



**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**

**THURSDAY, 29 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

<b>Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services .....</b>	<b>1035</b>
<b>Department of Territory and Municipal Services .....</b>	<b>985, 1035</b>
<b>Office of Multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs .....</b>	<b>1035</b>

**The committee met at 9.32 am.**

Appearances:

Hargreaves, Mr John, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Housing, Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Department of Territory and Municipal Services

Zissler, Mr Mike, Chief Executive Officer

Byles, Mr Gary, Executive Director, Enterprise Services

Elliott, Mr Tom, General Manager, ACTION, Enterprise Services

Clarke, Ms Liz, Manager, Business Alliance and Performance, Corporate Office, ACTION, Enterprise Services

Ryan, Mr Stephen, Director, ACT Property Group

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning. You are familiar with the contents of the yellow privilege card?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Indeed.

**THE CHAIR:** And you understand the privilege implications that are contained within it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** 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:** Minister, do you want to make some opening remarks? We are dealing with ACTION for a little while.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Very briefly, Madam Chair. The new network which will be rolled out on 2 June provides significant changes to the way in which we are delivering public transport services in the ACT. I want to record my appreciation on the public record to the officers of ACTION, particularly Tom Elliott and Liz Clarke, the schedulers, the drivers and everybody who has had anything to do with this new network. It has been a very significant piece of work over a significant period of time. I think the people of the ACT will appreciate that once it is rolled out.

We need to appreciate the extent to which funding has been put into this. You will see that it is reflected in the budget, and we will get to the detail of that in the course of the morning. But we are talking about tens of millions of dollars. This is not just a cosmetic change; it is a very significant change. It needs to be considered against this background: after we introduced network 06, it was greeted quite savagely by the community, and we acknowledge that. I acknowledged that directly. We did not just decide to bandaid network 06; we decided to eliminate network 06, go back to the drawing board, employ the services of a network designer and consult with the community.

This is significant and I need to underscore it: the lesson we learnt from network 06 was that we needed to engage very heavily with the community. We did that. It took a very long time. People got quite impatient. It was done through online surveys, on-bus surveys and interchange surveys. It was done through looking back at all of the complaints that we received. It was a true, honest and transparent engagement with the community.

As a result, we changed the network. Cabinet agreed that we needed to inject additional funds into it and gave us \$5.5 million in the supplementary approp last year. We then rolled out for public consideration the proposed network 08. There were some sections of the community who were going to be disadvantaged, so we were able to change that as well. The government appreciated that it needed to throw additional funds at it, because we were talking about additional services. That is why you will see in this budget an extra \$3.5 million.

It was interesting that we needed to have that second round of consultation, because a lot of the work was done in consultation with the community. Nonetheless it was still done on a flat surface; it was still a matter of looking at a map to change these things. When people had a look at what the network was going to do, they were able to tell us things that we were not able to see instantly.

For example, people in Campbell, on route 38, said to us, “Yes, we see what you’re doing, and that’s fine, except that you are now asking older people to walk up a hill to catch the bus, and we can’t do it.” We were able to reconfigure that particular bus route so that they could catch the bus. That is why that second consultation phase was absolutely vital.

If we look at the amount of money, as I say, there is a total of \$9 million on top of the budget for additional services. We were able to roll out new services to places like Gungahlin, the eye hospital and Brindabella Business Park. We will now be able to increase the connectivity and the frequency. So what you are seeing is a significant change to the bus system, and there is significant money attached to it. We agreed with the workforce on a four percent increase. That added another \$2.1 million to the process. So we have got \$9 million plus \$2.1 million, just to keep the additional services on the road.

We have plans to look at the interchange system. We have started with Belconnen. The Belconnen interchange will disappear over time and three bus stations will emerge. We have significant funds going into that. We also have some spruce-up funds to make the other interchanges a nicer place to be. We have added a lot of money to make sure that security at the interchanges is enhanced. We have security cameras on all of our buses now, and they have proved their worth. The new network will have much better signage around the town that will be much easier to read. We intend to have a greater engagement with the community through the interchanges.

This is a very significant exercise. Any suggestion that this is just a bandaid attempt or putting back what was there before needs to be dismissed. I think the committee will see, by the time we have finished, that this is a very good system.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, minister. In budget paper 4, at page 324, it is stated that 16 new buses will be received between June and October this year and another 100 buses will be acquired over the next four financial years, all with access for people with disabilities.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Where will that leave us in terms of the current old fleet? One of the community groups that appeared before us the other day commented about the good initiative around the gold pass, but said that elderly people need to be able to get on the bus. How quickly is this going to happen, and how do they know which bus is going to have that access and which is not?

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is our commitment that, ultimately, every single bus that we have in the network will be accessible. It will drop to the pavement so that people can get onto the bus much more easily. We have a commitment under the Disability Discrimination Act, a federal piece of legislation, to have 55 per cent of our fleet accessible by 2012. We are at around the 24 to 25 per cent mark now, so we are on track. As you quite rightly point out, all of the new buses that we buy will be like that, and they will be fuelled by compressed natural gas.

The best way in which people can find out whether the bus coming down their road

will have wheelchair accessibility, whilst we wait for them to be rolled out, is to contact ACTION management. That feedback is essential because that information can assist us in the selection of a bus on a given bus route. I have had a couple of people ask me about having a wheelchair-accessible bus go down their street. Unless we know roughly how many people will use it, we are not quite sure which ones to do. So what we have tended to do is to give priority to the inter-town buses. The ones that have the most passengers tend to get those ones first.

**THE CHAIR:** It is not just wheelchairs, of course; sometimes elderly people have difficulty going up steps. With regard to the gold card, there has been a little bit of confusion around the arrangements for that, with respect to the licences. Could you give us a bit more information?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I am happy to clear that up. This is one of the initiatives, I think, that has gone under the radar a bit for a lot of the community because the media did not pick it up quite as well as I had hoped. There are two reasons for the initiative coming forward. Anybody who is a resident of the ACT and has proof of age, at or over 75 years of age, will get a gold pass from 1 July and will travel free on ACTION buses for the rest of their days. Those are the only qualifications people need.

We believe that we can package this up as part of our older drivers initiative. I will undertake to get for you a copy of the older drivers handbook. There are two parts to these handbooks. One part is handed out when people get to 70 and it says, "You need to think about your driving habits, please." Some people are fine to drive at age 90 and some people are not right to drive at age 65. But we do know from evidence that 70 is a good time to start thinking about it. In the handbook there is a graph which shows the incredible jump in the accident effects on people over 75. The cost is huge—lives are wrecked, even if they do not die in the accident. We are saying to people when they get to 75, "Now is a really good time to take a decision about that."

Originally we thought we might swap the licence for a gold pass. I then had conversations with many people who were aged 70, 75 and older. I had conversations with the Association of Independent Retirees and with the Council on the Ageing. In that conversation we determined that it would not work; people would not swap it because it is a symbol. They have carried it for 50 or 60 years and they want to keep it. So we decided that what we needed to do was to show that the service could actually meet their needs before they were prepared to do that.

We are saying, "Think about your driving behaviour, think about the opportunities to get around the town and perhaps use it as a combination of both." It means that, over time, people can shrink their need to get into the motor car. Over time, they come to realise that it is just too dangerous to drive at night; if they still want to go out to dinner, they can travel by bus. If they want to go from, say, Curtin to the Woden Plaza, they would normally take the car. They do not have to; they can hop on a bus and do that. There are some times, however, when going to a certain part of town involves a long journey because you want to go, believe it or not—

**MRS DUNNE:** Take your golf clubs somewhere.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is a good one. If, for example, you want to go from Curtin to

Deakin, you have to go in a certain way. It is not very far so people tend to hop in the car and go across to Deakin to the medical suites. If we say, "Think about going on the bus," people will do so. This is a significant initiative. It recognises that people who live in the ACT, generally speaking, have contributed significantly to the whole community here. We can say, "We'll give them something back."

I urge the committee, if you are talking to people who are approaching that age or who are over that age, to please tell them there are absolutely no strings, other than you have to be 75 years or over and a resident of the ACT. I am expecting, though, that there might be some reaction, shall we say, from the New South Wales government because if it becomes infectious across the border it will cost the New South Wales government, but that is their bad luck.

