. If we look at indicators “a”, “b” and “c” on page 199, we see 9,200 cases expected, 3½ thousand reports expected to require appraisal and 690 substantiated. Mr Duggan, you said that in “b” the difference between the 2,000 and the 3½ thousand was the differential response which dealt with, I think you said, 650. If you take 650 from 3,500 it still leaves about 850 cases unaccounted for before you get down to 200.

Ms Gallagher: You can get multiple reports about the same family, and you quite often do. That would be one of the answers.

MRS DUNNE: That will be, to some extent, addressed by the changes in the new legislation.

Ms Lambert: To some extent, but not entirely.

Ms Gallagher: It could be.

Ms Lambert: Because this is over a period.

Mr Hehir: There are also often multiple children, multiple reports.

MRS DUNNE: So one report per child? If someone says, “I think there’s a family at risk,” and they have three children, that is essentially three reports?

Mr Duggan: Yes. They may make three reports, and if it is from a different source, there may be multiple reports by mandated reporters about the child.

MRS DUNNE: But we should be able to address that—

Mr Duggan: That is what we are addressing in the new legislation, as you know. That can be part of the statistical analysis.

MR SMYTH: Do you have adequate resources to investigate all of these reports?

Mr Duggan: I am not sure what you—

Ms Gallagher: Do you mean staff?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Ms Gallagher: We would if we had every position filled. There are 31 vacancies out of 110 positions.

MRS DUNNE: Last year we had about 21 vacancies.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, so it is a bit higher than that.

MRS DUNNE: It has got worse.

Ms Gallagher: We have had an ongoing national recruitment exercise. In the last one we did, we did not get any successful candidates through it, and that was advertised right across the country. We are managing the workload but we would love to have those positions filled.

MR SMYTH: Are you satisfied that all reports are being adequately reviewed?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, I am, but I think it is being managed very closely, on a day-by-day basis, by the staff.

MR SMYTH: Is it managed through overtime?

Ms Gallagher: It can be, yes.

MR SMYTH: Is it managed by staff not being able to take leave?

Mr Duggan: No, staff still take leave. We have had a very successful regime with the staff group. They have really rallied around these issues. We are very strict about managing that process. Staff leave is still on track as normal, and flex leave is still being utilised. But we have put in a sequence of what we call “chip and pizza nights”. It is really just a phrase playing on our CHIP system, which is our child protection data system, and pizza, because we are working in the evenings. The uptake of the staff group on that has been significant. They have really enjoyed that. We are working through each of the reports and each of the administrative tasks that we have. So we are doing our administrative work in the evenings.

Ms Gallagher: I should also add that Frank, Martin and another two staff are going overseas, to the UK, where we got our last 32 recruits from, of which 22 are still with us. They are going back on Friday to do 110 pre-arranged interviews with staff to do a similar thing. If we get 30 people out of this—if we even get 10 people out of this—it will be a cheaper exercise than advertising nationally and getting nobody.

MR SMYTH: Do you do exit surveys when people resign and leave the service?

Ms Lambert: Yes.

MR SMYTH: What are the reasons given?

Ms Lambert: A lot of the reasons given are just the intensity of the work and the stress of the work. I have said this a number of times in this forum: it is the toughest area of government business. I would say that the people who leave are not necessarily leaving the department. That is the other thing. The people who leave often go into other positions in the department, and we are working through a process

internally to enable people to return if they want to as well.

It is very tough work. You go into people's homes; you go into very intense situations—terrible situations sometimes. You go in following a police force intervention—often quite a significant intervention. It takes a toll on people. We expect that it will. We do all sorts of things to provide support for staff. I think we do that effectively. Essentially, the reasons relate to the pressures of work, particularly if you are trying to manage your own life and your own family as well.

MR SMYTH: Are there any creative employment schemes around Australia, around the world, whereby people job share? So you would do a year at the hard end and a year recuperating back in the department?

Ms Lambert: Yes. We have a number of care and protection workers who are now working in the child and family centres, for instance. That provides another level of skill.

Mr Duggan: There is quite a significant rotation around the department vis-a-vis staff getting opportunities in other areas. We have a couple of positions in our own branch with practice leader positions for staff. They can actually do that; they come in and have a more supervisory role and support staff. We have had staff who have left the department and left care and protection, almost on a sabbatical, and who have returned to us, most recently from commonwealth departments, to do what they enjoy doing. But I agree that it is a very difficult place to work.

Ms Gallagher: We are also working at the other end with the universities on the work experience—

Mr Duggan: The vocational employment scheme. We have sponsored a number of students in their last year of education to come into the department. We train them over a 12-week period during the year and then we try to get them back for another year. After that year, they become permanent staff with us in the care and protection group.

MS MacDONALD: What types of qualifications are you taking on?

Mr Duggan: Primarily social work and psychology.

MS MacDONALD: But you are also doing education qualifications?

Mr Duggan: We have broadened that into teaching and another subsidiaries, and there is nursing. Predominantly, we are still attracting social workers and psychologists.

Ms Lambert: And when we do attract from other professions, we need to do some quite intense work in this profession as well. We work with the Australian Catholic University to do some of that work. In relation to the international recruits, they have added real value to the organisation in terms of the skills and practice examples that they have brought. Many of their partners are also now employed either in the ACT government or in our agency. So it has been a very important exercise for us not just

in financial terms but also in cultural and resilience terms.

MRS DUNNE: I am just reading from your press release, minister. Of the 32 that you recruited in 2004, you have lost 10 of those. Would it be possible to indicate to the committee the destinations of those people?

Mr Duggan: Yes. Four of them went home, but in proportional terms, in any immigration process, that is a very low number, according to the department of immigration. Six have stayed in Australia. A number of them were single people and they went off to Sydney and other areas.

MS MacDONALD: Are you saying they got hitched and left?

Mr Duggan: I am not sure about that status. They left, but it was two years into the process before they left. But only four actually returned to the UK, which is a very low number.

MR SMYTH: What assistance do we offer? Do we just go and recruit them and they make their own way here? Do we pay their fare?

Ms Gallagher: They get enormous assistance, relocation costs.

Mr Duggan: We have a full program where we work with the department—

Ms Gallagher: Frank speaks their language!

MR SMYTH: Actually, on percentage of population of the United Kingdom, he only speaks the language of 3½ million of them.

Ms Gallagher: We did target Ireland.

Ms Lambert: We have every accent.

MR SMYTH: He doesn't speak Irish, I can assure you.

Mr Duggan: I can assure you I say a few words but I will not say them here.

We have a very good program. In fact, with respect to some of the feedback, some of our colleagues from other jurisdictions have been over there and people have opted to wait for interviews with us, for a range of reasons. One is that we have put together a significant package from what we learnt before. We are bringing a number of folks over with us who have experienced the transition more successfully over the last couple of years.

We have developed a website. We have been working with the live in Canberra folks in the Chief Minister's Department, who have fantastic DVD packages and material that we can bring with us. We have a range of presentations that we will be delivering to the spouses, partners and siblings as part of this process.

You can now immigrate directly to Canberra. Our previous experience was with

Sydney and London, and that was very problematic. I have had a range of meetings with the branch manager of our local commonwealth department of immigration. He has been very responsive to us; he has given us every piece of material so that it is a straight process for getting the folks out.

We have an email list. We will be sending them regular weekly emails. We will be sending them the *Canberra Times* every month. We are engaging a range of real estate agents to get them accommodated. We have done a lot of work over the last couple of years with our folks here, so that we can see what worked, what did not work, and what we need to do better to get folks to come out. The response has been beyond our expectations. We have actually got 110 active interviews as of today. I got another three CVs in last night, and we do not close until Friday. So we are hoping that that number will give us a sustainable number to bring out here.

MR SMYTH: Can you detail what the financial package or assistance is?

Mr Duggan: The financial package is up to \$12,000 per individual, and \$2,000 per dependent family member.

MR SMYTH: And in respect of a term of service?

Mr Duggan: Eighteen months, under the certified agreement. We achieved 97 per cent of that with the first cohort. One person left due to a family situation but recompensed us pro rata on the cost that we have allowed. As I say, 22 are still with us at the moment. It is actually four years ago, so in terms of retaining a cohort, it is significant.

MRS DUNNE: I want to go to strategic indicator 4 on page 188. Could somebody walk me through what this strategic indicator means?

Ms Lambert: Resubstantiation.

Ms Mitchell: Of those reports that were substantiated as a risk of harm, 20 per cent had a resubstantiation within three months.

MRS DUNNE: What does resubstantiation—

Ms Mitchell: Another report and an investigation that substantiated a risk of harm, and 35 per cent within 12 months.

MRS DUNNE: It does not seem to be improving over the outyears, but I will come back to that. If you have had a substantiation of a child at harm, after it has been substantiated and you start a statutory process, whether or not it is taking the child into the care of the chief executive or something less than that, what steps are taken in that three months? In that three months what is done to try and ensure that these children are not subjected to harm again? It seems to be a very high figure.

Ms Mitchell: You are dealing with the hardest cases here.

MRS DUNNE: I know we are dealing with the tough end.

Ms Mitchell: Often it is a chronic neglect situation. So you would be supporting the parents to do better parenting and referring them to, say, drug and alcohol services. Their child may or may not be with them.

Ms Gallagher: An example would be that the child is in the care of the territory; they are there for supervised access. It may be for emotional abuse and supervised access has been provided at a non-government agency. The parent comes in and shouts and carries on at the child. The agency will report that back to us. So it covers a whole range. It is not a case of taking the kids, putting them back and then they are resubstantiated so we take them out again, although that could be the case. There is a big focus on restoration planning, if that is appropriate.

Parents have every right to see their children and advocate those rights quite strongly. At times that can place children in the firing line. If it is not a risk to their immediate safety, it perpetuates an abuse situation. So they would fit into this category as well—a large part of it.

Ms Mitchell: There is such a range of different risk scenarios here. It would be difficult to say. But if a child was at serious risk in that substantiation process and could not be with their parents as a result of that determination, they would not be with their parents. We would intervene and get court action.

MRS DUNNE: So what you are saying is that in the really hard cases they would not be with their family. But as the minister said, it could be that during an access visit they could have—

Ms Mitchell: Yes, in the contact visit.

Ms Lambert: Or they could be with the service, being supported by a service. We try to keep families together but if that has not worked, the service will report. So they can be in all sorts of support situations when this happens.

Ms Mitchell: Another example which is pretty common is when there has been a domestic violence situation in the first instance. The male perpetrator has left and then comes back again, so another incident occurs. That is a pretty common set of events. DV occurs in about 80 per cent of cases that we have.

MRS DUNNE: I want to go back to the question about these figure again, and the flatlining. Why are they flatlining and what prospect is there in the more distant future of bringing those figures down? I presume that is what we are all in the business of doing.

Ms Mitchell: Yes, absolutely.

Ms Gallagher: My understanding is these figures are quite low compared to national figures; they may be part of it.

Ms Mitchell: They are comparable.

Ms Gallagher: Maybe it is about being realistic. Again, we would love to see those rates come down, too. I guess you go on what you know and the data you have seen over the last few years, and you predict the best you can over the next three. We have not seen enormous change. But, as you say, with some of the programs we have put in place, such as the integrated family support program—

Ms Lambert: The work with health is another one.

Ms Gallagher: That is right; the work with the vulnerable families, the impact program, the 0 to 2 project. Hopefully we will see them decrease.

Ms Lambert: We would like to not flatline. The complexity of families continues to amaze me and the complexity of issues when we look at particular families continues to really astound me. There are a whole lot of others. We come in at one point and there are so many other things that intervene in people's lives that make their lives very difficult.

MR SMYTH: This is the re-substantiation rate for people who are already in the system. If we went back to the indicators a, b, and c, on page 199, what percentage of the people who are not investigated and do not receive an appraisal later reappear as actual offenders?

THE CHAIR: Do you call them offenders?

MR SMYTH: Or cases.

Ms Gallagher: Cases that are substantiated, yes.

MR SMYTH: Yes, cases that are substantiated at a later time?

Mr Hehir: I do not have the figure off the top of my head, but I understand they are reported in ROGS. Cases that are not substantiated and that later we substantiate is one of the required government services indicators.

MR SMYTH: Could that be provided to the committee?

Ms Mitchell: Sure.

Ms Gallagher: For sure, yes.

DR FOSKEY: This question belongs to this area but it is not a budget issue. In circumstances where the Commissioner for Housing is required to make a decision which might impact on children, thereby activating the role of the territory as parent, could you please explain how this situation and the potential conflict of interest is managed?

This might be so in particular where a tenant is facing eviction, the children are known to care and protection, you are fairly sure that there is nowhere to live and the children might need to be taken into care due to issues related to the parents. Can you require, as the territory as parent, Housing ACT to take a different approach or, in this

case, does Housing ACT act independently?

Ms Lambert: I can and do require them to take a different approach. Ms Sheehan can talk about some examples, but the rights of the child and the legislation that I operate under are paramount, and that must guide me in the work that we do in terms of housing.

Having said that, we may proceed to eviction where there are children if we think that we need to intervene with services. We would not necessarily be evicting in the sense that there would be no other home for those children to go. We have, as I said to the committee earlier, established a criterion in the public housing rental program which asks that, in considering eviction or other processes and housing allocations as well, the rights and needs of children are taken into account.

Ms Sheehan: The Commissioner for Housing operates, as Ms Lambert was explaining, within the terms of two major instruments, the Housing Assistance Act and the public rental housing assistance program. Then there is an overarching policy framework between states and territories and the commonwealth, the commonwealth-state housing agreement.

Within the framework of that legislation, that program and the agreement, what we are trying to do is house people who are financially disadvantaged—and it might be socially disadvantaged as well—and provide housing assistance to them to sustain their tenancies. And the theme of sustaining a tenancy by providing appropriate support is the strongest theme that we have in housing. If you have a family that requires intensive support and children who are at risk or potentially at risk, then provision of housing to that family is incredibly important, and that is a responsibility that we take very seriously.

As members of the committee would know, the chief executive, who is also the Commissioner for Housing, is also the funder and provider of homelessness services in the ACT. We have instituted substantial reform of our service system so that we have gone from public housing being one service, and then having 50 separate homelessness services, to a single service system where we provide crisis support through the homelessness services system at the point of crisis and then we move families through to safe, secure, affordable housing.

Within that framework, if it was not possible to sustain a tenancy, where children were involved—whether it is with children or without children—we still do provide support to individuals and families and we are able to do that through the homelessness system. It does not mean that someone who is evicted from public housing necessarily ends up in a refuge; they might then move to private accommodation. If they require support we will ensure, through our service system, that support is provided. In that way, we are able to have a child-centred approach to make sure that the rights of children are respected.

As Ms Lambert said on the allocation of properties, some families might move out of public housing but then may reappear some time later looking for housing assistance. We do have, since the reforms to the public rental housing assistance program, the priority category where we can actually target in the highest needs group—the priority

needs group, it is called—children who are at risk and their carers.

That enables those families and their carers, whether the children are with their biological parents or they may be in the care of other people at that stage, to be housed on a priority basis back inside public housing. And we are able to do that in over 85 per cent of cases within 90 days. It is a very comprehensive system of support that we are able to provide for families and for children who are at risk.

Mr Hehir: With your permission, I would like to add two points to that. There is another piece of legislation, the Residential Tenancies Act, and it would be fair to say that members of the Residential Tenancy Tribunal do not always see eye to eye with us when we are trying to sustain a family. And we have borne the brunt of that.

It is also, I think, important to note that it is not just at the commissioner level and the territory as parent level that this work takes place. There are actually formal processes in place at officer level within housing and within the child protection services about communication where we become aware that there are families with children that we are concerned about within Housing ACT. We then advise our other partner, the child protection services, that we are concerned about what is happening in those properties and that we are beginning a path which may lead to an eviction.

We can actually engage with those families early, if we are not already engaged; and if we are already engaged, there is a process to recontact them and begin some work again. So it is actually quite well developed within the department. Having said that, there are some really tough cases out there which sometimes do end up in eviction.

DR FOSKEY: And have you ever seen it go wrong?

Mr Hehir: I think an eviction is wrong. In a sense, that has gone wrong. We have not been able to support the family to sustain their tenancy, and that is something that I always feel very badly about. I am not sure how the ACT needs to bear the full responsibility for that, because we do seek to engage. While ever people are engaged with us, we will work with them. But in a sense I feel that any time we have had an eviction something has gone wrong.

MR SMYTH: When you were on maternity leave last year and another minister was acting as minister and, therefore, the other shareholder in Actew, who would have been acting in your role as the other shareholder?

Ms Gallagher: I am not sure. I think it was Minister Corbell. I am not 100 per cent certain.

MR SMYTH: Could you confirm that?

Ms Gallagher: Yes, sure.

THE CHAIR: We will go to output 3.1, community and homelessness services.

Ms Gallagher: Only output 3, I think, is mine, is it?

THE CHAIR: Yes, 1 and 2. The other one is community affairs, just to do with women, though.

Ms Gallagher: Of course, yes.

THE CHAIR: I should not say “just to do with women”, but it is the women’s area.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, we had ACTCOSS before us earlier when community groups appeared at the hearings. They talked about some seniors having trouble finding homes and they said that they were couch surfing, which is more a term that we use for our younger generation.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, the young people.

DR FOSKEY: They actually call it sofa surfing

Ms Gallagher: We have a couch surfing program for younger people.

MR GENTLEMAN: I understand that we see this, too, in our homeless area for youth. Could you let us know what you are doing to address that?

Ms Gallagher: For young people? Yes, we have, I think, two programs that have been specifically funded under the SAAP agreement through the innovations program. One of them is on couch surfing and one of them is stairwell—is it?

Ms Sheehan: The other one is on youth exiting youth detention and moving into supported accommodation at the end of the period of detention, yes. In terms of the idea of couch surfing, that program is designed to come in and provide assistance for young people, we would say, really at an early intervention stage. It is an attempt to keep young people outside the more traditional homelessness services system because of some of the risks, I suppose, for any young person having to live away from their families.

Of course, sometimes it is appropriate to be away from your family but in many cases being able to return to your family would be the desired outcome. So the couch surfing program actually is able to provide support to young people who are estranged from their family, and it supports the family that they are staying with. That is really the beauty of the program.

MR GENTLEMAN: So how does it work?

Ms Sheehan: For example, we have a very close liaison with the education system, the school counsellors and the youth workers. What happens is that it might be the youth worker or it could be another part of youth support that identifies that there is a young person that is not living at home because of some problems at home and they are living outside the home. They have an amount of money that we would call brokerage funds that might be able to support the young person to continue that temporary arrangement, hopefully with a view to reunification.