**MR SMYTH:** How many buses are in the fleet?

**Mr Elliott:** There are about 400 buses in the fleet.

**MR SMYTH:** And we are replacing 100 over the next four years?

**Mr Elliott:** That is correct. The strategy is to meet standards of the disability and discrimination acts of replacing the entire fleet over the next 15 years. The first five years of that strategy translates to 115 buses in the current size of the fleet. We will be supplying 16 buses, which are currently on order. The first one is to arrive in June, and the next will be delivered in lots of four per month. That is what we can get off the production line. The procurement process for the subsequent 100 is underway. We expect that, if the contractual negotiations go well, we will get the first of those in the first or second quarter of next year.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Mr Smyth, can I just give you a couple of things. I have just been advised that the number is 379 at the moment, as at today. The other thing I need to point out is that the 16 buses that Mr Elliott was talking about are additional to the 100. Also, and this may be of use to you, not all of the buses in the fleet are the same age. As you would know, there are graduated ages. It may be useful for us to get you an age analysis of the fleet so you can see just how many we have which are 15 years old, 12 years old and that kind of thing, because that drives which buses get replaced earlier.

**MR SMYTH:** That would be good. At the end of the four years, what is the net increase in buses, or are these just replacements?

**Mr Elliott:** This is a replacement strategy, so there is no net increase in the number of buses.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That needs to be taken against the background—we had this conversation last year—of the fact that we have put money into the budget for engine replacement. The engine replacement actually extends the life and gives us an effective increase of about 40 vehicles.

**MR SMYTH:** But even with a new engine a bus cannot be in the same place twice or on two routes at the same time, so we have got 379, we have got 16 coming—

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, but when you replace them you are not replacing those particular ones, so, as we get to the end of the 379, we keep going because we have got the money.

**MR SMYTH:** You have got 379, you add 16, so that will be 395. On top of that 395, there are 100 coming. At the end of the four years, we will still have 395 buses?

**Mr Elliott:** The replacement strategy is to replace the existing fleet, so, at the end of the current program you would have the exact same number of buses that you have today. The 16 are part of the 115; the 115 represent an increase in the percentage size of the fleet to meet a disability target. Replacing 115 buses gives you 55 per cent accessible buses in the fleet by 2012, and that is the compliance target set by the commonwealth government.

**MR SMYTH:** That is fine. So at the end of four years we will have 379 buses?

**Mr Elliott:** Under this strategy we will.

**MRS DUNNE:** Just to clarify, we are frontloading the replacement so that you meet the target?

**Mr Elliott:** No, we are graduating the thing for a month until they are done.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is all right; I will go back and read what Mr Elliott said.

**Mr Hargreaves:** What we are essentially saying is that we have got 16 buses on order at the moment, which we got money for in the supplementary appropriation. This particular appropriation gives us another 100 buses coming forward, and we will get them at a rate of four a month graduated over the period that they come out of the factory. One of the problems that the ACT faces is that we do not have the fleet size purchase requirement to compete with some of the other jurisdictions. When Queensland do it, they buy 200 in one go. We are only buying four or five at a go, so we go to the end of the queue.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Mr Pratt.

**MR PRATT:** Minister, recently a mother advised me that her wheelchair-bound teenager had to wait two hours at Gungahlin for a wheelchair-accessible bus and when one did come, although it was signed as a wheelchair-accessible bus, the ramp was not working. When do you think it will get to the point where, in terms of the network changes now, that you will be able to increase the frequency of wheelchair-accessible buses at Gungahlin?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I cannot tell you about Gungahlin, because we need to do some work on how many people use that particular service. I can say to you that we will achieve our 55 per cent target by the year 2012, so half of the bus routes around town will be wheelchair accessible. It depends on the wheelchair of course, let me be very clear about that. We are not talking about one of the monster electric wheelchairs; we are talking about manual wheelchairs and smaller scale electric chairs. For example,



we all know of the case before the court at the moment. The person in that wheelchair is in a very significant size of wheelchair, and that could not cope with a bus anyway. But 55 per cent of the fleet will have that capability.

As I indicated before, the more information we can receive from members of the public about where we can place the priority in that the better. In terms of Gungahlin, if we get the feedback showing that there are a significant number of people who are affected like that and need that bus, we will shift the bus from one bus route which does not need it into those ones that do.

**MR PRATT:** How was a bus carrying a sticker indicating wheelchair accessibility unserviceable? Does that happen frequently?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Mr Pratt, you know that all mechanical things break down from time to time.

**MR PRATT:** I know they do break down; there is a risk of that.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is the frequency of it that determines whether or not it is an issue. I have not had any reports given to me that it is an issue that we have not been able to address.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne, you have a supplementary?

**MRS DUNNE:** I have a supplementary to that.

**THE CHAIR:** Then you can go on to your substantive question after that.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. Minister, what proactive steps are you taking to try and ascertain what routes have demand for wheelchair accessibility?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The community consultation process is in two stages. When the new bus routes have been operating for a number of months, we will be going out to the community again to see how people have taken the service, and we will be putting that in that particular approach.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** You have a substantive question?

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay, my substantive question. Minister, in network 08, what provision is there for extending the service in the life of the network? If there is suddenly a demand for a bus in a particular area, what provision do you have to extend the service?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We do not have a specific provision in there at this point in time. I do not expect there to be too much need for an extension between now and 12 months hence, for example. We do know that there will need to be additional services put on when the suburbs of Molonglo come on line. We do know that, where we see significant changes of demography, we will have to have a different style of bus. We

have that capacity within the system to pick up that sort of slack. Also, we need to understand that network 08 is an evolving service. We have had the mindset in the past that we set a network in concrete, and that is what you got. We do not have that mindset any more. Each year we will be looking at what we actually need and going forward.

**MRS DUNNE:** So in that case, minister, is there provision to put on buses as staff start to work at the data centre in Mugga Lane?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Not at this point.

**MRS DUNNE:** So you have not thought about provision?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We have, but we have not got one there yet, Mrs Dunne. In fact, I might remind the committee that we did not put a bus on to the Brindabella business park when it first became operational. We waited until there was a critical mass that could actually sustain a viable bus service.

**MRS DUNNE:** What is a critical mass to the Mugga Lane data centre?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We will have to see. I notice that the number of potential jobs has gone down from 300 to 200.

**MR PRATT:** It is 400 to 300.

**MR SMYTH:** It is 400 to 300.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I put that at your feet, Mr Smyth. I put that loss of 100 jobs to the Tuggeranong youth at your feet.

**MR SMYTH:** Do you?

**DR FOSKEY:** Let us go off on a side track.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Well, somebody else introduced the side track Dr Foskey, not me.

**MR SMYTH:** Macarthur residents actually put it down to your very poor consultation, minister.

**MRS DUNNE:** Mr Pratt had a supplementary, Madam Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** I know.

**MR PRATT:** Thanks, Madam Chair. On the question of consultation, given that the government is clearly under a lot of pressure at the moment about a failure to consult on a range of areas, what space now will there be in this network 08 confirmation stage for ongoing consultation? How will you actually do that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** One of the interesting things about the ACTION service—I have to applaud the service for this—is the way they engage with the community. When we

did this exercise of renewal, we engaged quite clearly with the community. The officers themselves within ACTION have personally spoken to an enormous number of people about their travelling needs, their travelling behaviour.

We have a great relationship with the community where they can actually ring ACTION and talk to people there. There will be ample opportunity for people as we go down the track just to pick up the phone and talk to them, and they do that a lot. As I said, it is an evolving process, and, on an annual basis, we will seek further information. For example, we will seek satisfaction survey information to see how they are doing.

**MR PRATT:** With the consultancy that was undertaken to develop transport 08—

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is network 08, Mr Pratt. Get with the program.

**MR PRATT:** Were any aspects of the consultancy undertaken overseas?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No.

**MR PRATT:** Minister, I have had a constituent indicate to me that she was advised by an officer at the Civic interchange that at least some aspects of this consultancy were undertaken overseas. Is that not correct?

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is not my understanding, Mr Pratt. I would like to see the evidence. I can tell you—

**MR PRATT:** Could your officials perhaps clarify that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** If you will give me a chance to answer your question, I will tell you that the person who undertook the consultancy came from Canada. He was actually in the country at the time we engaged him, and he did his work here.

**MR PRATT:** Was he here for the entire duration of the development process?

**Mr Hargreaves:** He was interstate.

**Mr Elliott:** The consultant, in fact, is Canadian. He works for a company that has an arm in Canada, an arm in the United States and an arm in Australia. He is based in Brisbane. For the duration of the project, he went back to Canada twice, from my understanding, but that was within the contractual arrangements that we had with the company. When he was working for us, he was working in Canberra. He did some modelling work, I guess, while he was on the road in Brisbane. But by and large he did his work on the program for us in Australia.

He is now working on other projects in Australia. He is working for an aspect of the ticketing system down in Melbourne; he is working on some busways out in the west of Sydney, for Sydney Buses; and he is doing some more modelling work for Brisbane City Council on one of their new busways and arrangements up in Brisbane.

To that extent, he worked in Australia. I would have to say that the comment about

him working overseas is, in fact, incorrect.

**MR PRATT:** How well was he acquainted with the Canberra transport landscape?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Very extensively.

**MR PRATT:** So he actually caught buses and spoke to people and mingled amongst passengers?

**Mr Elliott:** This gentleman is, in fact, a heavy public-transport user, does not own a car and makes his way round the world on various consultancies on public transport. He used the Canberra bus system extensively. He has done previous work for the ACT planning authority on transport systems for the territory. That was part of his credentials and why he was selected in the first place. He was familiar with the Canberra bus route network and its development over a series of years.

**MRS DUNNE:** Who is the consultant?

**Mr Elliott:** The gentleman's name was Jarrett Walker.

**MR SMYTH:** In regard to network 08, on page 327, the very last of the indicators in public transport, j, I note that the target for recovery at the fare box as a percentage of total cost is less than the target for the current year. If network 08 is going to be so good and get so many people back on the buses, why are we expecting less fares?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Because we have got to net it off. One of the things that we are not doing is increasing the price of the fare; we are putting extensive additional services on and not increasing the fare.

**MR SMYTH:** So are you expecting increased boardings?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We are hoping that we will have increased boardings, yes. I am pretty confident that we will.

**MR SMYTH:** So we are going to have increased boardings yet less money through the fare box?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Not less money through the fare box, no. There will not be an increase in the money in terms of the percentage of total cost—it will go down—but you will see it is a minor increase, from the outcome to the targets, of 0.3 per cent. One of the beauties of our system here is: for \$3 you can go for an hour and a half on a bus. In fact, a person from interstate congratulated me about that only two days ago.

I do not believe, and the government does not believe, that we can introduce such a significant change to our bus network and, before we introduce that change, put the fare up. That is just not acceptable. We need to make sure that people are happy with the system before we put the fare up.

**MR SMYTH:** So you will put the fares up after the increase on network 08? Is that what you are saying?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Sorry?

**MR SMYTH:** You have just said, “We will not put the fares up before we introduce the system; people have to be happy; we will put the fares up after the network has been introduced.”

**Mr Hargreaves:** What we are saying is that there would normally be, as with any government charge, as people would know, about a three per cent increase or something like that annually. You would normally expect to see that. We are not going to introduce that particular percentage increase this year because the travelling public have not experienced network 08 yet. I do not think it is a fair thing to do. We will be doing the normal annual review of fares in the next financial year, the normal thing.

**MR SMYTH:** So fares are going up three per cent?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, they are not going up three per cent?

**THE CHAIR:** No, he just said they are not.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have said it about three times that we are not putting fares up.

**THE CHAIR:** I think it is fairly clear.

**MR SMYTH:** Did you just say that fares go up annually?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. I said they would normally go up annually about three per cent, the same as any other government charge, but they are not going up this time at all.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne, you have got a supplementary; and then we are going to Mr Gentleman. I am not taking more supplementaries to this. Mr Gentleman has been very patient.

**MRS DUNNE:** Perhaps he can take this on notice. What is the dollar amount of fare box recovery for 2007-08 and what is the target for 2008-09?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The fare box in 2007-08, we are expecting \$18.8 million at the conclusion of the financial year; and in 2008-2009 we are expecting \$19.7 million.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, if I can bring you to page 323, budget paper 4, under the priorities, one of the priorities is the implementation of the new ticketing system. The drivers and the Transport Workers Union have been calling for this through this budget process. Can you tell us what you hope to achieve with the new system?

**Mr Hargreaves:** One of the problems with the old system—and thank you for the question—is that it is antiquated and we cannot get spares for it. It does not give us the data we need to project what we need into the future. It does not tell us, for example, when people get off the bus; we do not know the duration of the journey so that we cannot see what loadings on a particular bus route might exist; we just know

who gets on; we do not know the type of channel patterns applicable to the route.

The ticketing system goes down frequently and no fares are collected for a particular journey or series of journeys. We cannot get spares to fix it. It is not GPS oriented, so we cannot use it as a security tracking device for passenger safety and driver safety. There are a whole range of reasons why we need to replace the thing.

We are hoping, in fact, that the new ticketing system will be a smartcard-type technology and will be able to provide us with enormous amounts of data, will be able to take the varying ranges of types of tickets that we have, will reduce the amount of time that people take to get on and off the bus and will bring us into line with similar transport companies around Australia in having a decent ticketing system for the people of Canberra. It is an \$8 million project. We are, I think at the moment, just completing the specifications.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** You have noted on page 324 that you are looking at a feasibility study for a smartcard system as well. Will people be able to log on at home and update their credits perhaps on their smartcard?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I understand so.

**MRS DUNNE:** I get the impression that it would work like the oyster card on the tube, where you swipe on and swipe off, so that you can tell where people are getting on and off. Is that the idea?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I might go to Dr Foskey now because she has been waiting very patiently, and then I will go to Mrs Dunne and Mr Smyth.

**DR FOSKEY:** Thank you. It is nice to call what I have been doing patience; that is generous really. I want to ask you: literally, in light of the increased petrol prices this week, which of course are not really a surprise to any of us who have been watching these markets, is there going to be any attempt to give people a real alternative to driving their cars, ratcheting up our bus service, perhaps looking to increase the number of buses, the frequency of services, reliability, looking at expenditure on roads compared to expenditure on public transport and realising that the government might have to step in here?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** Have you been to Curitiba?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No.

**DR FOSKEY:** It is very interesting to go basically to a third-world city in Brazil where they instituted a—

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have not had the opportunity to go to Brazil.

**DR FOSKEY:** It could be on the cards though if you want to look at how it is done in quite a cash-strapped economy

**Mr Hargreaves:** I would not think so.

**DR FOSKEY:** They made rapid transit bus services the major priority in a town where a lot of people did not actually have cars at that time. I must say there are a lot of cars there now. But I just wondered whether you had had a look at transport systems around the world where they have faced similar economic issues and similar issues where cities were built for cars and whether you have used that information to inform the way we design our bus system.

**Mr Hargreaves:** We have got to, I suppose, acknowledge that Canberra is a tad unique not only in its demography but also its layout. One of the challenges that we experience in Canberra is that—and I have used this example before so I will use it again—we have the same geographic area as in Sydney between Hornsby and Sutherland. If you take out the greater metropolitan area of Sydney from that area, in terms of people, they have got about five million people in that area and we have got 330,000 in the same area. The ability for us to have an economically viable transport system is somewhat diminished.

We also know that we have an imperative to address climate change in the context of public transport. That was a significant driver in the government saying that we need to put additional resources into the public transport system in the ACT and that is why we have got greater connectivity, more frequent buses. We are actually updating the bus fleet so that it is an attractive journey; we are addressing the interchange experience. It is part of an integrated aspect in terms of our long cycle lanes, in terms of some of the other transport initiatives like the bike racks.

In terms of examining other systems, we have had field trips and things like that. I have looked not in particular detail at, but I have experienced, public transport systems in London, Paris, Singapore, Rome—

**DR FOSKEY:** You are far better travelled than I.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is because I am able to. I have also experienced it in California, Washington, New York and Boston. In recent times I was pleased to be able to go to Beijing and Shanghai on the invitation of the Chinese government to talk about multicultural affairs and housing. Whilst I was there I looked at public transport issues in those major cities. Interestingly, with some of their multi-unit housing complexes—they talked about building a complex that houses 60,000 people on 17 hectares. It is enormous. I can recall talking to the developers there. One of our party—not someone from the ACT—asked the developer, “But where do they park their cars?” The developer said, “These people are too poor to have a car; they do not need one.” So what happens? There is a public transport system, a bus system that goes there.