For example, the young person might say, “I feel really bad. I am staying with the

family of my friend. They are a pretty-low income family and I have not even got any money to contribute to food.” So we could make the contribution to the family expenses; or, “I need to go on a school excursion and I do not have the money for the school excursion,” or, “I need a school uniform and I do not have the money for that.”

It is a very flexible and responsive program. It does not require a formalised assessment so much as existing providers say, “This is a young person who needs a bit of support,” and we are hopefully, where it is appropriate, going to support them to a point where they can then return to their families.

MRS DUNNE: I think this is the right place to ask this question. The ACT has traditionally had a lower than the national average rate of exit from the SAAP program.

Ms Lambert: That is right.

MRS DUNNE: There is nothing in here that would point to that, but could you tell us how we are going in addressing those issues?

Ms Lambert: I certainly can. Ms Sheehan alluded to it before. We have done a lot of work with the refuge sector, the SAAP sector, to work on transitioning through. What we have been able to achieve in the last two years really, spearheaded by that domestic violence initiative which we have talked about before in committee hearings, is to position SAAP really as the crisis response and then as, if you like, the wraparound service response.

We have provided a number of Housing ACT properties for transitional housing, so they move from the crisis response into transitional housing and then they will move through into public housing once we think their tenancies can be sustained. So that blockage is no longer as severe as it once was. People were, I think, spending much longer in the SAAP refuge before they got into public housing. Now there is a three-stage process, if you like: the crisis response, the transitional response and then the movement into public housing.

MRS DUNNE: And that of course frees up more refuge space for people who need refuges.

Ms Lambert: That is right; it does.

Mr Hehir: Just to add to that, I think the information you are talking about did have a qualifier on it, which actually says that sometimes spending a long time in a SAAP service is appropriate.

Ms Lambert: That is right.

Mr Hehir: One of the key things that the SAAP services are meant to do is reintroduce the life skills or provide the life skills for someone to sustain accommodation into the future. We all know that homelessness often has a number of other factors associated with it, whether it be mental health, drug and alcohol, domestic violence—they are all often key factors in homelessness. Sometimes

spending the appropriate amount of time is more important than churning people through as fast as you possibly can.

MRS DUNNE: I take your point, Mr Hehir.

Mr Hehir: All the analysis around that does actually put a qualifier in saying yes, it may be slow, but that is not necessarily not appropriate.

Ms Gallagher: This is also an area that the federal government are covering in their paper on homelessness—the green paper, the white paper. I think the first paper—

Mr Hehir: The green.

Ms Gallagher: the green paper—was the green paper launched?

Mr Hehir: Yes.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, last week, and it did identify exiting SAAP as one of the areas to focus on, so we are all taking part in that national work.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Dr Foskey?

DR FOSKEY: Given that in 2006 we cut our funding to SAAP based on the federal government's funding, if the federal funding goes up will the ACT contribution go up or, conversely, are we hoping that the federal government will compensate for the fact that we still have not replaced that \$1 million, despite the problems?

Ms Gallagher: No, we did not cut the funding based on anything to do with the commonwealth's share.

DR FOSKEY: That was one of the justifications.

Ms Gallagher: I do not recall that being one of the reasons. We overfund, we overmatch. We are required to match under the SAAP agreement; we overmatched by, I think, \$3.2 million. There were efficiencies to be made in the SAAP system. Every part of government was asked to find savings, and SAAP was no different.

We currently overmatch SAAP by \$2 million from the commonwealth's share and we would be hopeful that the commonwealth will give us some money. In fact, I think there has been some early advice over some of the allocation from the commonwealth. I am just trying to recall what it was. We are more than meeting our responsibilities as a jurisdiction in this area in terms of funding, Dr Foskey.

DR FOSKEY: If the federal funding goes up, what will be the ACT's response?

MS Gallagher: We would still be compliant with our agreement if they increased it by \$2 million and we did nothing, because we overmatch by that amount of money. But, if the commonwealth want to talk to us about future investments under the next SAAP agreement, of course the government will just have to consider that, as we do every year when we are making our budget allocations. The second appropriation did

include \$760,000 to extend the early morning drop-in centre at Pilgrim House. If you add that to the \$2.2 million, we are back almost to where we were.

DR FOSKEY: But that is not accommodation for the homeless.

Ms Gallagher: But neither was the \$1 million. The \$1 million saving was actually out of—

DR FOSKEY: That was admin and so on.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey, let the minister answer the question.

Ms Gallagher: There were quite a number of programs that were not around providing direct accommodation and other costs, so we did not lose a single accommodation space with that \$1 million and I know that there are some people—

DR FOSKEY: Did we gain any?

Ms Gallagher: I think we gained two.

Ms Sheehan: We gained two at that time and we introduced the transitional housing program. In addition to that, since the innovation and investment projects have come up, we have provided about six more accommodation places for young people as well.

Ms Gallagher: These things are always painful, these journeys, but there were a number of organisations which had occupancy rates at around 30 per cent, from memory. There is another organisation where we were paying for staff when the young people were required to be out of the house from nine to five. They are the areas we worked on—not around reducing capacity but saying, “Come on, you’ve had it pretty good under these agreements and now we’re going to tighten them.” And that is what we did. It did cause some strain and some pain. And that is not to say that this sector is not without stress—just the nature of the business is stressful—but I am not going to accept that the \$1 million cut that we took was not for the right reasons, has not supported significant change in the sector. The sector has responded very well.

DR FOSKEY: That would depend on whether you thought the functional review was the right reason.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne?

MRS DUNNE: Can I seek some clarification on two things. The \$2 million, minister, that you say that you overmatch—

Ms Gallagher: It is more money than we are required to fund; it is almost \$3 million.

MRS DUNNE: That all goes to accommodation?

Ms Gallagher: The majority of it would go to accommodation but there would be parts of it that would not.

Mr Hehir: Outreach. We do outreach and preventative work as well within that. A key part of the SAAP5 philosophy was about moving just from a centre-based approach—preventing homelessness in the first place but also, when a family does move from a crisis service, providing outreach to continue that support to make sure that accommodation is sustained. So it is not all done within an accommodation setting.

MRS DUNNE: The other thing is the transition housing that Ms Sheehan and Ms Lambert talked about. Where is the funding for that coming from? That is not SAAP funding?

Ms Sheehan: It is; the support funding is provided by the existing SAAP providers who, when one of their clients moves into the transitional housing, which is funded by Housing ACT through the commonwealth-state housing agreement, the SAAP provider allows the support to follow the person into the new accommodation.

Ms Gallagher: So the capital is provided by housing but the support is provided through SAAP.

MRS DUNNE: The support—that is the program, the outreach—

Ms Sheehan: The outreach support.

MRS DUNNE: What about the rent?

Ms Sheehan: We provide the properties to the individuals and then they would pay some rent.

MRS DUNNE: When they are in support in a refuge, are they paying rent?

Ms Sheehan: They do and that is up to the individual SAAP agency because, as you would understand, it is very important that a life skill that people develop and have is the ability to meet their rental obligations, so that would be something that the SAAP provider would work with them on.

MR SMYTH: I notice in the accountability indicators at page 197, a, the number of training sessions provided for community sector organisations—

THE CHAIR: What page are you on?

MR SMYTH: Page 197, budget paper 4, indicators, output 3.1, under a. Were they fully subscribed? Could there have been more? Was there a waiting list? Is 10 an adequate number and how was this received by the community?

Ms Overton-Clarke: That indicator is one that we have with ACTCOSS, who we fund to provide the training sessions for the community sector. It comprises a mixture at the moment of raising the standard, quality measures and governance seminars. So it is a total of 10 and a mixture, as I said, of the sorts of measures that at the time we put them in place were deemed to be the most appropriate. We review those on an ongoing basis. We have been getting some anecdotal inquiries about having additional

governance and accountability, risk management, OH&S. As the process of normally reviewing them, we will be talking to ACTCOSS about the sorts of things they provide and whether we should change the mix of them. But the number is a way of counting what they deliver. In terms of the specifics—

MR SMYTH: I do not disagree that 10 is a number, but how many people attended each session? Do we know how many community groups benefited from this?

Ms Overton-Clarke: I can get you that information.

Ms Gallagher: We will have to get it from ACTCOSS.

MR SMYTH: That is okay. Were they undersubscribed? Were they oversubscribed? Is there a wait list? Is there demand for, apart from different seminars, the original seminar? Was there unmet need?

Ms Overton-Clarke: I would need to get that information from ACTCOSS. My understanding is—and certainly I have attended some of those; not last year but the year before—that they run them on a needs basis, so generally there are no waiting lists for them. They wait until they have enough people from services who are able to attend and then they put them on. So they are quite well planned. But I can get the information for the last financial year.

MR SMYTH: How much do they cost to put on?

Ms Overton-Clarke: There is a nominal monetary amount that people from organisations pay. We obviously fund ACTCOSS to do it.

MR SMYTH: How much do you fund ACTCOSS?

Ms Overton-Clarke: We fund them \$157,000 for those—

THE CHAIR: Okay. We will go on to the next area, which is 3.2, women, under community affairs.

DR FOSKEY: I have got a few questions.

MRS DUNNE: I have some questions.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: This does not relate to the output class; it relates to the women's budget statement. Apart from the women's and children's hospital, what are the women's initiatives in this budget—not the ones that are sort of generic; the midwifery scholarship scheme, perhaps? Are there any others that are specifically addressed to women? Is there a women's aspect to the centenary of Canberra? I suppose it is my sort of perennial cry of—

Ms Gallagher: Yes, I know. We have this discussion every year, I think.

MRS DUNNE: in what sense is this a women's program? So the ones that really are women's programs, which ones are they?

Ms Gallagher: This is the issue we have had with this budget statement, since we agreed to do it. It was my idea from the select committee on the status—

THE CHAIR: Your bright idea.

MS GALLAGHER: It was my tremendous idea from the Select Committee on the Status of Women to do one, and I have just never been really happy with how—

MRS DUNNE: Good; that makes two of us.

Ms Gallagher: we have been able to articulate everything we are doing. We try every year to make it easier to disaggregate. So many of the initiatives do impact on women. The women's and children's hospital is an obvious one, but all of those other ones listed in those dot points are going to benefit women but they are not women-specific initiatives. The Audrey Fagan scholarship is another one and the women's return to work grants—they were part of the second appropriation. I do not know where but they will be listed in here somewhere, wouldn't they?

Ms Whitten: Ongoing initiatives.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, under learning and leadership and stuff like that. I am happy to take advice on how to improve the women's budget statement. It is one thing that we have struggled with since we agreed to do it. Do you just put the women's and children hospital, the Audrey Fagan and the return to work grants in and say, "That's it"? A lot of those other initiatives will have an important and positive impact on women as well. This is the question I ask myself.

MRS DUNNE: I suppose it is one that we struggle with all the time, minister. Sometimes it seems to be drawing a long bow to say that 50 per cent of the people who will benefit from this program are women, therefore it is a women's program. It seems a bit tenuous.

Ms Gallagher: Yes. We are not saying they are women's programs. I think we are trying to articulate what things in the budget may support women. I cannot say that the mental health growth will not support women. There is a component there where it will. I guess the only initiatives, apart from say capital ones perhaps, that you could say would not benefit women would be men's initiatives, but we have got money in this for the Canberra Men's Centre. I would say that that in an indirect way would benefit women too, because it is often about sustaining relationships, anger management and things like that. I am just being honest with you: we struggle with how to articulate a message.

DR FOSKEY: Can I say something about that? If you start talking about gender instead of women, you might get part of the way there, but also there is a lot of work being done by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. It is generally applied to Third World countries, but that does not mean that it does not have relevance here.

THE CHAIR: Don't we call them developing countries now?

DR FOSKEY: We call them all kinds of things, Mrs Porter. I am sorry if I have offended you.

THE CHAIR: No, you have not offended me—apart from calling me Mrs Porter.

DR FOSKEY: We are talking about the same thing anyway.

Ms Lambert: When you think about that terminology, essentially that work is about providing opportunity for women in a whole range of ways. If you look at some of these, that is exactly what they are about. If you look at the return to work grants and the work that we put into supporting families, it is about providing the opportunity for women to move from where they are to where they want to be. That is, in essence, what the work on developing countries is about.

The work of women like Martha Nussbaum and so on is all about saying that you can provide the immediate intervention but the next step is about providing the opportunity. Often that opportunity is in a mainstream process rather than in a targeted process, but it can be targeted, as the women's return to work grants are. It is actually about balancing those. That is the tension that you have when you are doing this work, because there are some things in here which are very definitely initiatives for women. The domestic violence one is one of those. The return to work grants are one of those. But there are others in here which give women an opportunity to change their circumstance if that is what they need to do. So it is really always a tension.

Ms Overton-Clarke: What I would like to add as well is that there are significant initiatives in terms of the carers around the west Belconnen service. It is really important to stress, as we all know, that carers are predominantly women—not exclusively, of course, but when we are talking about support for young parents to enhance their parenting skills or having one-on-one sessions around individual support, in terms of young children we are predominantly talking about women.

Ms Whitten: We also have a grants program each year. That has been recently announced as well.

Ms Lambert: The women's grants program.

Ms Whitten: Which is \$100,000.

THE CHAIR: I beg your pardon?

Ms Whitten: It is \$100,000 in 2007-08

Ms Lambert: We are continuing to do work in the office for women too—on, if you like, gendered budget analysis. That goes back to what you were talking about, Dr Foskey. We are doing some work on that as well.

DR FOSKEY: I do have some questions as well as that important discussion.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, you have just one. This will have to be our last question, because the minister does have to go at 2 o'clock.

Ms Gallagher: I can do a couple more just to be helpful.

MRS DUNNE: The women's return to work grants, which have now been going for three or four months—how many grants have we offered so far?

Ms Whitten: We have approved 18.

MRS DUNNE: Is that for the full \$1,000 or do they vary?

Ms Whitten: No, they are \$1,000.

MRS DUNNE: So each grant is \$1,000?

Ms Whitten: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Ms Whitten: That is since February.

Ms Gallagher: It is not going as fast as we would like.

MRS DUNNE: How many did you plan?

Ms Gallagher: I think we want 200 a year.

Ms Whitten: And 50 for this—

Ms Gallagher: Yes, 50 for this bit.

Ms Whitten: It is five months.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, because it started late. We are constantly looking at eligibility—whether we made it too tight—and advertising of it. Initially, we did not advertise it because in other jurisdictions where they had advertised it they were just overwhelmed with demand. We took that; we did not advertise them widely. We did a media release and promotional material, and left it at that. I do not think they are coming in fast enough. I am not sure if we are getting the message out to the people who they are aimed at, so we changed it in the last week or two.

Ms Whitten: We have advertised more broadly in the last couple of weeks and we have received 42 applications in total.

Ms Gallagher: So that has changed.

Ms Whitten: There is a process. Once an application is received, there is an interview. We are working our way through at the moment.

DR FOSKEY: How does the public find information about that? I am quite sure that a lot of the women who would be very worthy just would not have a clue that they were even there.

Ms Whitten: Our coordinator is meeting with women's groups in community.

DR FOSKEY: But they would not be in women's groups.

Ms Whitten: Okay. We are also working through the child and family centres and a range of—

Ms Gallagher: We are advertising more generically, though. I have seen ads.

Ms Whitten: There have been ads in the *Canberra Times* and the Koori news.

DR FOSKEY: I know it is hard; it is the biggest challenge really.

Ms Lambert: We will take any suggestions.

Ms Whitten: And the *Chronicle*.

DR FOSKEY: Word of mouth is probably best.

Ms Lambert: Yes, it is. The Women's Information and Referral Centre, which has the guidance of these, is using that word of mouth as well.

DR FOSKEY: And noticeboards in shops.

Ms Lambert: Yes, doctor's surgeries and places like that.

MRS DUNNE: We are two years into the women's directorships scholarships program? Is that right?

Ms Gallagher: Two years? Yes, we would be. I think two; it might be three. We might be in the third.

MRS DUNNE: How many people have received scholarships to do that?

Ms Whitten: Four per annum.

MRS DUNNE: And that has been fully subscribed?

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: Over the three years now?

Ms Gallagher: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: Could I ask one more question?

THE CHAIR: Yes, and we will finish on that.

DR FOSKEY: I am sorry; I realise that it is hard for you people who have been here all morning. In relation to the women's statement on page 174, it says that, as part of the increased demand in the older person's services initiative, support is provided to women in their capacity as carers. Could you please outline how much funding you have set aside within this initiative for carer support?

Ms Gallagher: We probably did this last week, though maybe not the women's angle. This should be drawn out as a very women-specific initiative. This is the recurrent funding, not grant funding, to Brindabella and Majura women's groups.

MS MacDONALD: Are you looking at something else?

THE CHAIR: What page are you on?

DR FOSKEY: I am on page 174; so are we all.

MRS DUNNE: Not quite; I am on a different part of the page.

MS MacDONALD: Sorry.

DR FOSKEY: It is just that we are talking about different bits of the page.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, I have you; I am on it.

MS MacDONALD: It was more for our information as to where you were.

Ms Overton-Clarke: We were excited because we had missed giving you as an example Majura and Brindabella women's groups.

Ms Gallagher: We were excited.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Which is specifically a women's group that we have funded—ongoing funded.

Ms Gallagher: It should have been in the dot points.

MR SMYTH: You were so excited you forgot.

Ms Gallagher: I am just trying to get my health hat on.

DR FOSKEY: Okay, but please look at the paragraph above, because that is what I was referring to.

Ms Gallagher: I am. The initiative that that relates to is under my health portfolio.

MRS DUNNE: Increased demand in older person's services.

Ms Gallagher: Yes. There is a proportion of this that goes to the non-government

sector. I was just trying to find the initiative thing.

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is the first paragraph on 174.

MRS DUNNE: But it also relates to page 74 in the health initiatives. There is \$1 million with indexation in the outyears.

Ms Gallagher: I am trying to find my notes.

MRS DUNNE: And 71 per cent of that will go to women.

Ms Gallagher: Almost there.

DR FOSKEY: Thank you. You seem to have answered my questions, Mrs Dunne.

Ms Gallagher: Vicki has answered it for you, has she?

DR FOSKEY: Yes, I believe so.

MRS DUNNE: It is \$1 million this year, with indexation in the outyears.

Ms Gallagher: Yes, that is right.

MRS DUNNE: On page 74 of the initiatives.

DR FOSKEY: Clearly she understands the women's budget.

Ms Gallagher: It is about extending some of the services to a seven day a week service and a range of allied health services to go into this, plus establishing a dietetic service as well.

DR FOSKEY: I will put my other questions on notice.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister and witnesses.

Meeting adjourned from 2.03 to 3.01 pm.

Appearances:

Hargreaves, Mr John, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Department of Territory and Municipal Services

Morrell, Ms Sue, Executive Director, Community and Infrastructure Services

Greenland, Ms Karen, General Manager, Transport Regulation and Planning/Community and Infrastructure Services

Gill, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT/Community and Infrastructure Services and Recreation

Horsey, Mr Chris, Senior Manager, ACT NOWaste/Sustainability Policy and Programs – Environment and Recreation

Polinelli, Mr Anthony, Acting Executive Director, Strategic Coordination and Continuous Improvement/Office of the Chief Executive

Kalogeropoulos, Mr Nick, Acting Director, Strategic Finance/Office of the Chief Executive

THE CHAIR: Welcome, minister, to this afternoon's hearing on the Select Committee on Estimates 2008-2009. You are familiar with what is in the yellow card and understand the privileges implications contained within it?

Mr Hargreaves: Indeed.

THE CHAIR: Fine, thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: We are all skilled in it.

THE CHAIR: Do you want to make some opening remarks, Mr Hargreaves?

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to provide some opening comments before the committee begins its examination of my department's 2007-08 budget—

THE CHAIR: 2008-09 maybe?

Mr Hargreaves: What?

MR SMYTH: Try 2008-09.

Mr Hargreaves: All right, 2008-09.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: I thought I might have got away with that, Mr Zissler, but there is an eagle-eyed Mr Smyth here.

THE CHAIR: Carry on, Mr Hargreaves.

Mr Hargreaves: Okay, thanks very much, chair. This year, in addition to ensuring

that we continue to do the basics, as we have since being elected in 2001, the government is focusing on addressing our transport system and infrastructure to meet Canberra's current and future needs. The government is providing \$20.4 million for capital upgrades in the 2008-09 budget, which is aimed at improving the look and amenity of the city and extending the useful life of the territory's assets.

I must say here, Madam Chair, that the government cops some unfair criticism about the look of the city. My office has worked very hard in ensuring that litter is cleaned up from public areas, that graffiti is cleared in accordance with a well-known policy, and that there is a regular schedule of mowing carried out. There are, in fact, 16 cleaning staff, a mix of permanent employees and contracted casuals, assigned to Civic alone.

The major difference between the past and the present is that the extended drought—or is it a changed climate—means that the parks and trees are not receiving the same amount of water and, therefore, not as green as they used to be. That is beyond our control. However, we will continue to make improvements to roads, infrastructure, sports facilities, libraries, bus stops, stormwater infrastructure, urban open spaces, cycle paths and footpaths, and local shopping precincts.

We have allocated \$2 million for additional spending to improve the amenity of Canberra's suburbs and shopping centres, which will increase the frequency of cleaning and sweeping of these shopping centres, playgrounds, toilets, bus shelters, underpasses and car parks. It will also allow for an increase in frequency of mowing and edging of arterial roads, maintenance of shrub beds and weed control.

This money is in addition to the levy the government collects through the payments from Canberra CBD Ltd specifically for the Civic area. That money is levied from property owners in Civic for expenditure in accordance with the wishes of the Civic property owners. The Property Council and the City Heart Business Association are represented on the board of that company.

Additionally, the government is upgrading the older section of Bunda Street, with \$3.65 million to be spent on lighting, street furniture and paving from Northbourne Avenue to Akuna Street, as well as improving public safety and providing continuity of design along the street.

The budget also includes funding of \$3 million to provide new infrastructure in the city west precinct to deliver improved safety, presentation and functionality of the area. The final stage of the Belconnen lakeshore refurbishment at Eastern Valley Way Inlet will also be completed with \$2.8 million dedicated to this project, integrating the recently completed promenade with the lake edge through boardwalks and piers over Lake Ginninderra.

The government is also planning for the future in the growth of our city. There is funding for planning future waste infrastructure requirements, technical and engineering advice on waste facility management, a feasibility study for additional recycling drop-off facilities, and, most importantly, Madam Chair, more than \$5 million over four years to support our ageing infrastructure's need to cope with the growing urban development.

The 2008-09 budget includes funding of \$11 million for the upgrade of Tharwa Drive, \$20 million for the duplication of Flemington Road and \$10 million for stage 2 of the upgrade of roads around the airport, with works also to be completed on Athllon Drive, the Cotter Road and the Kings Highway. An on-road cycle path will also be constructed on the Cotter Road to provide a safer way for drivers and cyclists to share this road.

Nearly \$50 million over four years will be provided to purchase 100 new, efficient, more accessible buses as part of ACTION's bus fleet replacement program. ACTION will also receive an additional \$12.95 million over four years to implement network 08, which will provide additional and more frequent bus services. This is in addition to the funding provided in the 2007-08 budget second appropriation of \$22 million over four years from 2008-09.

Funding of \$16.5 million has also been allocated for the extension and replacement of the Belconnen bus interchange. The government has listened to what the community has been saying about what they want from ACTION and, as is demonstrated through this budget, we are responding to meet the transport needs now and into the future.

Madam Chair, as I said previously, in addition to continuing to get the basics done, as we have from the start, this is a budget for the future. I am happy to try to address questions from you and from the committee.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. Before I go to committee members, I just had a quick question about one of the things that you mentioned in your introductory remarks, and that was the footpath program.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

THE CHAIR: You know I have taken a keen interest in the government's footpath repair program. On page 285 of budget paper 4, indicator "f" is discontinued in the 2008-09 year. I just wondered where it has gone to. It is probably somewhere else and I cannot find it.

Mr Hargreaves: Certainly, Madam Chair. Who is the expert on footpaths?

Mr Gill: Madam Chair, which reference?

THE CHAIR: It was on page 285 of budget paper 4. It is under accountability indicators, and it is indicator "f". It says that the existing measure is discontinued. Is it somewhere else? It is interpreted a different way?

Mr Gill: That indicator has not been continued in terms of reporting on it in this report. It is going to be continued in Roads ACT's business planning report.

THE CHAIR: Right.

Mr Gill: In replacing it in terms of footpath indicators, we have decided it would be more useful to actually indicate the length of footpath that we are providing on an

annual basis and how the footpath system has been increased on an annual basis rather than just reporting back on the cost per square meter of footpath.

THE CHAIR: So, in the annual reports—

Mr Gill: In the annual report, an indicator is basically the extent of footpaths that we are adding to the network.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Gill: We are also, for instance, doing that to determine the extent of cycle path we are adding to the network.

THE CHAIR: Right.

Mr Gill: It also applies to the extent of bus lanes that we are adding to the network. So it is a more useful indicator in terms of how we are contributing to the overall network.

THE CHAIR: Right.

Mr Gill: In terms of the cost per square meter for footpaths, that information is collected within Roads ACT, and it is still available within Roads ACT.

THE CHAIR: Right. So if anyone wanted that information they could certainly access it?

Mr Gill: That information is readily available. We think it is an important indicator from the point of view of how we deliver our services.

MR MULCAHY: A supplementary, chair?

THE CHAIR: Yes, Mr Mulcahy.

MR MULCAHY: How does that tie in with the pavement upgrades forward year allocation of \$6 million over the four years? Does that embrace the same outlays, or is that a different area of expenditure?

Mr Hargreaves: It is a different area of expenditure. Which document are you referring to?

MR MULCAHY: I was actually going off this one, the budget overview on page 14. You talk about pavement upgrades, future provisions that do not apply this financial year, but then there is—

Mr Hargreaves: No, it is additional.

MR MULCAHY: Right. That is the same sort of work, is it?

Mr Hargreaves: It is additional.

MR MULCAHY: Footpaths?

Mr Gill: Pavements could be road pavements.

MR MULCAHY: Yes, that is why I was curious as to what it means.

Mr Gill: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: Give us a look at it. Which page are we talking about?

MR MULCAHY: Page 14.

Mr Hargreaves: On budget paper—

MR MULCAHY: The budget overview, under improving urban amenities. Page 14.

Mr Hargreaves: I am having a little bit of trouble finding it, I am sorry.

MR MULCAHY: I will show you the document.

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you. The pavement upgrades?

MR MULCAHY: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you.

Mr Gill: That relates to road pavement, and it is part of the capital upgrade program.

MR MULCAHY: So it is nothing to do with the—

Mr Gill: When we talk about footpaths, we talk about community paths.

MR MULCAHY: Right. The \$2 million extra that you announced this year in addition to normal funding, has it been defined where that will be applied? In 2004-05, you made a \$5 million allocation, from memory, in the inner-northern suburbs because there were problems with footpaths and the like.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MR MULCAHY: Has this additional money been earmarked for a particular area, because there are still a number of issues with the south side of Canberra in the older suburbs?

Mr Hargreaves: There is. We have a priority listing of where we need to do repair work, maintenance, the sort of grinding that you see in the suburbs, as opposed to replacements. Sometimes we have to replace pavements. This actually augments that program. What it does not have defined is whether or not we will, for example, go and put additional footpaths in older suburbs. It does not have that in there, unless there is a reason to do it, which competes in priority against the other requirements that we

have.

MR MULCAHY: Can you give any indication at this stage where that is likely to be allocated, or is it all over the place?

Mr Hargreaves: Not at this stage of the game. It is all over Canberra. There is priority listing, or a listing, rather. Some parts of the town deteriorate faster than others, and we just have to respond to it. This actually augments that program, so that means we can get that stuff done more quickly and then attend to the areas that you have representation on in the older areas. Some of those older areas will never have footpaths in them because their roads were designed not to have them in there.

MR MULCAHY: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: We would expect that. Some of them are heritage areas and we would not do it anyway.

MR MULCAHY: I am just thinking of the ones that are there.

Mr Hargreaves: Some of the older suburbs—

MR MULCAHY: Where they are cracked.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, the cracked ones. This is the additional money to do that. Once the money has been allocated and the Assembly has approved the budget, then the department can go back and prioritise the works that they have over the next year from a very long list of works.

MR MULCAHY: Okay. Mrs Dunne has a supplementary and then we are going to Mr Smyth.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you, Madam Chair. Generally speaking, minister, my experience has been that if members point out to you areas where there are dangerous footpaths you at least come along and do a quick bitumen patch and come back afterwards. I pointed out to you some particularly dangerous paths around Chinner Crescent and Boulton Place in Melba, and I was told that they would be fixed up last September. I drove down there the other day, and it is still dangerous; a big crack and a big apex have not been addressed. Do you know what is happening?

Mr Hargreaves: Off the top of my head, I do not carry around the addresses of all of the requests that I have—

MRS DUNNE: Could you take that up?

Mr Hargreaves: Mrs Dunne, I will certainly take it on notice.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: I can give you an assurance we shall attend to it with the speed of a startled gazelle.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you very much. I like to get these things done.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, I do not know if you heard it, but during the hearings last Friday afternoon, the Canberrans for Power Station Relocation Inc praised your speedy efforts to intervene in the eviction of certain horses from the Rose Cottage paddocks by 14 May. So, on record, thank you from the community. Why were they ordered to be removed from those paddocks in the first place on 15 February?

Mr Hargreaves: Thanks very much for your question, Mr Smyth. It gives me an opportunity in public to actually put the case forward. There was a misunderstanding at officer level about the status, if you wish, of the proposal. The officers concerned who started the process were under the impression that the process did not include a conclusion of the community consultation process. That was clearly not the case.

As I say, there was confusion reigning in that particular area. That confusion was removed when they were advised that there were no decisions taken. They were advised that a consultation process was on foot, and any sort of suggestion at all to the community that there was a decision taken on it was grossly inappropriate. Once that was conveyed to those people, it was changed rather quickly.

MR SMYTH: So an officer in the department misunderstood and thought he should evict the horses?

Mr Hargreaves: No, he did not think he had to evict the horses at all. I think that was a gross misrepresentation of the facts. The proposal being put forward, from my information, is that the agistment areas there comprise nine paddocks. There was going to be an effect on a couple of them, because they interleave. There was not going to be a total eviction at all. It meant there was not going to be access to that particular part of the totality of the block, remembering that in the totality of the block there are nine paddocks, and there are not nine paddocks in this particular proposal.

It was then said that these horses would not be able to be agisted on the bits of those paddocks that were affected by the proposal. Notwithstanding that, there was an understanding, which was incorrect, that people had to make alternative arrangements for their horses, either on the remaining part of that block—I think the name of the block is 16, 71—or they would have to agist them elsewhere. That was premature, and it was fixed.

MR SMYTH: I am not aware of any premature eviction of horses from any horse paddock with any PAs pending. I am not aware of any misunderstandings regarding the need to remove horses from horse paddocks with a PA or a DA pending. Why was there a misunderstanding on this one?

Mr Hargreaves: There have been misunderstandings in the past regarding horse paddocks during my tenure as minister. I refer, for example, to the north Curtin horse paddocks. So it is not out of the ordinary, in my view. Whether it is out of the

ordinary or not is immaterial. The fact is that there was a misunderstanding. The misunderstanding was fixed, and the information was conveyed to the people pretty quickly. If anything, I wanted to say thanks very much to my officers for being so quick about it.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, in your opening comments, and on page 273 of budget paper 4, under “priorities”, you talked about road construction projects. Could you go into some detail on that. I am particularly interested in the duplication of Tharwa Drive and the timing for that work to begin.

Mr Hargreaves: Thanks very much for the question. We committed \$11 million over three years to upgrade Tharwa Drive. The area that will be upgraded is from Johnson Drive through to the Lanyon Marketplace. I have had conversations with people in the Lanyon Valley about this, including, in recent times, the Lanyon Valley Community Forum, which Mr Spaccavento chairs, and which is a very useful forum. They have indicated to me that the area most in need is from the marketplace to Johnson Drive.

I am reminded that the election promise from the opposition prior to the last election was to provide money to duplicate Tharwa Drive only from the Tharwa Drive bend, which heads towards the Monaro Highway, and the Lanyon Marketplace. It would have left a traffic snarl between the turning point of Tharwa Drive into Johnson Drive. It would have made the situation worse. However, we have allocated that money and we intend to proceed with the contracts fairly shortly.

We have committed \$10 million over the next three years to further upgrade the airport roads system. With respect to Beltana Road through to the airport, as the committee would remember from the last time that we spoke, the airport and the government are in partnership to get on with that particular project. We are still hopeful that that might be concluded by the end of this year, around Christmas time. We are now moving to do works—you will have seen it already—along Morshead Drive through to Beltana Road. That is phase 2 of the first stage.

We also have stage 2, where we are providing funds for the Fairbairn Avenue-Morshead Drive-Majura Road intersection. It is a very large roundabout, if you like. We intend to do work there in partnership with the federal government. They have allocated \$30 million to the project. That will include traffic light treatment at Fairbairn Avenue, the roundabout road—I have forgotten what that is called; Majura Road, I think—and Morshead Drive. There will be traffic light treatment also at Majura Road and Beltana Road. Also, there will be the construction of a flyover, which will give Majura Road and Monaro Highway connection all the way through. That is the second stage.

That came out of the traffic congestion forum that we conducted with a whole heap of players. It resulted in the federal government coming up with that commitment. Further discussions at officer level ensue around the duplication of Majura Parkway. That is estimated to be worth about \$150 million for the project. If the negotiations are successful and we have it included in the AusLink 2 program, that means there will be a 70-30 split. Until those negotiations are completed, it would be premature to put any provision at all into the budget per se and list it. But I can assure the committee that as soon as those negotiations are concluded, and if they are concluded

satisfactorily, we will be advising the Assembly accordingly.

We have committed \$2 million to complete the duplication of Athllon Drive around the town centre, which has been needed for quite some time. At this point, I would like to say thanks very much to Mr Smyth. When he was minister, he started that particular project. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that work.

We are doing \$5 million worth of work to extend Horse Park Drive to Burrumarra Avenue in Gungahlin, and \$3.6 million over two years to improve cycle facilities. That particular piece of work is on the Cotter Road, from Streeton Drive to Stromlo park. We have had a lot of interest in Stromlo forest park, and there is an enormous amount of activity, particularly on a weekend, with people using the cycle facilities out there, from Adelaide Avenue through to Stromlo forest park. It can be a bit of a nightmare for cyclists, so we are addressing all of that. The bit that is remaining for us to worry about is from Streeton Drive through to Stromlo park.

We are also doing the cycle lane around the Jerrabomberra wetlands. That has been needed for some time. We have got a dirt road or path around the bird hives there, but with the imminence of the East Lake development, we have to make sure that the wetlands are protected and are enhanced for the species that use them. We are doing a cycle path around there. If you put a cement or bitumen cycle path in, people will respect that. Therefore, it will preserve the wetlands.

The last thing to say is that we have committed \$2.4 million over four years to provide safety screens on bridges to stop people hurling rocks off them.

THE CHAIR: Or throwing themselves over.

Mr Hargreaves: Or hurling themselves off them, but I do not recommend that. Don't try this at home; this is only for experts.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, when do you expect that the work will start on the Tharwa Drive duplication?

Mr Hargreaves: I will get Mr Gill to take you through that.

Mr Gill: At the moment the project is at the preliminary design stage. It is out for public consultation in the Lanyon markets and at the Hyperdome at the moment. There is a presentation to the Tuggeranong Community Council on 5 June. Pending that, and the comments from that, the design will be finalised. The intention would be to go to tender in September-October and for construction to start in November this year.

MR GENTLEMAN: Do you think it will cause a lot of disruption—the construction phase?

Mr Gill: It is a major project and the traffic management will need careful consideration. But there are some options in terms of how you might construct that. There is a bypass in terms of Woodcock Drive, which you could use to detour some of the traffic that might be impacted.

MR GENTLEMAN: Would you look at going to public consultation again as you did with the roundabout at the back of my place—Johnson Drive and Ashley?

Mr Gill: That is part of our approach. We will raise that in our meeting at the Tuggeranong Community Council on 5 June as an option. When the design is fully developed we will come back to the council and seek some views, similar to what we did with Johnson Drive, which was very effective. It saved four weeks of construction, and the impact on the general users of the road was reduced significantly.

DR FOSKEY: What is the breakdown in funding on the airport road between the federal government, the ACT government and the airport?

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Gill might jump in and correct me on the numbers, but my understanding is that Beltana Road to the airport is a \$12 million project. The airport share is \$4.5 million; ours is \$7.5 million. The only caveat to that is that if there is any over-budget expense, because of the works or delays, those costs will be borne by the airport and not by the territory. That is part of the deal. The rest of—

MRS DUNNE: So you privatised the risks? Congratulations.

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you.

MR SMYTH: Do they get the savings if it is under budget?

Mr Hargreaves: If it comes off their airport \$4.5 million, they can save as much as they like. I have to congratulate, to his eternal embarrassment, Mr Gill, who negotiated this arrangement at the airport to the advantage of the territory. I think it was an excellent bit of work.

The next stage is phase 2, if you like. That is at a cost of \$7½ million, to go from Morshead Drive through to Beltana Road. That was picked up by the territory. The next phase is stage 2. That will be a \$30 million contribution by the commonwealth and about \$22½ million by the ACT.