One of the difficulties we have in the ACT compared with the other places is that we do not have an existing rail infrastructure to supplement our bus service; we do not have an existing tram infrastructure to do that. If we are going to go down those particular tracks, we have to start from the beginning. Everybody that I spoke to was

keen to have a light rail system, and try to augment a train system, but it is financially not possible at the moment.

**DR FOSKEY:** In Curitiba—and Porto Alegre, which is another city that I went to—

**Mr Hargreaves:** You are much more fortunate than I am to travel so widely.

**DR FOSKEY:** They are both in Brazil, so it is the same place. The bus priority lanes were the main aspect of their rapid transit bus system. I note that in the budget—

**Mr Hargreaves:** Just like the Adelaide Avenue ones and the ones we are building up Flemington Road?

**DR FOSKEY:** I notice that there is a target for an increase in bus priority lanes over the next four years of just one. I want to check that with you. And I want to check whether ACTION was consulted about the number and location of bus priority lanes?

**Mr Hargreaves:** They are getting a bus priority lane in Flemington Road, yes. Are we going to be creating more in the next 12 months? No.

**DR FOSKEY:** In the next four years. It is not in the budget.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Well, that is—

**DR FOSKEY:** This is how you get buses moving; you make them go faster.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That may be the case, but I would suggest to you that we have other initiatives coming on line. We have the light bus priority signals at the lights. We already have some of the bus priority lanes existing there. As we mentioned yesterday, we are looking at how we can address the Northbourne Avenue issue. It is down the main arterials. We have provided sufficient land to go down from Belconnen to the city. We need to also consider that this is what we have indicated by way of a specific program for the next four years. In our infrastructure fund, you will notice that there are some indicators—and indicators only—of where we may go. That is not to suggest that we could not change that priority in the course of the next four years and do something else.

**DR FOSKEY:** Do you think that, if petrol prices are heading the way they are, you will perhaps do something else, do something more?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I believe that the petrol price increase will probably encourage more people to get onto our buses. I think we will get that up and running before we start planning too far into the future.

**DR FOSKEY:** So we are going to be reactive, rather than going out and—

**Mr Hargreaves:** I reject that entirely. If you look at the amount of millions of dollars put into the bus system into the next four years, you will, I hope, agree that tens of millions of dollars is not reactive; it is proactive.



**THE CHAIR:** We will now go to Mr Pratt's supplementary. Mr Gentleman also has a supplementary on this.

**MR PRATT:** The plan for the next four years is to build one kilometre of bus lanes?

**Mr Hargreaves:** A million dollars worth, Mr Pratt. Three million dollars worth.

**MR PRATT:** Is that not fairly narrow-minded in terms of wanting to create the capacity to attract people to catch the bus transport system?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, I do not think it is, Mr Pratt; \$3 million is a fairly significant amount of money out of this budget to go to that particular exercise. No, it is not narrow-minded. I am not the expert on narrow-mindedness. Perhaps you can tell us all about that.

**THE CHAIR:** We will go to Mrs Dunne and then Mr Smyth and back to Mr Gentleman.

**MRS DUNNE:** In relation to Network 08, how will you measure the success or otherwise of the new network, and what mechanisms are in place from now?

**Mr Hargreaves:** There are a couple of them, obviously. There is fare box increase, having regard to no increase in the cost. If we see that, we will be quite pleased about it. This is a measure. The second one is satisfaction surveys that we will do. We will be asking our drivers and our transport officers on the platforms to let us know what conversations they are having with people. Essentially, there are our complaints mechanisms. If we have a significant decrease in the amount of complaints, that is a positive indicator. So there are a range of them. One of the difficulties that we have is our ticketing system, which significantly affects the data that we can collect. We are addressing that, so we will just have to see.

**MRS DUNNE:** But there is no survey mechanism?

**Mr Hargreaves:** An annual satisfaction survey. It is a departmental survey. We do a satisfaction survey from the department, and ACTION is part of the department.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman, you have a supplementary.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, I am still on Network 08. I have just had a look at the new route from my suburb to the city. The time now is 31 minutes from Calwell to the city, which equates to the same travel time for me in a car, which is quite an incentive. My concern with the tight times for turnaround is whether there is going to be enough time for drivers to have a break at the end of their runs and get around in time?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, we believe so. We know that there will be some tweaking that is required on some bus routes and at some terminals or terminuses. We have conversations with the Transport Workers Union. We are very conscious about the occupational health and safety of our drivers. We look at those sorts of issues—the types of seats, whether or not people can get out and walk around. But it needs to be recorded officially that there are regulated breaks contained in the certified agreement

and we will not allow things to breach the certified agreement.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth?

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, I notice that when you put out the building a better bus service brochure on the proposed new network it said that routes 768 and 769 were to be replaced by route 11/111. The community questioned this. I have a letter from one constituent that says, “The new replacement route comes nowhere near where we live.” You said in an email to constituents that the suggestion that the 769 route will be axed as put about by the opposition is merely a scare tactic. You have said in your own brochure that the route is going. Clearly, the community feedback worked. Why would you say that the route was never to be axed when it is quite clear in your brochure that it was?

**Mr Hargreaves:** You have lost me there. You might have to say that again.

**MR SMYTH:** Why would you mislead constituents?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not mislead constituents.

**MR SMYTH:** Will you apologise to the people—that you said that what we were saying was false?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not accept that I mislead constituents.

**MR PRATT:** You did over the Tharwa bridge.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Pratt, let the minister answer the questions. That has got nothing to do with this output class.

**MR SMYTH:** The email goes on to say this. This is an email from you to a constituent. It says, “You may care to know that the opposition said that they were going to submit the petition to the Assembly. This has not happened.” The petition was actually submitted. Again, in your email the information is incorrect.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Not in my—

**MR SMYTH:** Will you apologise to the constituent and will you apologise to the opposition?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not believe that was incorrect. I have no reason to extend such an apology. I was in the chamber that day. I was in the chamber when the petition was supposed to have been presented, and it was not.

**MR SMYTH:** Do you want me to get a copy of the record?

**Mr Hargreaves:** It was not. I was in there that day and it was not. In fact, a media release was put out before the day of its supposed tabling, its presentation, in the chamber. If you want to check the timing on these things, feel free. If you want to occupy your time worrying about all of those sorts of things, about when petitions are

lodged and when they are not lodged, knock yourself out.

**MR SMYTH:** No. I am concerned that you are putting out misinformation to constituents.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I am glad you are concerned about that because you are indeed the expert on putting out misinformation—and I do not hold a candle to you in that regard.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not think we will continue this—

**MR SMYTH:** I will get you a copy of the transcript of where it was tabled.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I look forward to it.

**THE CHAIR:** We will move on. Minister, you talked about the new interchange arrangements at Belconnen in your introductory remarks. As you know, that is in my electorate. I am particularly interested in when the demolition is planned to start for the interchange and how that is going to be managed.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will get Mr Elliott to answer that for you.

**Mr Elliott:** I will attempt to answer in the manner that I can; it is not an ACTION project as such. It is being organised by the planning department and Roads ACT essentially.

The last information we had, because we need to know when we have to rebuild the next network and the day that the next network will start, the next big rebuild, will be the day that Belconnen interchange is demolished, and at this point in time it is June 2009. I think the preparatory works are being undertaken this financial year with a view that the demolition will commence in June 2009. But, as I say, we are informed of the project and we add input to that, but our interest in it is really to understand how we will organise the bus services through Belconnen during the project's transition.

**MRS DUNNE:** The proposed completion date for the replacement?

**Mr Elliott:** The documents that I saw were forecasting about 12 months of construction through that block. I have not been apprised of whether or not that is still current, but certainly some of the preliminary documentation suggested around a 12-month time frame. It is a significant piece of construction, as you might imagine. It is a dedicated bus route through that block from Benjamin Way back to, I think, Aikman Drive. I guess it will take as long as it takes, but my understanding is it is 12 months.