DR FOSKEY: When you are planning new road building, road widening et cetera, does the funding for public transport and roads come under the Office of Transport or whatever it is called?

Mr Hargreaves: No.

DR FOSKEY: How does the government weigh this up, when it is deciding to allot money to a road as distinct from defining it as a transport issue, a transport problem or a traffic problem and then looking at the whole gamut of things, rather than just putting money straight into roads? Do you look at solving the problem rather than just going along one line and saying, “Oh, we’ll fix up the road”?

Mr Hargreaves: I think that is a very good question which needs an answer. There are a couple of issues that I would advise you to take into account. Firstly, there is the historical nature of the growth of the city and the imperatives. I refer, for example, to

the work that we need to effect on Majura Road. It is only a road at the moment. If we want freight to come down that road and avoid the city area or the built-up residential area, we have to address the pavement on that road because it is not capable of taking B-double trucks, which we would like to see come from Sydney or Melbourne and go through to Fyshwick. So we need to address that issue. Ordinarily, that would be beyond our capacity, so we need to enter into negotiations to do that.

We have historical information on the state of our roads. Some roads need upgrading and some need replacing. We can see the development of the suburbs coming online; west Belconnen and Gungahlin are two particular ones. We can see it into the future and we know we have to make provision for these. Horse Park Drive is probably your best example of that, and so too is Lanyon Drive, which goes up to Jerrabomberra and from the Monaro Highway through Hume.

The question also involves whether we should do things in a total environmental context. Should we actually take into account the environmental aspects? The answer is: absolutely. One of the reasons why the Office of Transport was created was to take into account the transport planners that were formerly with ACTPLA. The reason why they were introduced into TAMS was so that we could have a holistic approach. So is it in the total province of one part of the department? No, it is not. Do we make determinations going into the future which take into account the views of experts within the department? Yes, we do. Mr Zissler's senior management team distils all of the information before recommending to government what the priority areas are.

MR SMYTH: Minister, will your department be able to live within its budget for the 2008-09 years? Do you have enough cash on hand to manage the needs of the department?

Mr Hargreaves: I would hope so, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Well, does it or doesn't it?

Mr Hargreaves: I would hope so, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, according to the cash flow statements in the 2007-08 budget, on page 309, the department received a cash injection of \$108 million. What was the reason for that increased contribution?

Mr Hargreaves: I do not have the 2007-08 budget papers with me. I will take the question on notice.

MR SMYTH: Somebody with knowledge might like to help out.

Mr Hargreaves: Would you like me to say it again? I do not have the papers in front of me and—

MR SMYTH: It is reasonable to ask one of your officers, Mr Hargreaves.

Mr Hargreaves: I will take the question on notice.

MR SMYTH: If you can't manage your affairs—

THE CHAIR: That is fine, minister. Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: In the budget papers for this year, the 2008-09 budget, on page 307, according to the latest cash flow statements the department received a cash injection of \$108 million during 2007-08. This was \$40 million less than was budgeted for. Why was that the case? Where was the \$40 million saved?

Mr Hargreaves: I will ask the officer who is responsible for budget preparation to respond to that.

Mr Kalogeropoulos: In relation to the question on page 307, that line that relates to capital injection from government. That is actually the funding that the department gets for the capital works program. The reason why it has decreased from the original budget is largely due to our rolling over some funding into the forward year. So this line here does not actually reflect the liquidity performance of the department; it is actually funding that is associated with the capital works program.

MR SMYTH: The question still stands, though. Does the department have enough cash on hand to manage its affairs? I notice the cash at the end of the period as budgeted for is down by \$11 million.

Mr Kalogeropoulos: If you look at the cash flow statement as budgeted, if you turn over to page 308, we are budgeting for a surplus for the period for each year and into the forwards.

MR SMYTH: Yes, but the surplus is falling; your cash on hand is falling?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: Actually the cash on hand is increasing into the forwards.

MR SMYTH: It might be increasing into the forwards, but the cash is budgeted to fall by \$11 million during 2008-09.

Mr Kalogeropoulos: Correct. Part of the reason why it is budgeted for is that part of that balance that made up the closing balance of \$18 million relates to significant funds that we had from insurance claims as a result of the bushfires. As a result, we have been continuing that during the year.

MR SMYTH: So what is the cash injection that you are asking for for this financial year?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: Sorry, which cash injection?

MR SMYTH: Are you asking for a cash injection to keep the budget in TAMS afloat this year?

Mr Kalogeropoulos: At the moment, I am not sure exactly the amount of the injection that we are looking for but we are in the process of determining a cash injection for a number of cost pressures that we have incurred during the year. I do not

have the details with me, but those cost pressures largely relate to an increase in the water charges. There has been an increase in the cost of water from 1 July 2007 of approximately 37.7 per cent.

MR SMYTH: So at the end of 2008-09 you do not expect to have asked for a significant amount of money back from Treasury to keep the department afloat?

Mr Hargreaves: I think that is a little bit of tealeaf gazing and we will worry about that towards the end of the year. We will, of course, have intervening in that period an election and perhaps the new government will have to address that.

MR SMYTH: So they might have to address the need for a cash injection?

Mr Hargreaves: You can go fishing as long as you like, but at the moment all you are picking up is a dead carp. I am not going to speculate on what is going to happen at the end of the financial year.

MR SMYTH: So are sections of the department being asked to restrict their spending, to restrict staff recruitment, because the cash position of the department is so tight that you cannot afford any additional expenditure throughout this year?

Mr Hargreaves: You are probably the Assembly's best builder of straw people. You can tear it down as often as you like; I am not going to do anything but treat that question with the contempt that it is due.

MR SMYTH: So the department's budget is in a fine position and it will not need supplementation throughout the year?

Mr Hargreaves: I am not going to go down that track with you; it is just a blatant fishing trip. Our estimates and what we want to do for the next year are laid before the committee. You can examine those, if you like; I have no intention of predicting anything further than is in this particular set of documents. You would not ask me to do that, I would hope; you would not be silly enough to do that, I would hope.

MRS DUNNE: Minister, back in 2004, and you will probably remember this because you were sitting at the estimates table at the time, the then chief executive of the forerunner of this department—DUS, in those days, it was—told members of the committee and the community that the Gungahlin Drive extension, when it was built, would be a great road 22 hours a day.

Mr Hargreaves: I have to confess to you that I do not remember that.

MRS DUNNE: I do.

Mr Hargreaves: And I have no doubt at all about the veracity of the quote, nor your phenomenal memory. I have seen you in quiz nights, and it is formidable.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you. I am glad you appreciate these things.

Mr Hargreaves: I do. I like being beaten by a giant mind.

MRS DUNNE: Does your experience since the opening of Gungahlin Drive bear this out?

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely.

MRS DUNNE: It is a great road 22 hours a day?

Mr Hargreaves: In fact, some of the reports I have had say it is a great road 24 hours a day.

THE CHAIR: Certainly in my experience.

Mr Hargreaves: Some people, in fact, have experienced some issues on congestion a couple of hours of the day, in the peak hours, and I do not quarrel with their experiences at all. In fact, in the infrastructure fund into the future, we have actually made sure that there are sufficient funds that, if the time comes when we need to duplicate it, we can move ahead on that.

But I have to say that prior to it being completed I was a regular recipient of emails from people who were discontented, and since then I have had no more than about 10 emails, probably closer to about six or seven, saying that they are dissatisfied with some of the aspects of the Gungahlin Drive extension path, which is the bit from the Barton Highway through to Belconnen Way. And I have had at least one or two from down the southern direction of Caswell Drive.

Overwhelmingly, people have said to me that it is a much more effective journey and that the Glenloch interchange has been absolutely phenomenal. My experience, travelling on it every day as I do in peak hour, is that it is a phenomenal piece of work.

MRS DUNNE: My experience and the experience of my constituents is that there are a number of choke points, principally those associated with Aranda and, as you said, where people come off Belconnen Way to go south—where people are coming out of Aranda and people are coming south from the Barton Highway, from Gungahlin or from the Ginninderra Drive area. What observations have your officials made—you said at the time that it was opened, that you would be out observing and keeping tabs on it—about those choke points and how long do they last? In my experience, it does not matter whether I get on it 8 o'clock or 9 o'clock; there are still choke points at those times.

Mr Hargreaves: There are a couple of points I would like to make to you. I do not think we have really had a long enough period for us to have, in an engineering context anyway, sufficient information on it to make these judgements.

The other point that I would make to you is that what we have not seen and been able to qualify just at this point is the effect that the opening of the Caswell Drive bit and the interchange has had on the Belconnen Way traffic, the Northbourne Avenue traffic, a lot of the airport traffic and the William Hovell Drive traffic. We suspect that there has been an alleviation of the amount of vehicles on all those other roads but we have to measure it over time.

I guess I am saying to you that it is just early days yet. I am aware of the areas that you say are problematic at certain times of the day. I might suggest to you, though, before the GDE was actually done, we were having much greater choking along Northbourne Avenue, along Adelaide Avenue, down Horse Park Drive and Ginninderra Drive. I think we have had some relief from that.

MRS DUNNE: So what traffic studies are planned or are on foot? And if there are traffic studies, when might we expect to see the results?

Mr Hargreaves: I would not expect to be able to see the results inside 12 months. We evaluate all of the roads. You have got to remember, too, that we do not have just a blank cheque; we cannot do every single road in town. It is going to have to be a staged process. I do not want to see any results out of the traffic movement on GDE unless we can compare it with traffic movements along Ginninderra Drive, Northbourne Avenue, Majura Road and all those other ones. I know there was an enormous amount, something like 20,000 vehicles a day, on the other roads.

MRS DUNNE: So you have baseline data against what you can compare?

Mr Hargreaves: Against the pre-GDE myth. We did traffic counts on the other roads. If I am not wrong, it was something like 20,000 cars a day on the other roads.

Mr Gill: There were 20,000 cars that were displaced when GDE was getting constructed.

Mr Hargreaves: Now those 20,000 cars, we hope, have gone back to the GDE. If they have, then we should be able to see some relief on those other roads as well. It may very well be that, if people have changed their travel patterns and they are still continuing to go down there, our moneys may very well be applied to those other roads rather than that one. So I do not want to jump in too quickly on it.

MR MULCAHY: Minister, as you know, I have had of late quite a number of letters and emails from people who are concerned that it has not really shortened their travel time to work. Are you saying, then, that there is no prospect of possibly the next stage being looked at or at least determined inside of a year? That is the first thing I wanted to ask.

The second part, which flows from that, is this: I know Mr Gill; I have heard him speak at the Weston Creek council about the issue of speed on Northbourne Avenue; and I understand the thinking that not coordinating the lights is to actually discourage speed. But would it not assist in a better flow of traffic for people coming in from the north and take some of the pressure off, say, Hackett, where I know you were good enough to speak last night, if you reconsidered the issue of coordinating traffic lights on Northbourne Avenue?

Mr Hargreaves: On your first point—

MR MULCAHY: Am I misrepresenting Mr Gill on that point?

Mr Hargreaves: No. I will get Mr Gill to address this.

MR MULCAHY: That is my understanding of what he said about two years ago at Weston Creek.

Mr Hargreaves: On the first one, no, we will not be providing any funds in this financial year to placate those particular parts.

MR MULCAHY: I meant the decision.

Mr Hargreaves: It would be inappropriate of us to make a decision until there has been sufficient time elapsed for us to make a judgement about where the priority is. If the priority is, for example, to do some more work on Ginninderra Drive, we should at least apply our thinking to that as well. Just because it is obvious now does not mean that people's travel patterns have actually concluded. I want to see a number of things actually come together.

You will appreciate that if the bus system improves the way we expect it to—and I am sure it will; I am certain it will but other people have got to be convinced of this—then we will find people returning to the buses and perhaps even taking more bus travel. That will have an impact as well. I want to see that whole package before I—

MR MULCAHY: It will be at least a year before you form a conclusion?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. There is a second part to the question.

MR MULCAHY: The synchronisation.

Mr Gill: I might add to what the minister has said in relation to the Gungahlin Drive extension. The department is looking at how the traffic conditions are operating along the full length. We have conducted a safety audit along the route from the Barton Highway down to Glenloch and there will be some small improvements that we can basically make to the existing route. We need to seek available dollars without seeking any additional funding. So there would be some refinements to certain aspects, including in Aranda, in the next while, within the available budget.

MRS DUNNE: So what sorts of refinements are they?

Mr Gill: Issues in relation to the merged road, with that Aranda work, where traffic from Belconnen Way enter and merge with traffic on Gungahlin Drive extension. There is an opportunity to make better use of the existing pavement by re-marking it.

MR MULCAHY: Accelerator lanes or whatever they call them?

Mr Gill: Lengthening the acceleration lane because the problem is not the road itself; it is just the length of pavement available to merge. That is my observation. We can make some adjustments there.

There are also issues in Aranda where some residents have concerns about traffic noise. We have pre measurements of traffic noise. We have engaged a consultant to

basically repeat those measurements now that the road is in place. We will be able to look at that information to see whether there is a need to add to the noise attenuation measures that we have put in place.

Those are small improvements within the existing funding. What the minister was flagging was basically additional capital funding. There has been no bid made for any additional capital works funding at this point in time.

Mr Hargreaves: The point needs to be made to the committee, in terms of its examination of financial matters, that the figures put into this particular budget talk about additional funding to the capital works budget. There is a base budget for road maintenance and refurbs, and it is the judging of the priority of that that Roads ACT and TAMS actually apply and will be applying their minds to—this sort of an exercise. So we will not be asking the Assembly to approve additional appropriations for that work.

I would like to put on the record, though—I hope we are almost done with the GDE but if not, I would still like to put this on the record—

MRS DUNNE: No, it will never be done, until it is duplicated.

Mr Hargreaves: You should live that long. Or am I asking for too much? Be careful what you wish for, perhaps. I needed to put on the record congratulations, in a sense, to the people who built it. These contractors are local companies; they employed local people; and the profits stay in the community. They have actually delivered that particular project under time. I think that is a significant achievement.

You might like to know that, since it has been open, we have not had any traffic accidents on that bit. There have been traffic accidents on William Hovell Drive; there have been traffic accidents—

MRS DUNNE: No, that is not true.

Mr Hargreaves: Not reported to me. There have been traffic accidents on the Tuggeranong Parkway; and there have been traffic accidents further up on the existing parkway. Nowhere, that I have been advised; it has not had any.

MRS DUNNE: I know of one.

Mr Hargreaves: No significant ones.

MRS DUNNE: There were three or four cars in an end-to-end near the Belconnen Way overpass, going north, about three weeks ago on a Wednesday night.

Mr Hargreaves: I have not had it reported to me.

MR MULCAHY: The Northbourne Avenue lights.

Mr Hargreaves: The Northbourne Avenue lights issue, Mr Gill will address.

Mr Gill: At the Hackett Residents Association meeting last night I talked about, I suppose, broader transport issues. I tried to speak in terms of broader transport issues than North Canberra. And one of the questions was in relation to the coordination of traffic lights on Northbourne Avenue.

They are coordinated but there is some scope for improvement of that coordination, particularly in the context of trying to improve and link that in with bus services along Northbourne Avenue and try to provide some priority for buses as they travel down Northbourne Avenue. That was the nature of the question. The difficulty with Northbourne Avenue is that it is hard to get coordination in both directions, but that has always been the issue.

MR MULCAHY: The bulk of the traffic is obviously going down Northbourne in the mornings.

Mr Hargreaves: As soon as you get to the city part and then you get a feed in from Barry Drive, that is significant.

Mr Gill: So that might have been the comment or the context that rested with you previously. It is difficult to coordinate traffic lights in both directions, if not impossible, particularly when you have got an imbalance of traffic.

MR MULCAHY: It would take a lot of pressure off if people felt it was a pretty smooth run through rather than cutting back through Hackett and Watson and all that.

Mr Gill: Yes, the context last night was that people felt that they were filtering through residential streets because Northbourne Avenue was not operating very efficiently. I suppose our response was that Northbourne Avenue will take as much traffic as it can take; it is a very attractive route and it does carry quite a large volume of traffic.

MR MULCAHY: I just hear it anecdotally; I have not had formal representation. But I think Mrs Dunne would have the same view that it is a problem.

THE CHAIR: Yes. We are going to Mr Pratt now; he has a supplementary and then I will go on to information services after this question.

MR PRATT: On the priorities proposed, major road constructions—

Mr Hargreaves: Sorry to interrupt you, Mr Pratt, have you got a reference point there? Could I perhaps have that and I am happy to—

MR PRATT: Page 273 of BP4, 2008-09 priorities. I am also looking at BP3, pages 65 and 66, minister. That is a blanket coverage of your reference points.

With respect to the upgrades of roads, there is quite a list of road projects there—pretty impressive it seems. The airport road, stage 2, the Majura Road-Beltana Road link: does that include a new bridge?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, the flyover. What will happen—

MR PRATT: Change of access or—

Mr Hargreaves: At that point the Majura Road going into Monaro Highway is a north-south access. The Morshead Drive-Pialligo Avenue is the east-west access. That is the most significant access in town at the moment. What we are proposing to do is to have the east-west go under the flyover that goes north-south.

MR PRATT: Okay.

MRS DUNNE: So you could say that north-south is going over east-west?

Mr Hargreaves: You could do that indeed, Mrs Dunne. There is a fine example of the giant intellect of Mrs Dunne.

MR PRATT: We will not flog that do death, Mrs Dunne; it is pretty obvious.

MRS DUNNE: I am just trying to work out whether it is a tunnel or a flyover.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt, have you finished your question or not?

MR PRATT: No, I have not really. Minister, do all of these upgrades reflect a priority of task and can you tell us something about the strategic roads plan?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, sure. The airport road project came out of a need to respond to the congestion around the airport, as we all know, which erupted a couple of years back—really erupted. It was quite clear that with the airport development, the 5,000 people, I think, who were going to be employed out at the airport at the time, the travel of more people down from Gungahlin along the Majura Road, the possible emergence of the strategic defence headquarters, which is now a reality, the movement of people from Queanbeyan into Canberra and out of Canberra and, of course, just plain more services flying in and out of town—a whole range of reasons—the road was clogged and there needed to be a solution.

What I did was to convene a roundtable, wanting to get all of the people who had anything to do with that congestion to come up with a solution. What happened was that Roads ACT, the NCA, ACTPLA and DOTARS came together, looked at some possible solutions to this particular problem and brought them to the roundtable. We then considered whether or not our various jurisdictions could share the cost of fixing it.

We made the point, for example, that New South Wales people were contributing to the thing. But the New South Wales government chose to give us nothing. We knew that a lot of people from the Queanbeyan area were contributing to that particular problem. But the Queanbeyan city council had no money to contribute to the area. However, Roads ACT negotiated particularly well with the commonwealth department and got a shared arrangement. At that time, the road project, the solution, including the flyover, was going to cost \$45 million. What was negotiated was a fifty-fifty split. The federal government would not provide the money until they saw the colour of the money from the ACT. That is why you saw the \$15 million provision

in the budget last time. Of course, our continued share of that was another \$7½ million.

Of course, over the passage of time, the price of that project naturally goes up. It is sitting up around the \$50 million mark now. Also what transpired was that the airport recognised that they did have a contribution, albeit not the sole contribution, to the clogging of the road. They wanted to have a new entrance into the airport and they wanted to have an uninterrupted journey into and out of it for their particular clients, whether they be Brindabella Business Park or the travelling public. So they decided to contribute \$4½ million to the project. The commonwealth contributed \$30 million and the way in which we would split the works was that we would do the Morshead Drive through to the airport and they would do the stage 2.

MR PRATT: I am not so much concerned about the detail of each of these projects—I will be at another time—but my question really is: what is your overall strategic plan? Are these projects locked into priority listing? In fact, do you have a five-year and a 10-year plan which has all of these projects running in sequence to a grand design, or is this just a shotgun approach?

Mr Hargreaves: We do have a strategic plan for the provision of major works on our roads, remembering, of course, that all strategic plans might have to be varied according to a priority which emerges at a time.

MR PRATT: Things change.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, we do. It is not just a knee-jerk reaction to emerging issues. The Athllon Drive one, for example, has been on the program since Mr Smyth contributed to probably two-thirds of Athllon Drive, and then we are going to pick up the other third.

MR PRATT: Mr Smyth's five-year plan, I think, wasn't it?

Mr Hargreaves: No. It might be Mr Smyth's five-year plan; heavens above. I think he had a three-year plan, and that blew up in his face, too. The issue for Tharwa Drive has been on the boil for some time. There was \$7 million provided for that. As it turns out, that was insufficient to do the work anyway because it would have only done what your party provided, which was from Tharwa Drive to the Lanyon marketplace. It would have neglected the Tharwa Drive through the Johnson Drive bit, which required the extra \$4 million. So there is a series of roads in the strategic plan, yes.

MR PRATT: Why does not the budget, therefore, reflect something like a five-year plan, and even perhaps a 10-year plan?

Mr Hargreaves: It actually does.

MR PRATT: How?

Mr Hargreaves: Firstly, it provides funding for specific road works. You just congratulated us on the list, and I thank you very much for that.

MR PRATT: Well, I do.

Mr Hargreaves: That is in year one.

MR PRATT: I do not see any rhyme or reason to it.

Mr Hargreaves: It is also provided into the outyears. You will see there is provision in the outyears. You will also notice that there are significant funds in the budget, generally speaking—and you need to talk to the Treasurer about the detail about this—for the infrastructure fund and the components of that. There are significant funds put in there so that we can bring forward or let out projects in the strategic road program.

Additionally, some of our roads can either happen or be accelerated depending on a contribution from the commonwealth. For example, Lanyon Drive from the Monaro Highway up to Shepherd Street and the introduction of the slip lane there; that is a partnership between the three jurisdictions, remembering that the commonwealth are contributing fifty-fifty to it. Our contribution is \$7½ million; the commonwealth is throwing in the same amount. The New South Wales government are putting in about \$8 million because their problem is that they have a railway bridge to go over. So there is a three-way partnership, which sometimes can accelerate a particular project in the program.

MR PRATT: Given that the last five-year plan was thrown to the winds—

Mr Hargreaves: Was it?

MR PRATT: Clearly, projects like Tharwa Drive and others just kept getting rolled and rolled and rolled and rolled. You can understand why we have no confidence that you have got a plan. Can you table your five-year plan or your 10-year plan or your strategic plan? Can you table them?

Mr Hargreaves: Firstly, I reject—

MR PRATT: Not what is in the budget.

Mr Hargreaves: No. You have the list in front of you.

MR PRATT: Not what is in the budget. Can you table—

Mr Hargreaves: You have got the list in front of you.

MR PRATT: Can you table your strategic plan, which is, for want of a better term, your territory roads plan.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, all right. I understand it. I have heard the question from you three times. You need to understand that I totally reject your opening statement there about how these things have been rolled over and over and over again.

MR PRATT: They have.

Mr Hargreaves: That is nothing short of absolute misrepresentation of facts.

MR PRATT: But you have raided—

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt—

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Pratt, do you want me to answer the question or not? Will I take it on notice for you?

MR PRATT: You raided those projects to finance GDE, did you not?

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt, will you let the minister answer the question?

MR PRATT: Yes, chair, I will.

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you. The fact that Tharwa Drive was postponed into another budget because of the need to apply it to the GDE was a once-off effect. Secondly, it was because we needed to put money into the GDE. A contribution to the increased costs, of course, can be laid at your party's feet for mucking around on the alignment in the first place and delaying matters, for putting obstruction after obstruction after obstruction in the way of the construction—

MR PRATT: You have got to wear that. Your party has to wear that.

Mr Hargreaves: and also promising only to complete it as far as Belconnen Way. So we can have that argument until the cows come home.

MR PRATT: That was a government incompetence—

Mr Hargreaves: The first part; I reject your exaggeration completely. I think it is an absolute nonsense, and it does not do you any credit at all. As it comes to the strategic plan, I am happy to provide to the committee a copy of that, with the caveat—I impress this; I will say it slowly so it can be recorded—that these documents are evolutionary documents and they will be affected by priorities which emerge from time to time. They are an indicator. A strategic road plan is an indicator of government intention. It is not cast in stone. If it were cast in stone, that would be a totally irresponsible thing to do.

THE CHAIR: Fine, thank you, minister. We will now go on to information services, which is 1.1—

DR FOSKEY: I have some questions on this.

THE CHAIR: Yes. Minister, page 284 of budget paper 4, item “e” talks about the numbers of users accessing database via the library. That is a new output, a new measure, and it replaces the two measures above, virtual library visits and loans information downloads. So it has collapsed, obviously, into one thing, but it is not the

sum total of those two other ones.

Mr Hargreaves: No.

THE CHAIR: I am trying to figure out what that is.

Mr Hargreaves: I introduce to you Sue Morrell from the department. Also, can I just say that it is not a collapsing of the two.

THE CHAIR: Okay, so I misinterpreted that?

Mr Hargreaves: We will take it on notice, Madam Chair—

THE CHAIR: That would be lovely. Thank you very much.

Mr Hargreaves: and give you a full reply.

MR MULCAHY: I have a supplementary to that?

THE CHAIR: Yes, Mr Mulcahy.

MR MULCAHY: Minister, it says in here that you are purging non-active library members.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MR MULCAHY: Does the system not allow non-active members to be kept on the system electronically? What does it mean when a non-active library member seeks to become active again in terms of their access?

Mr Hargreaves: Before I get Ms Morrell to respond to you, Madam Chair, can I have the record show that one of the major reasons for us taking library type questions on notice is that the director of the ACT Library and Information Service is overseas at the moment. We will do the best we can to respond to the questions, and that is why we will take things on notice from time to time.

Ms Morrell: We do a regular purge of inactive library members, and that means they do not have borrowing rights. They can visit the libraries, but no borrowing rights. If they want to retain their borrowing rights, they re-add themselves as a member. We add them back to the database.

MR MULCAHY: But why do you take them out?

MS MacDONALD: What did you say? They do what?

Ms Morrell: If there are inactive library members, we purge them from the database.

MS MacDONALD: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: How long is that?

Ms Morrell: We review that every year, every 12 months.

MR MULCAHY: What do you do that for? What is the reason?

Ms Morrell: The database management is easier and much more effective if we have active library users within the database. So, for example, when we are giving out messages to all library users, the expense is huge if we have to send out messages—

MR MULCAHY: Are you not emailing them?

Ms Morrell: Sometimes. Sometimes it is through SMS texting; sometimes it is through email. So the cost is far greater if we have the database with all the inactive users as well as the active users. The inactive users are stored separately in another area. So if someone wants to become a library borrower again, it is very easy for them to rejoin the library and enter the active database.

MR MULCAHY: If I have, say, gone on a long holiday or been transferred overseas and come back and I want to suddenly reactivate, what is involved?

Ms Morrell: Just notifying the library.

MR MULCAHY: It can be done immediately?

Ms Morrell: Absolutely. It can be done online; it can be done by phone.

Mr Hargreaves: It is a very pleasant experience to just go through the joining process.

THE CHAIR: I have got a supplementary—

DR FOSKEY: We have all got something.

THE CHAIR: I may have missed this, because a little bit of interchange was going on, but is the person actually notified that they have become inactive? For instance, if I just bowled up to the library and expected to still be a member and then someone said, “No, you are not a member,” I might be confused. An elderly person, in particular, may be somewhat confused by that?

Ms Morrell: You would immediately be re-entered into the database at that time.

THE CHAIR: No, I am just asking you whether they are notified that they have become inactive. That is what my question is.

Ms Morrell: They are notified. However, a lot of the time—and this is one of the reasons for the data management that we use—those people have moved addresses. So they can be notified by mail and they do not receive it.

THE CHAIR: Right, of course.

Ms Morrell: So it is not until they come into the library to borrow a book that they

realise that.

MR MULCAHY: So it is if they have not accessed the library in 12 months?

Ms Morrell: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you. Minister, in those accountability measures on page 284, we are seeing a decline in library membership—

Mr Hargreaves: Whereabouts is this?

MRS DUNNE: Library membership, page 284, accountability indicators for output class 1.1.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: The figure of 160,000 was the target for 2007-08, but we seem to have achieved 194,000, then it falls back to 180,000. Why is that? Sorry, first of all, what caused the increase over the target?

Mr Hargreaves: It is the purge, Mrs Dunne.

MRS DUNNE: No, you purged and added 34,000 people to the list?

Mr Hargreaves: No. The point is that in the previous counting, we just added extra users on top of the inactive people. What you are seeing now is the results of that purge bringing it back to figures—

MRS DUNNE: So the 194,000 that is there as the estimated outcome, it does not include the purge?

Mr Hargreaves: The 160,000 includes a figure if the purge had occurred. Sorry, you are right. You are right. It includes the figures excluding—sorry—including the purged people in that lot.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Mr Hargreaves: So—

MRS DUNNE: The purge is about to take place?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, and it will go down to 180,000.

MRS DUNNE: To 180,000.

THE CHAIR: Okay.

MRS DUNNE: So it is only because you are going to conduct a purge?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Okay, Dr Foskey has a supplementary, and then we are going to Mr Smyth.

DR FOSKEY: On that same page, page 284, it indicates that the target for the percentage of population who are library members has been decreased for 2008-09, although the target was met. I am interested in why we would be reducing our target—

MRS DUNNE: It is not a target; it is an actual.

Mr Hargreaves: It is a percentage.

DR FOSKEY: A percentage target, yes. The target was 55 per cent this year; next year is 53 per cent, but the actual outcome is around—

Mr Hargreaves: Dr Foskey, the numbers are based on the number that start as users over the population. So, clearly, if you reduce the number that we are applying as members of the library service and we purge an amount of non-active members from that, you are going to get a smaller percentage. Okay? That is all that is. It is only about giving a realistic approach to the community about active or inactive members.

DR FOSKEY: Is there a footnote about the purge?

MR MULCAHY: Just library.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, but, footnote or not, Dr Foskey, that is the reason for it.

DR FOSKEY: Yes, okay. I have not got the budget in front of me, sorry.

THE CHAIR: I am going to Mr Smyth next and then I am going to Mr Mulcahy.

MR SMYTH: Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, we had the Speaker appear before the committee last week, and questions were asked about the future of the Assembly library.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MR SMYTH: Are you able to table the copy of the report done into the future of the Assembly library?

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MR SMYTH: Why not, minister?

Mr Hargreaves: I consider the report at this stage of the game to be a working document. It is not anything other than an aid to a decision that needs to be taken. I have not had an opportunity at this stage to have a conversation with the Speaker on the way forward. Until that conversation is concluded and decisions are taken jointly, I do not think I will be making that stuff available.

MR SMYTH: Have you checked the *Hansard*? Members might remember that the Speaker said that we should ask you for a copy because—

Mr Hargreaves: Indeed, I have seen the *Hansard*, and you can ask me as often as you like. I have just told you why I am not going to do it.

MR SMYTH: When did you receive the report?

Mr Hargreaves: I have not received the report.

MR SMYTH: You have not? So when was the report commissioned?

Mr Hargreaves: I would have to take that bit on notice. But I am happy to tell you this much, Mr Smyth, I am not going to go into the details of the report; I am not going to table it, and I do not suggest to you that it would be appropriate to do so.

When it comes to the issue of the Assembly library, I can quite happily put a couple of things on the record. The position from which I am starting in relation to it is this: I am aware, and have been for some time, that there can be a perception of an offence, if you like, against the doctrine of the separation of powers. In most other jurisdictions libraries belong to the parliament as opposed to the executive. The way in which it has emerged over time in the ACT is that the library is a subset of the Territory and Municipal Services ACT Library and Information Service.

I believe that the officers have provided an exemplary service, a bipartisan and independent service, to the Assembly since inception and, certainly, in my time. I cannot see any reason why, from their perspective, there needs to be change. However, I do recognise that, when it comes to the research arm of that particular service, our perceptions need to be consistent with reality.

I am concerned that some people may feel that there is an offence against the separation of powers where the parliament has to be seen to be independent from the executive. It is on that basis that the original conversations started. I would want to conclude those conversations with the Speaker around how it could happen, if we were to transfer responsibility of the library to the corporate services section within the Assembly.

There are a number of models which could apply. One is that we just transfer it holus-bolus, staff and all, so that they become staff of the Assembly. Another one is that we transfer the materials and the operating budget to the Assembly, and we provide the staff on contract from the ACT Library and Information Service so as to make sure that the library staff themselves have access to the professional development which is only available in the ACT Library and Information Service.

They are just two models which could apply. In conversations with the Speaker, I want to make sure that we discuss both of those and that the Speaker is comfortable with that. Now, I also know that the Speaker will be having conversations with the administrative and procedure committee, which is most appropriate. That committee is, as you know, formed to assist the Speaker in those decisions.

I have not, as I say, received a copy of that report. I have not had an opportunity to speak to the Speaker. When both of those have occurred, we will see about whether or not it can be tabled.

MR SMYTH: Has a copy of the draft been received, Mr Zissler?

Mr Hargreaves: The draft report is within the department, and it is being evaluated, but I have not seen it. Let me tell you this much, Madam Chair: the impetus for change within the context of the Assembly library is something which we all share and we are all quite happy with. Whether or not it needs to change—whether there need to be MOUs, whether there is a full-on staff transfer or anywhere in the middle—needs to be worked through. I do not propose to hurry that process. I want to make sure that the parliament is as happy with the process before it happens as much as the department is.

This is not a very difficult issue when you talk about transferring resources; it happens all the time in a bureaucracy. But it is an important matter of principle when it comes to the separation of powers. I want to make sure that that is actually respected in all of this process.

MR SMYTH: How long has the draft been with the department, Mr Zissler?

Mr Zissler: I have yet to see it.

Mr Hargreaves: I understand, Mr Smyth, about six to eight weeks.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Mr Mulcahy, you had a library question, and then we are going to afternoon tea.

MR MULCAHY: Okay. Minister, the rather vexed saga of the Griffith library is well known. I continue to receive representations, as you know, because I send them on to you. It is welcomed that there has been, I think, a doubling of the mobile library service in that area. Older residents and particularly residents who have English as a second language seemed to enjoy the facility that was available in the past, and they still express their concern over the absence of the facility. Is there any further thought being given to strengthening some form of library service in the Griffith-Narrabundah inner-south area?

Mr Hargreaves: Firstly, I am not going to put the library back into the Griffith area. The resources that were at the Griffith library have been, as you know, transferred into various libraries around town, not the least of which is the new Civic library. I have to congratulate the ACT Library and Information Service on the award that they got for innovation and service delivery. That just shows the way in which it has been received. I think it was a correct decision to be taken, even though some people disagree with that.

One of the things that are also available to the people in the Griffith area besides the mobile library service, which is a physical presence there, is the home library service where we actually deliver and pick up materials for people who are finding it difficult

to get around. I think, in fact, the mobile library service and the home lending library service should be sufficient at this point.

DR FOSKEY: A supplementary to that. In the Griffith neighbourhood plan, there is actually provision for a library, and that was one of the things that sustained the Griffith residents through the closing of the Griffith library, because they thought in the future there might be a library.

Mr Hargreaves: No.

DR FOSKEY: I note that there actually is in this budget a hall, but no library.

Mr Hargreaves: That is right, correct.

DR FOSKEY: What community consultation was carried out to inform this decision?

Mr Hargreaves: About providing a community hall?

DR FOSKEY: Rather than a library, given that you probably knew they wanted a library.

MR PRATT: Good question.

Mr Hargreaves: The decision is well known about not putting a library in Griffith. It is well known, just as the people of Weston Creek know that they are not getting one there either. The issue around the hall is to pick up some of the representations that were made during that period of closure of the Griffith library. People were saying that there were other issues that they wanted to have; for example, use it as a meeting place or for social engagements. What we have had the opportunity to do in the context of Griffith is to provide funds for a community facility on a small scale. You ask about community consultation, Dr Foskey. What we are saying at the moment is that there is provision in the budget for this. The consultation process will ensue now on what needs to go in that particular facility.

DR FOSKEY: So a library could?

Mr Hargreaves: As far as I am concerned, it will not be provided in that facility. The reason for that is that the provision of that particular facility does not come out of my budget. I am not going to shrink down the resources of the ACT Library and Information Service to put resources in that facility, no. Will the mobile library service be able to park out the front? Certainly.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Mr Smyth, you have a further question in this area, Mrs Dunne has a quick one and then we need to go on to transport.

MR SMYTH: Minister, page 284, budget paper 4, output class 1.1, accountability indicator "s", the average cost per transaction for the call centres was meant to be \$3.70, but it was \$3.93 this year.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MR SMYTH: You have it as \$3.70 in the coming year. If it costs you more this year, why is it going to cost you less next year?

Mr Hargreaves: Thanks very much for that, Mr Smyth. Through you, Madam Chair, I will ask Mr Polinelli, who is in charge of the call centre and a whole stack of other things in TAMS, to come up and answer the question.

Mr Polinelli: The fluctuation in channel pricing usually reflects the movement of transactions between channels. We are actively undertaking to move high-volume, low-complexity transactions out of shopfronts and into the call centre. That will sometimes have an impact on the way that the pricing per cost per transaction is reflected.

MR SMYTH: That would explain why this year is up. How come next year will be down? How come in the 2008-09 budget it will go back to \$3.70?

Mr Polinelli: We are anticipating that the cost per transaction will decrease again in call centres as we pick up more demand in the call centre, so it will continue to drive the price down.