**Mr Hargreaves:** On that issue I draw the committee's attention to the capital works budget. The provision is for \$2 million in 2008-09, \$10 million in 2009-10, and \$4.5 million in 2010-11. That shows you the spread of works and when we expect the bills to be paid. The financial year 2010-11 is when we expect the project to conclude. It may be of some use to the committee to see a map of what is proposed. I am happy to table for you a diagram which shows the proposed bus route and bus station

placements, which may be of some use.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. That would be very useful. I am aware that the Belconnen Community Council were given a presentation on the plans. I was wondering what kind of feedback was received at that meeting. Were the plans received favourably?

**Mr Elliott:** I attended that meeting and from my perspective there was a very positive attitude from the people who attended. The view that Belconnen interchange has outlived its usefulness as a functioning place to interact with a transport system was well accepted and I thought there was a great deal of positivism with regard to the rebuilding program. Equally, there were some concerns raised about what the transition arrangements were because it is a significant piece of bus infrastructure. Currently, we have about 900 services running through that interchange on a daily basis, in a normal working day, and, therefore, the arrangements around how we manage that process are going to occupy our attention quite significantly, I suspect, this year.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Pratt and Mr Smyth both have supplementaries.

**MR PRATT:** Mr Hargreaves, who initiated the Belconnen concept, Westfield or the government?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Mr Pratt, you are testing my memory a bit because this is really part of another portfolio, part of the planning portfolio, and not something that is within the group of officers that are here today.

**MR PRATT:** So you don't recall whether—

**Mr Hargreaves:** Hang on. My understanding of the issue is that the direct grant of land to Westfield for the extension and enhancement of the Belconnen Mall area, which takes into account the car park, included a negotiation around the provision of one of those bus stations that you will see in the map. So it was part of that negotiation to encourage the award of the direct grant. I do not know whose idea it was in the beginning, because it was part of a process that was begun long before I became a minister.

**MR PRATT:** Given that clearly the total rebuild of the Belconnen bus interchange will remove the safety issues that are besetting that interchange and the other interchanges, when do you think you might commence work or look at a program to clean up Woden and Tuggeranong interchanges?

**Mr Hargreaves:** There are two answers to that. The first one is that the total change of the interchange system, if you like, as applies to Belconnen was possible because of the way in which the town centre is laid out. We will do that. We will eliminate the interchange. You are quite right: the community safety aspects there are of some concern and they will be eliminated with the change to the bus station system because what the bus station system will do is remove the need to wait for half an hour for a bus in a place such as an interchange.

If that system is successful, as we expect it to be, we will be looking at its possible application to the others. Each of the other interchanges has a challenge to it. For example, Woden interchange is essentially backed up to the Woden Plaza area but it has its frontage on Callam Street. Callam Street has challenges about being able to put bus stations going south. Going north is not a problem because there are car park areas that you can come off the road and build a bus station into. But you might recall on the eastern side of Callam Street, going south—that is where the police station is—for example, there is very little space between the road and the floodway and there are buildings in the way. So there are challenges.

That is not to say that we could not actually reconfigure the whole thing. You cannot put a bus along Corinna Street, for example, because the road run is too thin. There are roundabouts in there that preclude it. So there would need to be some engineering challenges overcome before we could do it there. The difficulty with the Tuggeranong interchange is that the major roads that we have which could accommodate a bus station system are Athllon Drive, Anketell Street and the one that goes down past the college. The problem with those is that they have buildings on the side of the road, so it would be a challenge, but we will have a look and see if we can do it.

**MR PRATT:** What sort of funding do you have identified, at this stage, to either undertake preliminary works, assessments, analysis or commence any form of structural works?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The base budget of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services, particularly in the roads area, contains certain amounts that we can change priority on to do feasibility studies from time to time. There is the provision in the infrastructure fund for us to pick up \$100,000 and do something like that. I am just advised that the planning authority is doing a study at the moment of Gungahlin and Woden. But please understand that this is really something that planning will do. We feed into that process but it is not necessarily something we would commission.

**MR PRATT:** As the custodian of bus interchanges, and given that a significant number of your patrons are very concerned about the safety at Woden, particularly, and Tuggeranong, what is your time line? What is your objective for making these places secure?

**Mr Hargreaves:** What you are not recognising here, or respecting really, are the initiatives that are going on in those interchanges. Firstly, we have transport supervisors in those places. We have a police station in fairly close proximity to the Woden interchange.

**MR PRATT:** It is not doing much good, though, is it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I believe that it is doing a lot of good and I am a bit appalled at your suggestion that our police officers are not doing a good enough job protecting the people in Woden.

**MR PRATT:** Don't verbal me, minister. Don't verbal me, please.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I am repeating your stuff; you said they are not doing a good enough

job.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Pratt, if you could avoid the interjections it would certainly help and we would not have—

**MR PRATT:** It would be helpful if the minister did not verbal me too.

**THE CHAIR:** But it was your interjection that started that process.

**MR PRATT:** Thanks to you for your umpiring.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Madam chair, we need to put on the record some of the things we have been doing in security at interchanges. As I have indicated, there has been an increased presence of supervisors there. We have got \$1 million to upgrade existing CCTV cameras there for passengers' safety. All ACTION drivers and interchange staff undergo safety and security training to prepare them to handle public safety incidents. There is CCTV on our buses; I think every one of them has got closed-circuit television now. The government has provided \$1.8 million to ACTION to retrofit the fleet. We have an incident/accident reporting system. Our radio communications system on all buses includes a duress button and GPS.

We have also established a safety roundtable, which is a liaison arrangement between ACT Policing, ACTION, TAMS security, justice and community safety and the Transport Workers Union, and we have upgraded the security at all of them. We have improved external lighting, improved security pass access to the sites and improved safety and access procedures. So it is not correct to suggest that we are not doing anything about security and safety at interchanges; quite clearly it is not correct.

**MR PRATT:** In the annual reports hearing, Mr Elliott indicated last year that you had a goal of having all the CCTV cameras in bus interchanges installed by July 2008.

**Mr Elliott:** That is correct.

**MR PRATT:** Are you on track for that?

**Mr Elliott:** No, we are not.

**MR PRATT:** What is happening?

**Mr Elliott:** We have needed to go back to our supplier and align the technology to the initiative that is being run out of the justice and community safety department. This was on advice from the AFP and justice. What we found ourselves doing was entering into some contractual arrangements with suppliers that would supply technology that was not consistent with what was being delivered across the territory. We ceased those arrangements and re-ran the process back to align it.

The point here is to ensure we have got a consistent CCTV system across the territory, not something that runs on a different platform in the bus service and in particular in the interchanges. That has taken our time frame away, unfortunately, but I understand and I am led to believe that we will have it all in place in August.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Pratt, I want to interrupt for just two seconds. Minister, there are some visitors from the parliament of Tanzania with us.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Well, welcome. But there are not very many of them.

**THE CHAIR:** No, they are actually not here in the chamber any more. They are in the Assembly. They were here with us but I did not know who they were, so I was not able to acknowledge them, but now they are up in the Speaker's hospitality room and I was wondering if we could break for morning tea early so that you, minister, and members of the committee who wish to go up to greet the members of the parliament from Tanzania can go up and do that and then come back and we can get started again on this same subject at five past 11. Are you happy to do that? Otherwise, we will plough on until our normal 11 o'clock break.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I am at the service of the committee, Madam Chair.

**MR PRATT:** As the Tanzanians might say, jambo sana.

**THE CHAIR:** I think that means that we will do it. I am not sure, but we will break now for half an hour morning tea, and we will be back at five past 11 to carry on with ACTION.

**Meeting adjourned from 10.35 to 11.08 am.**

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman has a question.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, in budget paper 4, at page 323, under "corporate strategies" there is a discussion of the school bus services. I was very pleased with your response to my inquiry regarding the bus from Theodore to St Clare's. Have you had a lot of inquiries from customers on school bus services? Can you tell us what changes you have made following those inquiries?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will get the officers to address that. In terms of queries to my office, no. There have probably been three or four. Most of the emails to my office have been on the major trunk and suburban routes. One of the beaut parts of the new system is the way in which the public is engaging directly with ACTION, the ACTION officers themselves, and the way in which ACTION officers are going out personally and talking to people. Clearly, they will have much more information on that contact than I have. I will do a right-handed flick across to Ms Clarke.