MRS DUNNE: But it is not going down at the shopfronts?

THE CHAIR: No, it is; it is going back down again.

MRS DUNNE: But not in shopfronts.

MR SMYTH: So the volume will bring it down in the coming year?

Mr Polinelli: That is correct.

MR SMYTH: How much is the call centre worth? How many transactions a year do you do at the call centre?

Mr Polinelli: In terms of number of calls that we take through the call centre, this year we are predicting around 920,000.

MR SMYTH: When you say “this year”, is that the current year or 2008-09?

Mr Polinelli: In the current year.

MR SMYTH: And next year?

Mr Polinelli: Hard to predict. That will be based on customer demand, but we have seen a strong growth in the number of calls we have received year on year since the call centre opened, from around 140,000 in year one, 2000-01, through to over 800,000 at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Dunne, your question?

MRS DUNNE: This is really one to take on notice. Could the minister provide to the committee library membership by postcode?

Mr Hargreaves: No.

MRS DUNNE: Why not?

Mr Hargreaves: I will put that another way: I will take it on notice. I will see whether the complexity of the information that we have—

MRS DUNNE: That is a much better answer, minister.

Mr Hargreaves: I am sorry. What I was going through was an instant reaction to Mrs Burke's normal questions on these things when she likes me to identify the addresses of all of our public housing tenants. It was just a reaction—and for that I apologise.

THE CHAIR: Yes, thank you.

Mr Hargreaves: I quite happily apologise for that. That was my instant reaction. In terms of how many members of the library we have by postcode, it needs to be considered in the context that it is not only ACT residents that are members of the library.

MRS DUNNE: ACT postcodes, if that will make it easier.

Mr Hargreaves: Remember, though, that the figure that you would get as an aggregate of the ACT postcodes is not going to be the total number.

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Mr Hargreaves: We have, for example, quite legitimately, people from Queanbeyan and Jerrabomberra. We have got a number of people from Braidwood and Bungendore. In fact, there is even one in Austria. I know that because he emailed me. He was upset because he could not deliver his mother's books back to the Griffith library because we were closing it.

DR FOSKEY: You have mentioned him before.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, I have. I thought, "Well, you know, obviously, the public transport system in and out of Sydney airport is a big problem." So we will look at it—

MRS DUNNE: What I would like is the membership of ACT residents by postcode, and just something that indicates that the out-of-ACT numbers are X.

Mr Hargreaves: Sure; we will take it on notice for you.

MRS DUNNE: Thank you. It should be pretty simple if you have a computer program that has everyone's name and address.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Zissler reminds me of something which I do need to ask the committee to consider: this will be numbers, and the numbers do not necessarily reflect where the usage is. We have, for example, people in the south side of the city who go to Dickson library because that is where the Chinese collection is.

MR PRATT: Yes, we know that.

Mr Hargreaves: Okay? When your committee is considering comparing those sorts of things, please bear that in mind.

MRS DUNNE: And people go to the library closest to where they work often rather than where they live.

Mr Hargreaves: Indeed. Some people are members of the library and do not take books out but they do use the newspaper service, and some people use the internet service and do not take a book out, so—

MS MacDONALD: Can I ask a supplementary question?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MS MacDONALD: I confess I do not know in great detail, and I know it is terrible that I do not, but are you able to also provide information about which libraries offer specialist collections?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, happy to provide that list. For example, Phillip is where our heritage library is.

MS MacDONALD: Yes, I did know that.

Mr Hargreaves: We will go through each of the libraries and let you know what their specialisation is. Remember, too, that a couple of our libraries are joint-use libraries, so they have the whole of the student body sitting up as members of them as well.

THE CHAIR: Okay. Thank you very much. We will go on to 1.2.

MRS DUNNE: Just on a procedural matter, Madam Chair: could we break early and go to afternoon tea and then come back to the next area, rather than breaking that up?

THE CHAIR: Yes, we will go to afternoon tea now, and we will come back at 20 to five.

Meeting adjourned from 4.26 to 4.40 pm.

THE CHAIR: We will resume on 1.3. Good afternoon, Mr Horsey. Mrs Dunne, you had a question.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. The graph, which is strategic indicator No 4, reduction in waste going to landfill, there is an increase in material recovered from the waste stream.

Mr Hargreaves: Whereabouts is it?

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, BP4, page 278, top of the page. This seems to be flatlining. It did go up for a few years and it seems to be flatlining for some time. What are we doing to get it to go down, which is a general question, and when you say this is calculated using weighbridge data of waste to the landfill, is this just to the public landfill? And when are we going to be in a situation to measure what goes into the private landfill at concrete recycling?

Mr Horsey: Regarding the issue on private landfills, to the best of my knowledge there is only one in the ACT, run by Canberra Concrete Recyclers on a site that the commonwealth own. My understanding is that they are land-filling about 80,000 tonnes per annum of what is called mixed inert waste, so it is builders' rubble type material and clean fill. I think there has been a question on that through the planning and environment committee and it has taken us a number of years to get that data out of the operator, which we have now done and reported that to that particular committee previously.

MRS DUNNE: But it is not reported in this indicator?

Mr Horsey: No, because it is not a government facility.

Mr Hargreaves: It should not be. It is not a government facility.

THE CHAIR: It is commonwealth.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. Well, in that case, the figure to landfill is running at about 200,000 tonnes; is that right?

Mr Horsey: Correct, yes.

MRS DUNNE: And it is essentially flatlining. We have to add to that another 80,000 tonnes to the private landfill.

Mr Horsey: If you look at all landfill across the territory, that would be correct, yes.

MRS DUNNE: Yes. And do we have any indication, Mr Horsey, for how long Canberra Concrete Recyclers have been collecting that quantum of garbage at that site? It is very hard to really measure our total territory achievement against the indicator if we are not measuring about 30 per cent of stuff that is going to landfill.

Mr Horsey: Sure.

THE CHAIR: Because it is not ours; it is the commonwealth's.

MRS DUNNE: No, it is not; it is ours. It is produced in our city, on building sites, things like that, and it is going to landfill.

Mr Hargreaves: The point Mrs Dunne makes I think is taken very well. There are

two ways that we need to look at this. The first one is to measure the effectiveness of the government operations and the areas for which we can be held accountable, and the other one is: what is the community of Canberra doing about the totality of reducing waste to landfill? I accept both of those.

I only say to the committee that we are happy to do a discussion around that, around our initiatives to encourage people to recycle and reuse and things like that. But I would ask the committee to understand that, when it comes to being responsible and held accountable for achievements, it is only those that are in these indicators here that we can be held accountable for. But I accept the fact that what you are achieving to understand is a valid thing.

MRS DUNNE: Can I ask that Mr Horsey or someone provide to the committee on notice the information about how much goes to the private landfill and how long have you been collecting that information, or how much intelligence do you have about what the amount of stuff going to landfill at that site has been in the past?

Mr Horsey: I can answer that now if you like—

MRS DUNNE: Okay.

Mr Horsey: and probably some other information that is worth providing. I think through the P&E committee request we had sought, through writing to Canberra Concrete Recyclers, that data over a number of years. That was not forthcoming from the company. It was 2007 when we first acquired any information from them. They wrote back to us in a general sense and said that they were putting in approximately 80,000 per annum and had done over the last four years. So that is the best information that we have been able to glean from them. I do not know whether the Environment Protection Agency has any other information. ACT NOWaste does not have access to that for privacy reasons because that would be under an authorisation.

MRS DUNNE: Okay. I can take that up with the minister tomorrow.

Mr Horsey: The other issue that is worth noting is that we have had recent discussions with Canberra Concrete Recycling, the commonwealth and the EPA in relation to the inert land-filling at that site. ACT NOWaste has been concerned about that for some time because it interferes with our pricing strategy of trying to achieve the true cost of waste to landfill and then have other resource recovery businesses come in and accept waste materials cheaper than what we are putting it in to landfill for. Pialligo has always undercut that price. Therefore, there has been a leak in the system across to an inert landfill.

The EPA, I am aware, are set to issue an environmental authorisation in which the inert landfill activities should cease around September of this year, and I know Canberra Concrete Recyclers—we have been having discussions with them—are looking at moving into mixed waste processing rather than burying that material. So, rather than it going in a hole in the ground on that site as part of a remediation project, it will be processed and those materials will be recovered, and hopefully that will give us a significant lift in our resource recovery figures.

MRS DUNNE: I think I had better watch the space.

THE CHAIR: Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thanks, chair. Minister, my question relates to budget paper 5, page 63, and some funding there for a new landfill for the ACT. Can you give us some information about plans for the development of this new landfill and the rehabilitation of any old landfill facilities?

Mr Hargreaves: The government will spend a total of \$2 million to progress planning for the future waste infrastructure, including planning for replacement landfill to the current disposal cell in use at Mugga Lane, carrying out a feasibility study for the construction of additional regional recycling drop-off facilities to allow businesses access to free recycling services. Two key projects for the rehabilitation of the west Belconnen landfill facility that ceased operation in 2002 will commence with the rehabilitation of the sullage pits and the old soil borrow pit to begin.

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, what is a borrow pit?

Mr Hargreaves: Where you borrow. You get one hole over here, right? You have to dig up the sand from somewhere, don't you?

MRS DUNNE: Are you having a lend of me?

Mr Hargreaves: You have got a pile of dirt over here, so you have to dig another hole to put that dirt in.

MRS DUNNE: You are having a lend of me.

THE CHAIR: No.

Mr Hargreaves: And then you have got another pile of dirt. No, Mr Horsey can give you that.

MRS DUNNE: What is a borrow pit, Mr Horsey?

Mr Horsey: In running the operations of the landfill we have to put in a whole lot of soil to cover the waste at the end of a day—intermediate cover, roads, benching platforms et cetera—and then ultimately cap the landfill. That material comes out of a borrow pit, or think of it like a quarry if you like. We have pulled that material out, there is a quarry type pit sitting there and whenever it rains we get a significant amount of sediment that goes in our water management system and has to be treated so that it does not go down into the river.

We are required by the EPA to rehabilitate the entire site. Part of that is this borrow pit. So we would be looking to fill that borrow pit back up with soil material and we are looking to create some synergies between this rehabilitation project, future rehabilitation of the site in terms of future capping requirements—so we are hoping to glean off any topsoil that might be usable, any clay materials or any rock aggregates that might be usable in the process, making any future rehabilitation cheaper for the

territory and also providing a disposal for the surplus clean fill that is operating in the development industry in Canberra. So I think the project provides a range of benefits.

Mr Hargreaves: So basically you are borrowing sand out of one hole and filling up another.

MRS DUNNE: So he was not actually having a lend of me. How big is the hole?

Mr Horsey: Good question. I do not know at the moment. In fact, I think today we have just engaged a survey company to go out and survey that for us.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt, you had a supplementary.

MR PRATT: Yes. Minister, on page 278, BP4, strategic indicator No 4, clearly the performance graphs for landfill are showing pretty much flatlining in terms of the density to population increase and—

THE CHAIR: I think we asked that question before.

MR PRATT: No, I just checked. I was on the phone in fact when Mrs Dunne asked a question, but I have just checked with her. So are we on target for the no waste by 2010? What percentage of the performance indicators do we have to go—

Mr Hargreaves: I will get Mr Horsey to give you some percentages on the various types. Mr Pratt, you will have heard me speak over the last number of years about Towards NOWaste 2010. That came about as a result of conversations at an international conference at, I think, the Heritage Motel in Narrabundah, not long after I had become minister, where international people came to talk to us about what constituted no waste in their particular jurisdictions. Essentially, internationally, we regard about five per cent to actually constitute no waste because we have—

MR PRATT: Five per cent?

Mr Hargreaves: Something of that order, yes. There will always be certain items in transit. There will always be certain items like products with heavy metals in them which require a different treatment. In the ACT, for example, probably 70 per cent of our public housing premises have undisturbed asbestos in them in one form or another and that needs to be treated in a certain way until technology can take care of that.

MR PRATT: Are we on track to—

Mr Hargreaves: Hang on. The issue about the track bit is that you have got to separate it into the groups. There is domestic waste, there is construction and demolition waste and then there is the commercial waste. Each of them has different achievements because each of them has embraced recovery, reuse and recycling to a different degree. I will ask Mr Horsey to address that for you.

MR PRATT: Perhaps you could focus on the household general—

Mr Hargreaves: Well yes, we are on track.

MR PRATT: Mr Horsey, can you fill out that answer?

Mr Horsey: In relation to municipal waste, or household waste, there is approximately 200,000 tonnes of waste going to landfill. The indicator does show that that has increased marginally, and we anticipated that, I guess. From the household sector, the kerbside recycling is certainly going well. We are getting good recovery rates out of that.

There is still around 55,000 tonnes of kerbside collected material going to landfill and about 30,000 tonnes coming in through the transfer stations. That is material that we are currently targeting in terms of resource recovery through the new Mugga Lane contracts. I think we are achieving about 30 per cent resource recovery out of the transfer station at Mugga Lane. We would anticipate that that percentage should be driven up, hopefully to about 50 per cent.

In terms of the broader question of where we are at in terms of 2010 and time frames in terms of reduction, we have not yet got a decision in terms of an organics processing facility. We have talked in the past in this committee about alternative waste treatment technologies. Previously, we have stated that there are significant risks around those. We are currently doing a review—it has been put on the record before—around the no waste strategy, how far we can go, the time frames in which we can do that and what the costs would be for those various strategies to get there. That review is in its final stages. It has been quite complex, particularly in terms of getting proper economic assessments on the various—

MR PRATT: Sorry, can I interrupt? Review of exactly what? I just missed it.

Mr Horsey: There is a review basically of no waste by 2010.

MR PRATT: Sorry. Were you talking about the organics component of that or the entire—

Mr Horsey: No, the entire review. Effectively, what the review is doing is looking at options for going forward based on where we are at now. Literally we are looking at what options there are and what strategies come under each of those options, costing those options, and looking at whether they are achievable. That comes back to one of these key questions around the organics and the risk of AWTs and so forth.

MR PRATT: What is your assessment of our capacity to continue on this current track in terms of space available in the ACT if we do not get to the point where we are able to recycle a significant amount of what we are currently dumping?

Mr Hargreaves: It is a point we need to take in the context of that. It is a very good question and people need to know the answer. Through the work that ACT NOWaste has done over the years, we have had significant achievements with the construction and demolition industry, significant achievement in domestic reuse, recover and recycle, and significant work in the schools around paper recycling and things like that. But there is a big challenge to us in the softer industries and the commercial world, in particular in things like packaging.

Packaging is the biggest bane of our life at the moment. We are signatories to the national packaging covenant. We have significant education and different approaches to industry, trying to get them to do this. They are not coming on board as quickly as we would like. This is a nationwide problem. We have the keep Australia beautiful campaign, tidy towns and all those sorts of things. Every time we go to one of those we get the same message. Every time the keep Australia beautiful people come to town they tell us the same message; it is right around the country.

It is people in the commercial world and in the retail sector who are not recycling and reusing the way they should. There is a company out at Fyshwick, REECO, which I think recycles something like 98 to 99 per cent of everything that goes through, including the packaging. We are trying to get other people to follow their lead. ANU is doing some brilliant things around this. We are trying to get other people to follow their lead. Short of—

MR PRATT: Are you talking in terms of putrescibles with ANU?

Mr Hargreaves: Putrescibles is one. We gave them an award a couple of years ago on the treatment of their organics. It is a case of them taking that from the experimental into the commercial. It was ANUgreen that actually did it. They got a silver award, if my memory serves me correctly.

MR PRATT: How confident are you that we will get to that 2010 goal? What can-

Mr Hargreaves: I do not think—

MR PRATT: I heard Mr Horsey say that that is still being reviewed.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

MR PRATT: What is your confidence on this?

Mr Hargreaves: I am fairly confident that we will go very close in the domestic. I am pretty sure we will not go anywhere near it in terms of the retail.

DR FOSKEY: Can I follow up with some supplementaries?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: A few days ago we had Chris Peters here from the chamber of commerce. He was lamenting the demise of the waste advisory committee and the recycling advisory committee. I am not sure if those are the proper titles, but it is certainly what they did.

MR GENTLEMAN: NOWaste committee.

DR FOSKEY: The NOWaste advisory committee, which apparently died about two years ago. He says that this is a great loss to business. I expect that it was one of the advisory committees that went with that functional review in 2006. It is of great

concern. Frankly, it is good to hear there are still aspirational—I think you used that word yourself—aims around no waste by 2010 when there are so clearly quite a number of things that could be done to kick it on. Perhaps those are going to be pre-election announcements; I do not know. Anyway, what has happened to those advisory committees and are they going to be reinstated given the fact that they are lamented?

Mr Hargreaves: It needs to have more than just the lament to have something reinstated, but I will get Mr Horsey to answer that question.

Mr Horsey: In the past we have had an ACT industry waste forum where we have had various members such as the chamber of commerce, ANU and a range of other people come along and attend and sit on that forum. Effectively, the Waste Minimisation Act requires us to consult and have industry involvement in ACT-wide waste policy development and implementation. That forum was to serve that purpose.

Unfortunately, the forum died a very slow death in terms of attendance of the stakeholders. We were convening those forums on a quarterly basis. We had great difficulty in attracting the stakeholders that had said they wanted to come to those forums, be involved and participate to attend in those meetings. I can assure you that I personally gave my best efforts to reinvigorate that forum to make sure that the agendas and the topics discussed there—that industry had ample opportunity to be involved in policy development and knowing where we were at with implementing the no waste strategy. Unfortunately, the attendance did not bounce back; therefore we ceased holding that. We would be happy to reinvigorate those.

DR FOSKEY: Did you do a lot of work to try and reactive that forum?

THE CHAIR: I think that is what he just said.

Mr Horsey: Indeed, we did. I had personal discussions with Chris Peters around things we could do to get those types of people to come along. As I said, we tried a whole raft of strategies to try and reinvigorate that forum.

DR FOSKEY: The suggestion that Mr Peters made the other day is this:

I am not suggesting we need to go back to the stage of meetings of such frequency that used to occur—

he said they used to occur monthly—

but I think we do need to reinstate some mechanism of consultation. It has not been happening. So a dedicated officer would be useful to certainly work with the business community to improve waste recycling and waste elimination, but I think that is the second stage. The first stage is to get the consultation process back running to start with.

So what is happening to get that consultation stage running?

Mr Hargreaves: I am not interested in reconstituting another gabfest where people were just not going to engage.

DR FOSKEY: The question is: what will you do to get consultation—

Mr Hargreaves: I am talking about this body. I am not going to introduce another chat-fest where people come into a room, have a free cup of coffee and a bickie and then go away. And then, one by one, they drop away because they have a lack of commitment to the product.

I appreciate—Dr Foskey, I think we share this—the need to get these people engaged and get them moving. Chris has put enormous amounts of efforts into these individuals, but they are not engaging. We pay respect to Chris Peters’s commitment to this sort of thing. Often with these sorts of things they know no bounds, and I respect that. But you cannot keep other people engaged. I am not going to have another forum.

We will think of other ways of doing it. He suggested, for example, that we could have a dedicated officer. We have got ACT NOWaste dedicated to this. Our biggest challenge—I have said this in the chamber and outside—at the moment is those soft industries, the retail sector and the commercial sector. We have got specific awards; we have people that go around to canvass nominations for this. We have consultancies in ACT NOWaste that go to businesses and say, “Have you thought about this, that and the other?” I believe the engagement is about as effective as we can get it at the moment. The introduction of a forum which died a natural death is not going to cut it.

If we found, for example, that there was an interest on the part of four or five significant players in this town who wanted to do something along that line, we would certainly engage them in the formal process; we would be happy to do that. But until we see a couple of really significant captains of industry who want to go down that track I am not going to have NOWaste waste their time and energies providing a secretariat to a committee which is redundant.

DR FOSKEY: But providing leadership?

Mr Hargreaves: They do that already. NOWaste has provided significant leadership in this town and we are leading the way in many of the other areas of our recycling and reuse; domestic is the one in point. Our construction and demolition waste—they have done it again. The MRF down at the Mugga Lane landfill is a significant initiative that is pushed. Our education process at the MRF is second to none. Our activities around schools, universities and going around Civic, and our engagement with people like City Heart and Canberra CBD Ltd, know no bounds. That leadership is intact. These other folks out there, though, in the retail and the commercial area, are not picking it up as quickly as they could.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt, you have a supplementary?

DR FOSKEY: Just in relation to the review, I have a question on notice that I asked. I have got your answer here. It says that the review will be complete by the end of this month, May, and that there will be a consultation process held prior to finalisation of the future waste minimisation policy in Australia.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: I am just interested in the time line for that, please.

Mr Hargreaves: Once the information is in at the end of May, it will have to be synthesised. It will take us a few weeks to do that. We have not made decisions about the length of time the discussion with the community and stakeholders will take, but I also need to take the review and the proposal on the way forward to cabinet; it has to get on the cabinet agenda.

I have to just put this to you, though: this is a genuine “let’s go forward together” bid. The Canberra community is doing great things. In most parts of our recycling and resource recovery initiatives, they are doing great things. This strategy has been in place now for quite a long time and it has been revisited. Now is the time to go back and have an engagement with these people—and not only those people who are interested in the issue. I know, for example, that the Greens are interested; I know that the ANU is interested. But we need to do it widely. I have not got a time line yet on that one.

MR PRATT: If you got that done before this inquiry winds up, would you table it?

Mr Hargreaves: If I get what?

MR PRATT: If the review is done and dusted, would you table it?

Mr Hargreaves: I cannot undertake to do that; it has not been to cabinet, and it will have to go to cabinet. I cannot say no or yes to it; I cannot do that. If it is going to go to cabinet, I cannot table it prior to its going to cabinet. Anybody who has been in cabinet would know that.

THE CHAIR: We can go to the office of transport, 1.2.

Mr Hargreaves: And anybody that is not ever going to get into cabinet need not bother worrying about it.

DR FOSKEY: We look forward to your memoirs, Mr Hargreaves.

Mr Hargreaves: It will not be a very thick volume, Dr Foskey.

THE CHAIR: Questions on 1.2, Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: On page 67 of budget paper 5 at the top of the page, it refers to a “Temporary Car Park within Commonwealth Avenue Western Loops” feasibility study.

Mr Hargreaves: Sorry, you are going a little too quickly for me, Mr Smyth, which is unusual.

MR SMYTH: What is the intention here? How will people access and egress the loops?

Mr Hargreaves: That is why the feasibility study is being done. On that mud map sort of thing, you can see how people would come around the loop as we do when we come to it—you might; I do not—and you can actually get in there. There are exits—entries and egress—but amateur stuff. We need to do a proper feasibility study to see whether it can be done. Additionally, you might know that the whole thing is on a slope. It is a significant slope. That needs to be looked at.

This is not a commitment to doing it; this is a commitment to doing a feasibility study. It is an idea which was floated which may have some merit, so we decided to put some money into doing a technical feasibility on it. When the feasibility is done, we will see how it goes.

MR SMYTH: I am not sure where it fits in, but the other question would be this. There is some money to shift the model railway—I am not sure which part of the department it fits in—from where it is at the Causeway. Where is it going to?

Mr Hargreaves: It should be part of the planning process. It is linked in with the Eastlake development process.

MR SMYTH: It is in your portfolio?

Mr Hargreaves: It is within TAMS, but it is not mine.

MR SMYTH: So it is planning.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. But also remember that it is linked in with the Eastlake development. We want to make sure that people appreciate that the railway is not being neglected. It is taken into account early in the process so that we can make sure it is relocated properly.

MR GENTLEMAN: Staying on track?

Mr Hargreaves: Staying on track, yes.

THE CHAIR: It is being fixed down the line.

Mr Hargreaves: I am advised that it is part of tourism, so Mr Barr is the right person to ask.

THE CHAIR: Any more questions from this area?

MR PRATT: 1.2? Yes. Minister, I want to ask you questions about the green lane—on-road cycle lane system—against the pathways program.

Mr Hargreaves: They are two separate issues.

MR PRATT: On Thursday, Friday and this last Monday, I have had incidents reported to me of near accidents on both Adelaide Avenue and Commonwealth Avenue. In one case a motorist was at fault and on the other two occasions nobody at

all was at fault. Minister, you have told me before that you quite support that concept. Have you had a rethink in terms of—

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, I have had a rethink, Mr Pratt. I think it is a wonderful process and we are going to push ahead with it.

MR PRATT: You will push ahead with it?

Mr Hargreaves: Absolutely.

MR PRATT: You are not concerned about the NRMA's safety concerns for both drivers and cyclists?

Mr Hargreaves: The NRMA have rethought. I suggest you go back and have another chat with them.

MR PRATT: I have.

MR GENTLEMAN: What does the cyclists lobby feel about the green lane initiatives?

Mr Hargreaves: If I get congratulated by the cycling lobby, I get congratulated on the on-road cycle path system. One of the things that detractors forget is what the case was before that. We had people on the main carriageway—let us use Adelaide Avenue as an example—and suffering significant road rage because they were holding up the traffic. Now that these people have got their own lane, the traffic is flowing more freely. The evidence that the detractors throw around the place of massive pieces of road rage is not substantiated by reports. Nobody has been able to show me any growth in it, but we can show growth in lack of fatalities—not one fatality on these on-road cycle lanes. Is there one coming?

MS MacDONALD: I am just touching wood.

MR PRATT: I share Ms MacDonald's concerns—touching wood.

Mr Hargreaves: The alternative is for us to eliminate them. The alternative is to put the cyclists back in the middle of the road again. I was in Christchurch at a meeting of the ministerial council on small business just the other day, and do you know where I saw the cycle path, Madam Chair? Right in the middle of the road. There was a green lane in the middle of the road, with vehicles going in different directions on either side of the green lane. It works a treat.

MS MacDONALD: On that issue, I do not want people to misconstrue my comment. I am a supporter of the green bits which indicate where there is an intersection going across, which I understand is to make motorists and cyclists aware that they both need to be cautious of each other, and I am supportive of the on-road cycle paths. I was just touching wood because accidents, unfortunately, happen.

With the on-road cycle paths, there has been frustration in the past. Personally, as a motorist, I have had concerns at times with some cyclists going right on the edge of

the lane. I think part of the reason they do that at times is because often after a motor accident there is glass on the road. My question is: how often do you clean up and ensure that there is no glass in order to make sure that does not happen? What sorts of information or education campaigns are done with cyclists, because going too close to the cars is very dangerous.

Mr Hargreaves: I will pick up that one and ask Mr Gill to talk about the cleaning of the roads. We have regular discussions with people like Pedal Power. Pedal Power have incredible numbers of people; they do great surveys for us, they do educational programs, they do rider education and rider outings. They talk about safety as being paramount, and we trust them to pass out the message, along with our education in schools.

Interestingly, the letter in the *Canberra Times* got it right. There was a survey done of motorists and they were asked, "How many times have you seen a cyclist disobey the road rules?" Seventy per cent of people said, "I've observed it." The question was then put, "How many times have you seen a motorist disobey the road rules?" and the response was 100 per cent. So we need to look at it in a certain perspective. Cycle lanes are proceeding throughout the world; it is inexorable. We have to get people trained in using them as their haven.

MR PRATT: But they need to be safe, minister.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, I know, but sticking them in the middle of a highway is definitely not the right way to go.

MR SMYTH: But you just said it worked perfectly well in New Zealand.

Mr Gill: In relation to the question about sweeping of roads, main roads are swept every month, but any specific inquiry can be directed through Canberra Connect and can be responded to in a very short time frame.

On the more general question about on-road cycling lanes, they are not unique to the ACT; they are throughout Australia and, indeed, throughout the world. In conjunction with the NRMA and Pedal Power, we recently conducted an audit of the Northbourne Avenue and Adelaide Avenue on-road cycle lane. We got an external consultant to review it, and it stacked up pretty well from a safety point of view, in comparison with how the design was implemented. We had some independent advice that has been looked at by NRMA Motoring and Services, Pedal Power and the department. That documented audit basically confirms that what we are doing is good practice and, indeed, that the territory is leading the practice in this regard.

MR PRATT: Can you table that, minister?

Mr Gill: We can table it when it is finalised.

Mr Hargreaves: The boss has spoken.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, I attended the Ride of Silence on the weekend. Dr Foskey actually took part in the ride.

Mr Hargreaves: That would have been a sight for sore eyes!

DR FOSKEY: And I remained silent.

Mr Hargreaves: I do not believe that for a second.

MR GENTLEMAN: The main thing that the cyclists wanted to do with that ride was to raise awareness of cycling and also, of course, that accidents that happen. They wanted to try and find ways of making motorists more aware, in the same way as the NRMA want to raise awareness about motorcyclists. It appears that if you are in a car you view either cyclists or motorcyclists as a lesser danger and you do not have that awareness. What are you doing to try and raise that awareness in the motoring community?

Mr Hargreaves: One of the issues, particularly with Pedal Power, is that we have certain events during the year at which we draw attention to the issue. I have attended heaps of them myself. I applaud members for going out on this recent ride, too. We do occasional radio pieces and occasional advertisements in the papers. It is an integral part of learning how to drive as well. The L platers and the P platers are made aware of this issue in our driver training programs.

Interestingly, inside a car, I was told just yesterday that you are more acutely aware of what is going on around you even though you are in a tin box and you are safe. When you are on a bike, the traffic noise and other noise around you militates against the awareness. So cyclists need to be a little bit more aware of what is going on around them than motorists—not because the motorists are in a bigger and more threatening vehicle but because the cyclists can't hear what is going on. Often their equipment is such that they do not have wrap-around vision like you do in a motor car.

We are aware of these sorts of things. I can only reiterate that we are not the fount of all wisdom on this. We actually defer significantly to experts like Pedal Power. When we talk about motorcycle riding regimes, we talk to the Motorcycle Riders Association. Peter and Robyn Major, for example, have come up with a whole heap of initiatives that we have picked up, and we are grateful to them. The same thing applies with cyclists. We listen to Tony Shields and his committee, and I speak to them probably about once every six weeks.

MR GENTLEMAN: There are a growing number of people involved. I think it was said on the weekend that, for every motor vehicle, something like three or four cycles are bought.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, I appreciate that. Another thing that we need to understand is that there are two reasons for people to jump on a bike. One is for recreation and the other is for commuting. Our cycle paths and shared paths are fantastic. Okay, there is a certain amount of maintenance that we can do on them; I accept that. But they are a fantastic network and we are expanding that network. We also need to understand that those on-road ones are about getting people out of their cars and onto bikes, in order to (1) look after the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and (2) stop them having heart attacks when they get to 60.

DR FOSKEY: Given the tremendous support for cycling, I have to say that I am a little concerned that the Liberals tend to want to drag it down every time we meet on these issues. But in the budget, I am not sure that I see that commitment matched with dollars. I note that the Cotter Road cycle connection is being funded. There may be others; I would love to hear about them. There seems to be only one new park 'n ride, and that is at Mawson, planned for the next four years, and one bus priority lane. Where is the dollar commitment to back up what you just said about getting more people out on bikes?

Mr Hargreaves: Firstly, you have to understand that the budget contains additional funding; it is not our base funding. We have initiatives in the base funding about the extension of bike paths. So you will not actually see it pop up as a labelled initiative because once one part of the path is completed the same money is rolled along as a total program. There will be more cycle paths and more maintenance done as the other works are done. So there is that in our base.

In the context of support for cycling, I know that you will congratulate the government on its bike racks initiative. We have put the things on the buses, and every time we buy a bus they will have bike racks put on them. Ultimately, when we have turned the total fleet over, you will have them on every single bus in town. There is also the fact that you do not have to pay for your bus ride if you stick your bike on the front. We need to put these things in context, and there are the incremental bits. None of these things have been done before. We have the money there to provide the park 'n ride at Mawson. We are also looking at a facility, possibly to pop up in Mitchell, but that is still in the “looking at” stage.

I am advised that with the park 'n rides you have got to have some place to store your bike. Not long ago, in Civic, we had some bike storage containers over in East Row and Mort Street, and they were not favoured by the AFP because of risks in terrorist events. You do not put those sorts of things in places where people gather in their masses.

DR FOSKEY: Masses of people?

Mr Hargreaves: You do in a bus interchange, let me tell you, and that is where it was. When I went to New Zealand some months ago, on a completely different issue, I noticed that they have bus transit stations way out in the suburbs, and that is where the people have their bikes stored. They go to this bus station, store them in a container there and then take the bus in to town to do their work. They take the bus out, hop on their bike and go home. That is the way we would look at the Mawson facility happening.

DR FOSKEY: By the way, I notice that the new ACTION bus network map does not have the park 'n ride and cycle locker facilities on it.

Mr Hargreaves: It will not until they are actually done. They are not part of the ACTION network at the moment.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth, do you have a question?

Mr Hargreaves: Before we go on, I would like to say thanks very much to Dr Foskey for pointing this out. We will fold that into the information when we go to the next stage of the development because I think that is a very good call. Maybe we have been concentrating on the cyclist end of it and not on the bus end of it, and maybe not on both ends of it. So I take the point, and we will fold that into our next lot of thinking on it.

DR FOSKEY: Integrated transport, here we come.

Mr Hargreaves: Watch this space.

MR SMYTH: How many vehicles are registered in the ACT?

Mr Hargreaves: I will have to take it on notice. As at 30 June?

Ms Greenland: I cannot give you a precise number, but it is approximately 250,000.

MR SMYTH: I notice on page 285 in accountability indicators “n” and “o” that we are moving away from a number per 10,000 to just a total number of inspections. There should have been 56,000 this year, and your output now is 56,000. Why did we not achieve the target this year? Why did it drop from 2,240 to 1,800 per 10,000?

Ms Greenland: That is predominantly because the vehicle inspection team contributed to assisting with the equine flu emergency. Essentially one of the people who was in the very small inspection team was taken off line for some months to assist with that. That was one of the major contributors to that shortfall and not reaching the target.

MR SMYTH: The other issue would be roadside random drug testing. Is there money in the budget for the consultation and the study that you are doing?

Mr Hargreaves: That will be borne within the department.

MR SMYTH: Sorry?

Mr Hargreaves: There is not money in the budget for that; we will absorb that cost. It is not a very dear consultation process, remembering that the forum part of the consultation will be put on by the University of Canberra anyway. That has happened, and invitations have gone out today.

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Following on from that, minister, given that the government’s own DUS website, as it was then called in November 2004, indicated a growing concern about drug-affected driving in the ACT while other jurisdictions were already trialling or even implementing programs, why have we continued to drag the chain on introducing random roadside drug testing?

Mr Hargreaves: Partly for the reason that there was no consistency in the

jurisdictions in their approach. For example, two years ago I think you might have read that Victoria decided to introduce their regime, and they were testing for three drugs. And at the time, I can recall saying that I was concerned that testing for those three only was a bit limiting. You could assume that it was really just being used as a method of detecting people using drugs. I was not sure that the information coming our way on the pharmacology of all this sort of thing was very robust anyway.

When you talk about the length of time that cannabis stays in your system, if you take a zero-tolerance approach—I am not saying that is not the way to go—then is it true that the presence of the drug two weeks after taking it still has an effect on driving ability at all? There is suspicion that it does, so that was something that needed addressing.

You also need to appreciate that Tasmania were testing for 13 different drugs, I think. Other jurisdictions were adopting a zero-tolerance perspective, and some were saying that with other drugs, like alcohol, there is a certain amount of tolerance which is okay. We have all agreed that 0.08 needed to come back to 0.05, but it is still 0.05; you still can have as an adult some trace of that drug in your system.

Now with cannabis, I think one jurisdiction believed that that is possible to calibrate. That had not been tested. In my view, there had not been any sustained and robust academic evaluation of the process, and there had not been any test cases at law to make sure that the methodology of sample collection and testing was sufficient to achieve a conviction. Indeed, somebody challenged a court ruling—I think it was in Victoria—and it was successful.

What I wanted to do was, embracing the notion that driving while under the influence of a drug is something we need to address and to stop, make sure that all of these regimes were working. The other thing I wanted to make sure of was that this was regarded by the community as a road safety initiative and not an initiative to stop people taking drugs. We needed to make sure that the detection and penalty regimes were written up in law, and that the offence is driving under the influence of something rather than the offence being having drugs in your system. We needed to see that tested at law.

What happened was that after a certain amount of time with the other jurisdictions in their different ways having a go, the University of Canberra did do an academically robust investigation and concluded that we are sufficiently down the track now for the ACT to introduce some sort of legislation. The government has committed to introducing legislation to make it illegal to drive under the influence of drugs. We are leaning towards the same three that Victoria has.

We have got to be careful that we are not inconsistent with New South Wales, and we need to have the community have their say on which is more dangerous, if you want—driving under the influence of pseudoephedrine, which is available over the counter, or driving with a minute concentration of cannabis in your system because it was two weeks earlier that you took it.

I want this to be a road safety initiative; I absolutely want it to be a road safety initiative. Have I dragged the chain? I do not think so. Have I been cautious? Yes, I do

think so, and I think rightly so.

MR PRATT: What is the worst risk here—testing somebody who may or may not be on drugs and who may have to go through a difficult matter of time to confirm exactly what their intentions and actions were, or the danger of the 93 per cent of motorists who drive safely being involved in an accident by somebody who was drug affected?

DR FOSKEY: We are going to have this debate in the Assembly soon.