**Ms Clarke:** Yes, there have been some changes to the school bus services. We have advertised these to all schools that have the changes. As well, we have put them on the ACTION website. We have been advertising in the *Canberra Times* and also in the *Chronicle*, to advise students and parents of the changes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, my questions relate to the interaction between the ACTION bus service and the Kippax shopping centre last week.

**Mr Hargreaves:** "Interaction" is a very nice way of putting it, Mrs Dunne. They did

meet by accident.

**MRS DUNNE:** They did meet by accident. It was put to me on the weekend by a constituent who had some experience with the service that when that bus stop was being redesigned there was a request to put crash barriers at the bottom of the hill because the bus stop is on a slope. Is that the case and why weren't the crash barriers put in?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Mr Elliott will address that for you.

**Mr Elliott:** I visited the scene of the accident on the evening in question and had a look at the site. I think there has been some discussion about crash barriers. But the location where the bus actually mounted the kerb and went into the building is in fact a place for service vehicles to get into the shopping centre. So I suspect that putting a crash barrier at that point would not only provide a good safety measure but would also inhibit people doing business in and out of the Kippax centre.

**MRS DUNNE:** My understanding is that the easement there is so that the Australia Post people can empty the post boxes but there is no loading zone there. This was discussed at the time. Was there a proposal in the initial design to put in crash barriers?

**Mr Elliott:** I am not aware that there was.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you get back to us on that?

**Mr Elliott:** Certainly, we can take that on notice. I can say that WorkCover are investigating the accident, as they would, and I suspect that will be part of their recommendations that we take forward.

**MRS DUNNE:** Presumably, one of two things would have happened. Either the driver did not engage the brakes properly or the brakes slipped. What is the experience of ACTION with particular sorts of buses? Is there a propensity for brakes to slip and has it happened anywhere else, either out on a job or in the depots?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Mrs Dunne, without wishing to not respond to your question, I would like to wait until the WorkCover investigation is over and then we will have the actual facts as agreed with the WorkCover inspectors. Naturally, we will look at practices right across the bus system to see whether we have practices which would offend the recommendations of WorkCover. It is a little precipitous at the moment for us to make judgements on what may or may not have occurred. I am quite happy to talk about that when we next meet, but I do want to wait until we get the WorkCover report.

**MRS DUNNE:** Without making judgements about what may or may not have occurred in this instance, are there instances where buses have rolled off, of their own accord, because the brakes have not been engaged properly or the engagement process breaks?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We would have to go back and have a look at the accident statistics.



**MRS DUNNE:** If so, were they reported to WorkCover?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We will get back to you and see if we cannot fix that for you, based on the crash data that we have over the last 12 months or so.

**MRS DUNNE:** A couple of years.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Two.

**MR SMYTH:** Minister, there have been reports of a shortage of drivers for ACTION. Are we short of drivers and what are we doing to fix the problem?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, we are. We estimate that we would be between 20 and 30, and possibly up to 40, drivers short. There are two reasons for the shortage. One is the unavailability of drivers nation-wide. It is a significant problem nation-wide. The other is that we need to understand what occurs when we put on additional routes, as we did as a result of the second level of consultation.

When we did the first lot of consultations and we created the routes, and we got the additional \$5½ million from cabinet, we believed we had enough drivers coming and enough drivers going through the recruitment process to pick up the attrition rate, remembering that we can only take up to eight drivers in a training course at one time. That, generally speaking, is enough for us over a year to pick up an attrition rate.

However, when we put on the additional ones, we were quite clearly short. So we decided to do a recruitment program. That recruiting initiative has three parts to it. The first one is the one I have just mentioned, where we are putting people through driver training courses. The second one is that we are promoting people from the part-time ranks into full-time work, but they have to be backfilled.

Of course, a lot of our part timers are actually doing the work because that is the way they want it for their family-friendly workplace arrangements. They do not want full-time work; they want to have part-time work. So there is a limited availability of drivers there. The third one is to have a significant out-of-Canberra recruitment campaign. You may have seen ads in the papers trying to get drivers who are qualified into the ACT. They have a refresher course on the demographic of the ACT and then they go on the road.

We had an information night recently to attract people to ACTION. Something like 20 people turned up at that particular information night. It was a little bit disappointing, I suppose, given that the pay scales are particularly generous, I believe. We will just continue down this track. We would hope that we would be able to fix the problem by about Christmas time.

**MR SMYTH:** Does ACTION do resignation surveys and has it done anything to ascertain why people leave? Has it actually addressed the causes rather than just continuing to recruit?

**Mr Elliott:** I can answer that at one level at least. One of the issues we deal with

which is not peculiar to ACTION is a matter of skills, skills shortage and age. There are over 140 bus drivers who are between the ages of 55 and 64. We have recruited and now have on staff since February 2007 an extra 82 new drivers, and I think we are putting another eight or 10 through this month. So we are trying to recruit consistently all the time.

Eighty drivers have in fact left the service, and most of those have retired. They have retired because they have got to the end of their desire to work, and I guess they want to enjoy the environs of Canberra while not working. Some of those come back as casuals and do a little bit of work, but there is a natural attrition rate in this labour force because of the nature and the age of the service. Again, that is not peculiar to ACTION; that is a systemic thing right across the country.

**MR SMYTH:** So how many full-time drivers and how many casuals are there?

**Mr Elliott:** We have on our staff—and I might have to be corrected on this—around 500 staff: around 300 full time and around 200 part time. The numbers will fluctuate by factors of 10, but say 300 and 200.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I draw your attention, Mr Smyth, to page 324. That shows the estimated employment level.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, but the question was about drivers, not about—

**Mr Hargreaves:** I know. You were talking about drivers, and drivers leaving. It is an ageing workforce, and it is pretty much the same as the general public service workforce, except that it is a blue-collar job. We are finding that there would be a greater level of exit now and for the next five years before it starts to tail off again. It is difficult because it is not like the general workforce. It is easier to recruit for the general workforce than it is to recruit blue-collar workers.

**MR SMYTH:** For the minister's interest, a petition was tabled on ACTION bus route 769 on 4 March. It appears on page 1377 of the *Hansard*.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will look forward to seeing that. You said you would get me a copy of it.

**MR SMYTH:** I will give it to you; if you want it, you can have it.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have got a miscellaneous file I can put it in.

**MR PRATT:** Mr Hargreaves, I return to the bus interchanges and safety issues. I am sure Mr Elliott will not mind me quoting the comment he made at the recent Tuggeranong Community Council meeting, when he expressed his concern, which I was very pleased to hear, about the level of safety. I think he said that Woden interchange is not necessarily conducive to people comfortably or safely using that place—perhaps at night-time; I am not sure. Minister, I recall in May 2007 you and the Chief Minister both expressed your concerns about the safety of the interchanges. What has been the staff increase at Woden interchange since May 2007?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to take that on notice, Mr Pratt. I am quite happy to provide the information, but we will need to look at the staffing figures for that particular interchange. You have to look at that against the background that the government has recognised that Woden interchange is a problem. Nobody has shied away from that; hence some of the activities we have done there.

It is no accident that the refurbished police station is still in the vicinity. It is no accident that we have put, for example, murals up there to deter people from doing graffiti in the place. It is no accident that we have additional transport supervisors there, and it is no accident that we are going with the CCTV.

If you can point us to how you would address that issue, we would be quite happy to work together on that. I believe we have put significant thought and resources into it. There are additional funds in there to spruce the thing up. Again, short of having a fence around it so that anybody who looks like an undesirable does not get in, I am not sure how we can do any more than we have, with more of a police presence, more transport supervisors and greater CCTV in the interchange itself and on the buses. We have had criminal activity prevented because the bus drivers have detected it happening on the CCTV cameras in the buses.

**MR PRATT:** I am looking at a press release by the Chief Minister of 4 May, saying that he will improve staffing levels immediately in those interchanges to try to make the staff safer, as well as provide some more supervision on site. Are you saying you are not sure whether the staffing levels have been increased?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, I am not saying that at all. I am saying there has been an increase at all of the interchanges and we need to get for you specific information around Woden.

**MR PRATT:** Having identified this, why has it taken 12 months, until August, to get any CCTV cameras into those places, apart from those transport management cameras that already existed?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Madam Chair, my patience is being truly tried. Mr Elliott has already explained, for the benefit of the committee, that the closed circuit TV regime at interchanges has to have the same platform as the closed circuit TV surveillance technology in the city area, for example. It has to have the same monitoring; it has to have the same recording capabilities; it has to have the same privacy provisions attached to it.