Mr Hargreaves: I think that is a simplistic approach to it, and this is my reason for saying that. I believe there is a probability that there are more people on the road who are driving when they should not be because their attention is being impaired by the taking of prescription drugs or over-the-counter drugs than ever there are with people taking illegal drugs. I am concerned that we are looking at a testing regime for cannabis, ice and ecstasy when there is a cocktail of other drugs you can take which will impair your driving ability as well. I have not been satisfied until recently that merely identifying those three drugs is going to have a material effect on driving safety in the ACT when we are not addressing the other ones in concert.

MR PRATT: You said before that the other states had had difficulties with their trials, that they were trying to work out the range of drugs and that each jurisdiction was different. But the fact is, minister, they were at least doing trials and putting something on the road, whereas the ACT has sat back and has not done so. The AAMI research of 2005 showed that 10 per cent of motorists questioned said they had driven under the influence of illegal substances, not necessarily medicines either, and 12 per cent admitted to driving after using marijuana, cocaine or ecstasy. Those facts were known three years ago. Given that, we should be well down the track, surely.

Mr Hargreaves: I do not accept that, and I do not accept it for this reason—

MR PRATT: You do not accept that survey?

Mr Hargreaves: If you just hold your water instead of getting it tested we can go down that track. I do not accept it for this reason: the other jurisdictions were actually testing it and actually piloting it. The Victorians were piloting it when we looked at it, and I said that I wanted to see whether or not we could have a regime which stops people from driving with pseudoephedrine, No Doz or wake-me-up pills in their systems. I wanted to see if ever that was going to be checked across the country as well.

I also wanted to see that the legislation being put down did not offend against the privacy of somebody. You can shake your head until it falls off, Mr Pratt. There is a simple fact: if you take a blood alcohol concentration test, you blow into a tube; if you are talking about a roadside drug test, you are talking about saliva, blood or urine. I do not know how the saliva gets in there, that may be non-invasive, but the other two are physically invasive, and we need to make sure that the processes that are undertaken to take those samples are robust in court. It is pointless us having a roadside drug testing regime which falls over the minute it gets to court.

MR PRATT: Is it not true, minister—

DR FOSKEY: I am concerned—

MR PRATT: Is it not true, minister, that innocent people have been killed by drug-affected drivers in the ACT, and the drug affected drivers—

DR FOSKEY: It is on the table in the Assembly, Mr Pratt.

MR PRATT: Dr Foskey, you just sort of relax there, will you?

DR FOSKEY: There are other issues and more—

Mr Hargreaves: Do not take a Bex and have a lie down; you will get done for roadside drug testing.

MR PRATT: Is it not true that drug-affected drivers drive undeterred in the ACT? Couple that with the fact that there have been some innocent people killed by drug affected drivers, is it not true, therefore, that you do not have a duty-of-care policy in place?

Mr Hargreaves: Firstly, I reject your hysterical notion about a duty-of-care policy on the basis that we have legislation and penalties in place at the moment. You can be pinged for driving under the influence of drugs now, and that has been the case for decades.

MR PRATT: Yes, but you cannot be random tested.

Mr Hargreaves: If you are going to be hysterical, at least put your facts together so you do not look really stupid, because you are doing a good job of it at the moment.

MR PRATT: Random testing deters.

THE CHAIR: I think we need to move on. We will go—

DR FOSKEY: I think we do, too. Now we have spent 15 minutes on that, and there are so many questions about transport.

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey.

MRS DUNNE: I have got a question, Madam Chair.

THE CHAIR: We will go to other questions, but there is another output class yet, which is land management, so we cannot spend too much longer on this.

DR FOSKEY: Well, you could spend 20 minutes on that one.

MRS DUNNE: I have another question, Madam Chair, on this output class.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MRS DUNNE: I do not know whether I dare go into the taxi area.

Mr Hargreaves: I am happy to do that.

MRS DUNNE: First of all, could someone remind me what are the required standards for waiting times for taxis?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes happy to do that, Mrs Dunne.

Ms Greenland: The required standards for taxis are for non-peak and peak times, and they differ. The standards for peak times are that 85 per cent of hirings have to be met within 18 minutes and 95 per cent of hirings have to be met within 30 minutes from the time that the taxi was booked for. For non-peak times, 85 per cent of hirings are to be met within 10 minutes and 95 per cent of hirings are to be met within 20 minutes of the booked time. So that is what the standards are.

MRS DUNNE: So that 99 per cent is 99 per cent of 85 or—

Ms Greenland: Of the 85, that is right.

MRS DUNNE: Fine, thank you. What is it for WATs?

Ms Greenland: It is the same, but the peak period is slightly different for WATs.

MRS DUNNE: So what happens about problems at ranks?

Mr Hargreaves: In what way?

MRS DUNNE: There is a problem at the airport with ranks. Are they picked up in the standard, because that is about—

Mr Hargreaves: Not on private property.

Ms Greenland: No, these are booked hirings.

MRS DUNNE: They are booked hirings?

Ms Greenland: The standards are for booked times.

MRS DUNNE: So we have no standards for rank and hail?

Mr Hargreaves: We cannot. We do not know.

MRS DUNNE: We do not know.

Mr Hargreaves: Also, we need to make a point about the airport one, which is the biggest problem child of them all. Really, this is private land and a private concern. It is private property. So it is within the wit of the industry and the airport management to get together and solve that problem, but it is not something—

MRS DUNNE: Sorry, before we—

Mr Hargreaves: I am not being defensive; I am just being explanatory. We cannot do it.

MRS DUNNE: Before we get to that issue, we do not actually have any—

Mr Hargreaves: So we cannot get information on it.

MRS DUNNE: We do not have any record of or any way of measuring the waits that people have for rank and hail?

Ms Greenland: No, there is no measurement taken.

Mr Hargreaves: No, none taken.

MRS DUNNE: Is that the case in other jurisdictions? I do envisage it would be difficult.

Ms Greenland: I am not aware of any other arrangements in other jurisdictions to do that. I guess it would take physical monitoring of some sort to actually look at what people were saying around a rank—

MRS DUNNE: I would like to move on to—

Mr Hargreaves: I would not want to do it.

MRS DUNNE: Yes, I appreciate there are difficulties. But moving on to the airport, I still get the impression, minister, that you are saying, “They’re two private businesses and I’m not doing anything about it.”

Mr Hargreaves: No, I just said they are two private businesses and the solution rests in their hands. We have conversations with both groups on a regular basis, trying to bring the two groups together, particularly at this time where the airport is looking at refurbishment and getting the whole funding sorted differently.

There is, however, the overriding issue and that is that the airport is a private concern; it is private land. We can only try to bring them together. We had our taxi forum to bring together business, the airport and the taxi industry to try to tackle a number of issues, one of which was the number of cabs in town, because the airport was saying there are not enough cabs going through. They reckon we needed something like 157 of the things. I disagreed with that. We did actually say we would go out to 50.

There was also the nature of the service out there. Do they have a commissionaire? We have then got two taxi networks disagreeing on the payment of the commissionaire. What we really need the community to understand, though, is that the taxi system is not a government-provided system.

MRS DUNNE: I understand that.

Mr Hargreaves: And all we can do is apply the standards and fine people if they do not achieve them at the end of the day.

MRS DUNNE: But the trouble is that you cannot fine them for not achieving a standard—

Mr Hargreaves: We do.

MRS DUNNE: Because there is no standard to measure about rank and hail.

Mr Hargreaves: No, we do not.

MRS DUNNE: If there is an hour and a half queue at the airport, it is too bad, so sad.

Mr Hargreaves: No. What we did do about that, though, recognising that there was something that we could do, was that we introduced demand-responsive transport so that if somebody, for example, wanted to operate a company to run a small-sized bus or something like that between Parliament House and the airport or airport and hotels and the Convention Centre, whatever you like, it was legally possible to do that. We encouraged industry to do that.

That was an initiative, in fact, that Aerial wanted us to do earlier in the piece, and nobody has really picked it up. The only people who are doing it, quite frankly, under the legislation, are Deane's Buslines that do the run from the airport into the city via the hotels.

MRS DUNNE: But on the issue of demand-responsive transport, some of the potential players have said they have run into difficulties; if they want to run a minibus it has to be wheelchair accessible because of the commonwealth disability guidelines. Ms Greenland is nodding. Is that the case?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

Ms Greenland: That is right, because the commonwealth legislation applies, yes.

Mr Hargreaves: The DDA, the Disability Discrimination Act.

MRS DUNNE: So that is one of the impediments. But as the minister responsible for regulating this—and you are one of the people who have a role in this—is there someone in government whose job it is to knock these people's heads together to try to get a solution?

Mr Hargreaves: The answer to that is that we cannot knock people's heads together. We can actually bring people together to have a sensible discussion on it. We need to understand how far the taxi industry in Canberra has moved over the last three or four years. We have increased the number of taxis on the road by 40 per cent. We have changed the nature of the leasing.

We had a ballot yesterday. There were five taxi licences taken up and they cost \$10,000 a year to lease. That has put \$16,000 a year into the operators' pocket from

day one. So the whole of the taxi industry has been overhauled and reformed. The only thing which remains, quite frankly, is an arrangement between one private sector industry, which is the taxi industry itself, and another one, which is the airport, to get that bit fixed.

We are fixing up the road out there; we have put more taxis on the road; with the wheelchair-accessible taxi system, we have got incentives galore out there for people to do the right thing; we have facilitated the introduction of a second network. I know Mr Smyth tried his best to do that when he was minister. It has actually happened now. So we need to look at it in that broader context.

I have had a number of taxi forums. The most recent one was to talk about the lack of the service and its effect on business, and the taxi industry got mightily offended and stormed out. That is bad luck for them. But industry was pointing out what needed to happen in terms of getting the service for their customers and clients. We do that on a fairly regular basis.

We also have fairly regular chats with players in the industry, and there are three. There is Aerial Consolidated Transport; there is the Cabxpress company; and then there is the Canberra Taxi Industry Association. The Taxi Industry Association's major players are the same as the major players in the Aerial group; Cabxpress are not members of that association at this point. We are encouraging them to become members of the association so that we can deal with it as an industry group. We have got conversations going on with all of those three business groups.

I talk to the Property Council, the Business Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry on this thing quite regularly. I talk to the Cabxpress people very regularly—either my officers or I, the same as Aerial. In fact, Ms Greenland's section would be in contact with somebody in the taxi industry daily. So we use as much influence as we have about our person.

MRS DUNNE: On notice, could you tell me how many taxis we have and what licences that they have?

Mr Hargreaves: The standard taxi system, not wheelchair-accessible taxis?

MRS DUNNE: Yes.

Mr Hargreaves: We started off three years ago with 217. They were perpetual plates. I want you to be quite clear about this. The next, we said we would put out two sets of 20. We did that. I think 10 of them were transferable but not perpetual plates. The difference between the two is that you own the perpetual plate; you can trade it as a commodity. The transferable plates meant that you could transfer to another person but not as an asset. In other words, I could transfer it to you but I could not sell it to you.

The remaining 10 of that first tranche were: if you could not operate the system you returned it to government, who then issued it out themselves. We did that as a transitional arrangement.

The next set of 20 we issued out were total transfer back to the government only, and all of those 20 were leased. They were leased out for six years for \$20,000 a year, as opposed to \$26,000 from the leases in the perpetuals.

Then we had that forum which said that there were not enough taxis on the road. We checked out the per capita one against similar sized cities around the country and determined that we needed about 56. I said that I would issue out 50 because it is a nice round figure, in two tranches of 25.

We then issued, in a ballot yesterday, the first of that 25. They were 20 of the standard ones, which are the six-year, \$20,000 a year lease, standard motor car. There were 103 applications for that ballot. The other five were for a conditional lease, and the condition is that they had to take the wheelchair and they had to take six or more people in them, to encourage people movement from the airport, for example, or from nightclubs—Nightlink, that kind of thing. There were 26 applicants interested in that ballot. They all went, and the reserve list has now been compiled.

In August, we will release another 25. We want to see what the marketplace has done on the conditional ones, the moving of six or more people in them. Remember that there is about a five to one ratio in both camps, both types of thing. Karen Greenland's area is going to do some work between now and August about whether or not we say to the marketplace, "There are 25 plates out here. You tell us what you want, as long as there is a minimum of five of them that can take six or greater." If there is, for example, a really significant interest out there we might say we will lose half of them, 10 of them, so that we can get more vehicles out there.

For the disability community, the standard wheelchair can be picked up by these people; electrical wheelchairs can be picked up by WATs; small-scale electrical wheelchairs can be picked up by the six-seaters perhaps. Those licences are leased out at \$10,000.

MRS DUNNE: The WATs?-

Mr Hargreaves: The conditional leases, yes. We have got the standard Commodore—that is, \$20,000 a year—so you are \$6,000 a year better off than leasing it in the private marketplace. You have got the conditional ones, which is six or more people plus wheelchair capability—that is, \$10,000—so you are \$16,000 better off. That compensates because it is a much dearer motor car and the modifications are worse.

Then you have got the wheelchair-accessible taxis. There are 26 of those out. Twenty-two now have actually taken up the licence, and we have got four coming online in the next month or two. So in the next month or two we will have the full fleet back on the road, at 26. They are charged out at \$1,000 a year, as a lease. They also receive the lift fee. It is \$10, I think, the lift fee, is it not? I think it went up to \$10 or it might be \$13 by now. The thing is that there is a significant lift fee. Around Christmas time, Christmas Eve, New Year's Eve, we actually put in a lot more incentive to get those vehicles back on the road, as you know.

By the time August comes, we will only be six short of having the same number of

taxis per 100,000 people as similar-sized cities like Wollongong, Newcastle, Geelong and those sized cities.

THE CHAIR: I am aware that there are some people who would like to ask transport questions. However, if they do there will be-

Mr Hargreaves: Would you like us to stay for a while?

THE CHAIR: Mr Hargreaves, that is not what I am going to say. I am going to say that people can make a choice. They can either ask questions for five minutes on land management or they can ask questions for five minutes more on transport. They can please themselves.

MR SMYTH: So when will we do land management?

MRS DUNNE: We are doing land management again with the Chief Minister tomorrow.

DR FOSKEY: Different bits.

MRS DUNNE: I have really only got ones for the Chief Minister.

THE CHAIR: That is fine. Does anyone have another transport question?

MR SMYTH: I have a question that I assumed was in 1.4 but I am not sure whether it is. On page 312 of budget paper 4 there is a transfer of assets to the National Capital Authority relating to the Griffin legacy project worth \$30 million. What were they?

Mr Hargreaves: I do not want to be held to this but I have a feeling that it is car parking. It was a car parking area, I think, but it is something that was an LDA transfer. I would refer you to the Chief Minister. It relates to roads—Constitution Avenue and that sort of thing. It is something for the Chief Minister's Department, through Treasury—

MR SMYTH: It is in your papers and it is a transfer out—

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, but the point is that—

MR SMYTH: It is a transport question.

Mr Hargreaves: The point is that TAMS is the asset holder of all road assets. The conversation with the NCA is usually conducted either through ACTPLA or through the LDA. So that is why I have referred you to the Chief Minister. You are seeing him tomorrow. We do not have anything to hide on it.

MR SMYTH: Do the parks and gardens depots come under output class 1.4?

Mr Hargreaves: I would not have a clue. I do not read the 1.4 bits.

MR SMYTH: It is the next output class. You are not aware of output class 1.4?

Mr Hargreaves: I do not carry the output class numbers around in my head, no. I am not an insomniac like other people. I do not read it—

THE CHAIR: Dr Foskey, do you have a last question on this?

DR FOSKEY: Yes. What kind of coordination is there between Nightlink, the seniors transport services, the community bus service, the wheelchair accessible taxis and taxis in general, and ACTION?

Mr Hargreaves: The Nightlink one is an Aerial initiative. The government is in partnership with the taxi company that is providing that service. It is not a government service. We are encouraging it and we are putting a lot of money into the process to make sure it works, but we are not the driver of it.

DR FOSKEY: Yes, I know; it is coordination.

Mr Hargreaves: The community bus service is a partnership initiative between the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services—the community services part—and ACTION. ACTION is providing the rolling stock—the six white buses. We are providing the bus, the running costs of the bus, the maintenance costs of the bus, rego, fuel et cetera, and the money for the bus driver. We are putting them out to community services so that they can respond to people who are socially isolated through disability, age or whatever you like. It is up to them as to how they do that. What was the other question?

DR FOSKEY: Wheelchair accessible taxis and ACTION.

Mr Hargreaves: Wheelchair accessible taxis and ACTION: there is no connection.

DR FOSKEY: So how do they work together?

Mr Hargreaves: They do not.

DR FOSKEY: Well, could they?

Mr Hargreaves: They do not in the sense that they are two different transport modes. They operate a common—

DR FOSKEY: Let us just go to taxis then.

Mr Hargreaves: Ordinary taxis are the same. The Office of Transport has looked at it in an overall policy sense, but on a practical day-to-day basis, please understand that we do not have a taxi in government service. Not one taxi is in government service; it is a private industry.

DR FOSKEY: I know, but I am thinking that it might be a good idea.

Mr Hargreaves: Wheelchair accessible taxis is a private industry. It is operated 90 per cent through Cab Express. Our connection is the regulatory regime, and that is

all. We use our influence to try and get the system on the road. Once the system is happily provided, we are going to back off. So we do not have any role in that.

DR FOSKEY: I would have thought that Nightlink, being so innovative—maybe it is too early to say it is a success—might lead to rolling out other ways in which taxis and ACTION bus services can link and work together.

Mr Hargreaves: It might do. The extent and imagination of the human mind staggers even me. The point is that, again, Nightlink was a government partnership response with Aerial. I need to pay respect to Aerial because we have got this system up and running. It is a response to a community concern that people were not able to get home safely in the middle of the night. Buses stop running at a certain time of the morning; there is no need for the taxi system to do that. So it is an innovative process. Again, it is a private sector thing, not a government one. But we are in partnership, and throwing money at it.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister. Thank you very much, Mr Zissler, and officials.

Mr Hargreaves: Madam Chair, can I confirm that we will not be discussing output 1.4 tomorrow?

THE CHAIR: Yes, that is right.

Mr Hargreaves: So that the officers need not—

THE CHAIR: That is right.

MRS DUNNE: Some of them will be here in the afternoon with the Chief Minister, I presume.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, but not for 1.4.

THE CHAIR: We will be discussing what is in the Chief Minister's portfolio. Thank you very much, officials.

Mr Hargreaves: Before you close, Madam Chair, can I express my appreciation to the officers of TAMS who have been so diligent in providing support in these hearings.

THE CHAIR: Certainly, you may, Mr Hargreaves, and we would echo that as well.

Mr Hargreaves: Thank you very much.

The committee adjourned at 6.02 pm.