When the contract was put out for the CCTV at the interchanges, it was against the background that there was an undertaking to put CCTV in interchanges before the expanded CCTV program in the city area was actually decided upon. So when the specifications were compiled, we found that it was not the same platform, the situation changed and we have changed direction. There is no lack of commitment in here; there is no dragging of the chain; there was a lack of consistency in the specifications, which has been addressed.

**MR PRATT:** Minister, why then did you say in May 2007, in an MPI debate, “We acknowledge the problem,” and “As we speak, cameras are being installed”? Was that

a mislead or were you simply saying, “As we speak, we might be thinking about it”?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. Mr Pratt is very good at the butchering of the English language; I congratulate him on his meat-cleaving attitudes. There is obviously a problem of understanding here. Mr Pratt has this simplistic view that when we say that things are being installed it means that there is a man on a ladder with a screwdriver installing hardware. He does not understand that there is a process of purchase.

**MRS DUNNE:** It was the actual image that I had.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is right. It is simple minds at play, chair; simple things amuse simple minds. They forget, of course—you would expect this from the shadow Treasurer, but you would be disappointed—that there is a need to go through a procurement process. There have to be specifications raised; they have to be then transparently done through the procurement solutions people. There is a whole process. At the end of the day, someone goes up on a ladder and installs the camera.

**MR PRATT:** Just to quote you, minister the words were: “Cameras are being renewed and installed as we speak.” The question is: were you actually resourcing your ACTION authority to get on with what was identified as an urgent safety matter? The answer can be no.

**Mr Hargreaves:** In response to Mr Pratt, let me say that there are a couple of points that he seems to have conveniently missed out. One of them is that through the national land transport security committee we have national standards that have to be achieved. Second, we have a total closed-circuit TV camera program which is being managed by the Department of Justice and Community Safety. Mr Pratt seems to be under some misapprehension that, independently of all of this work on CCTVs, ACTION is going to stick up its own system. Perhaps that is because he does not listen. I have said it twice already; I am not going to say it a third time.

**MR PRATT:** With the actual amenity of these interchanges, why do we see this? That is one of three toilets broken at the Civic interchange. It has been like that forever. Bus drivers complain to me that they would not let their mothers, daughters or sisters use these toilets. Why do you insist on allowing toilets which can only be used by men at a bus interchange? How does this attract patronage?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not frequent public toilets in the Civic area quite as frequently as Mr Pratt does. I appreciate the photograph. He asked us for a specific instance. It is just a classic dose of headline grabbing. If he wishes to put forward this information, we will look into it.

**MR PRATT:** So you do not care about this?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Interestingly, Mr Pratt waltzes into the chamber here, puts a photograph in the air and says that the world is going to end on Thursday. I have got news for him: it is not going to end on Thursday.

**MR PRATT:** Madam Chair, could I table these photographs, which indicate that the minister does not give a stuff about the standard of our Civic interchange and the

amenity? I will table this, thank you.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Madam Chair, the last time Mr Pratt tabled photographs he made a complete goose of himself. If he is going to table these photographs, I would like to know the date that they were taken and by whom they were taken.

**MR PRATT:** Indeed. I undertake to provide all that.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Otherwise they will be like most photographs Mr Pratt produces in this place—not worth the film they were printed on.

**MR PRATT:** I will provide the dates happily.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I also ask Mr Pratt to indicate the date, the time and to whom he—he, not anybody else—reported that particular instance to Canberra Connect or city management.

**MR PRATT:** Madam Chair, perhaps I can provide you with a copy of the letter I wrote to the minister late last year about the standard of the toilets at the bus interchange.

**Mr Hargreaves:** If he does not put his reporting date down, it does not mean a thing. It just means that he is condoning this activity in the city area because he frequents them so frequently.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, my question relates to the new Adshel bus shelters. I must say that I am very impressed with the new shelters. Can you tell us what the response has been from ACTION consumers?

**MR PRATT:** Are you impressed with the one at Conder, which keeps getting blown up?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We have had a fairly good reaction to the new Adshel bus shelters—so much so that people have been ringing us up and wanting them installed at their particular bus stops. Some of them want the old bunkers removed and places put down. We have had representations from some considerable, dedicated members of this place, looking after their constituents, badgering me about putting in these bus shelters. I have to say that all of the atmospherics that the opposition has put around what a horrible thing this would be and all of the Greens' accusations about advertising on these things have just washed clean through.

**MRS DUNNE:** Never said anything.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have to say that, in being critical of the opposition's approach, I have to exclude Mrs Dunne from this, because she has said absolutely nothing about it and I appreciate that.

**MRS DUNNE:** That is not true either.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It has been the other people within the place who have been hysterical about it. The truth of the matter is that the people in the ACT think they are a wonderful new initiative. I congratulate ACTION on it; I think it is absolutely fantastic—particularly when we do not have to pay for them and we do not have to pay for the maintenance of them.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Duggan and Outtrim Avenue in Calwell are very busy streets for buses.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Sounds like a bid to me.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Will you be starting to roll these out into the suburbs?

**Mr Hargreaves:** This is a commercial proposition, Mr Gentleman. We need to have conversations with Adshel as to the extent to which they are going to put it out. I think they were putting out 156 or 157 of them, or around that number. They will be going on major traffic routes in the first instance. In some cases we might be swapping them with the bunker type, but we will need to be looking at it. This is something that Adshel are doing themselves. If you have a particular couple of bus stops you want us to check out for you, then if you can let us know about that we will get them checked out with Adshel for you.

**THE CHAIR:** All right.

**MRS DUNNE:** Can I just follow up on that. I preface my remarks by saying that, when the announcement was made about the Adshel contract, when I was the shadow minister for transport, I congratulated the department and the government on doing that, so I have not been silent on the matter.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Indeed.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, have there been any problems with locations where they have gone out—where maintenance has ended up being a particular problem?

**Mr Hargreaves:** There have been one or two bus stops that have been vandalised by people. The fabric of the glass perspex that is there usually withstands enormous percussion, but a couple have been targeted rather brutally and are an issue. But generally speaking, no.

**MRS DUNNE:** With the ones that have been continually targeted, what is the strategy there? Are you going to take them out and put back the old bunkers?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. We are still talking to Adshel about what we can do about this. There are two aspects we have to look at. You do not continually put the same thing back and have it destroyed; we need to look at some police action around that. That is a matter for the police, but we are working with the police on that. And there is the issue of the constant route replacement; we have to work with Adshel on how they are going to do that. It is an ongoing issue for us, but there are not very many of them that that is applied to. Mr Zissler points out that there is not much difference in the

attention that it is receiving from our normal bus stops. It is at about the same level.

**MRS DUNNE:** I noticed in the budget papers that you were getting \$60,000 from the commonwealth for apprentices. I cannot remember what page it is. Can you tell us how many apprentices you have, how many new apprentices you take on every year and what trades they are in? You can take that on notice, Mr Elliott.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I think we will have to take that on notice, Mrs Dunne. You are only talking about ACTION, are you?

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes. The other matter is this. Can I have an explanation for why—I am not satisfied with the note—we have changed the strategic indicator and why we have only one strategic indicator.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Which page is that on?

**MRS DUNNE:** Page 325. It is 327 in last year's budget paper 4. First of all, why do we have only one strategic indicator? Secondly, why have you changed it? You have gone from annual adult boardings to total yearly passenger boardings.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is a level of detail I would rather go back and check. I will take it on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Right.

**MR SMYTH:** On page 328 there is mention of the commonwealth government scheme to assist with fuel. Given that the cost of diesel has gone through the roof, will you be able to live within your budget for fuel this year or will you need supplementation?

**Mr Elliott:** We have put it with an eye to the way that fuel is fluctuating and the price level and the debate around fuel costs at the commonwealth level. We did forecast and put some estimates in in terms to allow us to soak up some of those fuel fluctuations. Currently we are paying \$1.60 a litre for diesel. I cannot tell you the specific price of CNG, but diesel is the one that we consume a bit more of. We have got a reasonable line in the budget around that. If fuel continues to increase, say up to \$2 a litre, we will be having some discussions with Treasury about that for sure. We have got enough in the budget now in terms of a forecast, but it is escalating a little bit more quickly than we would have imagined—as I think most people would have imagined.

**MR SMYTH:** Do we buy our diesel at commercial rates?

**Mr Elliott:** Yes, we buy it at commercial rates. We buy it through a contract as part of a New South Wales government contract for fuel supply.

**MR PRATT:** Madam Chair, for the benefit of the committee and Mr Hargreaves, I table a letter I wrote to him on 25 February about said toilet seats and also Mr Hargreaves's response to my letter, dated 30 April. And I ask again: why has he not done a damn thing about it?

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Pratt, have you put dates and things on that photograph?

**MR PRATT:** I will get—

**THE CHAIR:** Can you give it back to Mr Pratt, please. You can hand them in when you have got the—

**MR PRATT:** You may take the document and I will get the dates for you.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, if you put the dates, the venue and stuff. We need to go on to enterprise services, output 2.1, government services.

**MR SMYTH:** Can we do cemeteries first, just quickly.

**THE CHAIR:** You want to do cemeteries first?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes. The state of the returned services section at Woden—I still have concerns raised with me about that. We had a discussion about this last—

**Mr Hargreaves:** We did. I thought that had been addressed.

**MR SMYTH:** Some of it has been addressed, but you were going to look at how the long-term maintenance was being funded.

**Mr Hargreaves:** The committee can give us an indication of exactly what you want. I think we were talking about the fact that there was a certain amount of commonwealth contribution from Veterans' Affairs. My understanding is that predominantly the war vets graves area at Woden is looked after by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. We provide some additional service as well, the extent of which I am not sure of off the top of my head.

**MR SMYTH:** All right.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will take that away.

**MR SMYTH:** The question was more about what happens when the veteran's family dies. The whole purpose of the trust is to maintain things in perpetuity.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. There is perpetual care, I believe.

**MR SMYTH:** Arrangements were unclear, and you were going to investigate that.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have to tell you that I do not know where we are at. I will take that on notice. If not enough has ensued, we will move along with it. There is the issue—and this is worth putting on record—around the perpetual care liability of these particular grave sites. For example, what happens if all of the family of a particular serviceman have moved out of town or passed on? Somebody has to have the financial responsibility to maintain that grave site for that particular soldier, airman or sailor. I do not know whether the Department of Veterans' Affairs takes care of that perpetual care liability or whether it passes to the territory and therefore is picked up



within the context of our total perpetual care liability. We have an issue with our perpetual care liability. I will take that on board—not only by way of getting you a response, but by taking the issue up completely. I think that issue will only get worse if we do not have a solution to it.

**MR SMYTH:** I go to budget paper 4, page 433, the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority. One of the priorities is to continue to develop and refine the range of services and options for burial. There are reports that there will be a cemetery and possibly a crematorium built on Mugga Lane not too far from a certain power station.

**Mr Hargreaves:** There is some confidence there.

**MR SMYTH:** What plans are in train, what work is being done and what are the plans for the general area?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I cannot go into details for you. The reason for that is that I have a submission on that before cabinet at the moment. It covers two aspects. One is the provision of a cemetery for the southern part of town, Tuggeranong particularly. The other one is a separate issue: whether the ACT can sustain a second crematorium. If you look at some of the interstate experiences, it would appear as though the crematorium at Norwood Park can satisfy a population of 340,000 people. We were looking into the future around that, with a population of around 500,000 people. There is some work being put forward to cabinet but I cannot tell you anything more than that.

**MR SMYTH:** So there is consideration of a crematorium in the district of Tuggeranong near Macarthur?

**Mr Hargreaves:** There is a submission on the cabinet agenda—but it is not on the agenda for the next couple of weeks—which discusses the issue of a second crematorium. The discussion is whether or not you need to have it on the same site as the cemetery. I cannot give you any more detail other than to say to you that there is a discussion around a second crematorium for Canberra and, separately, a cemetery for the southern part of town.

You refer to the block of land on Mugga Lane. There is plenty of space there for a cemetery, and, at this stage of the game, as I indicated earlier, ACTPLA has reserved that general area until such time as that decision is taken by cabinet. It has not taken it yet.

**MR SMYTH:** Could you tell us what blocks are under consideration?

**Mr Hargreaves:** You would know that section 1671 is a big enough block to take into account a whole heap of things. But, no, I cannot tell you what block number. If you are trying to ask whether we are going to stick a power station on top of a crematorium, the answer is no.

**THE CHAIR:** We are now going on to 2.1, government services, under output class 2, Enterprise Services. Mr Gentleman has a question.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thanks, chair. Minister, in relation to Capital Linen Service, what have the staffing numbers been like? Have they fluctuated over the last year? I could not see.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Gary Byles will look at this.

**Mr Byles:** Madam Chair, members of the committee, the current staffing of Capital Linen Service is 102. There have been some slight fluctuations, but it has been in the order of single digit numbers. Capital Linen Service have sufficient staffing at the moment to produce the requirement to meet their output.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** In previous years Capital Linen Service were supplying quite a good employee training program to those new to Australia. How has that program been going? I understand they got an award, I think it was the year before last.

**Mr Hargreaves:** They did the year before last. The program continues, and the production of the linen service continues to grow. Also, their usage of water is dramatically reduced with the new batch washers that are in there. I have to say that if the committee has not individually been out to the laundry to have a look, I invite you to do so to see the staff out there. You will see a multicultural community out there. They have an enormous amount of staff support services out there. It will just blow your mind, let me tell you. Rather than going into too much detail, I invite you to go out there and have a look.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I think from the last budget there was one major capital expense in a new machine?

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is right.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That has been delivered now?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. The thing is that a lot of the old technology was very heavy on water usage. I have forgotten the numbers, but it was something in the order of 80 per cent turnaround in the amount of water used in the batch washer. These batch washers are very large machines, as you can imagine. It is to the credit of CLS that they were actually able to fund the purchase of the replacement batch washer themselves from internal savings rather than seeking a specific allocation for it.

**Mr Zissler:** The water saving was 47 per cent.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It was a 47 per cent water saving. I am sorry, I got it wrong. That was last year alone.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. Is this is where I get to ask questions about the Albert Hall?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. I know that this must be a crossover between you, minister, and the minister with responsibility for heritage, but I presume that Mr Ryan is looking—

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, Mr Ryan is champing at the bit. However, the heritage bits, I will not be able to answer.

**MRS DUNNE:** No, I understand. Question No 1: what is the \$2.723 million being spent on?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Heaps.

**MRS DUNNE:** We are fixing the roof, for a start?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The works to be undertaken are—this is in priority order: reroofing the building to stop water leaks and improve insulation; full external painting; removal of asbestos; removal of lead-based paints in the kitchen—so do not lick the walls in the kitchen, Mrs Dunne, it is dangerous; upgrading and replacement of kitchen equipment, because the members for Ginninderra will continually eat the equipment in the kitchen; implementing fire safety works; installation of electrical systems that are safe and functional—are you ready for this one, Mr Pratt—upgrading the toilets, so now you can you loiter around those ones; minor works, including doors, curtains, floors, carpets, security and the stage.

**THE CHAIR:** And the steps to the stage, one presumes as well?

**Mr Ryan:** The temporary ones, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, there will be new ones, not temporary ones?

**MRS DUNNE:** There are stairs in the wings, but there have never been stairs—

**Mr Hargreaves:** My Ryan is busting his little buns to tell you all about the reference group and things like that, and I think it is time for Mr Ryan to tell you just how this is going to be managed.

**MRS DUNNE:** Have we fixed up the mould and the leak in the ladies loo?

**Mr Hargreaves:** It says on the list, “Upgrade the toilets”. We will put a better quality of mould in the ladies loo for you, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** I was really concerned about the black marks on the ceiling.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is okay. You do not have to bring you own; we will fix it.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Just before Mr Ryan goes on to something else, I want to congratulate you, minister. I think this is a fantastic opportunity for the ACT.

**MRS DUNNE:** You can do that in the party room, Mick.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** There has been a big call for it from the community. When Mr Ryan gives us his answer, can he tell us also if there has been any further work on the organ?

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair, this was my question. You can ask a supplementary about the organ, Mr Gentleman. I am not sure I have had my question answered.

**Mr Hargreaves:** We will tack on comments about the organ onto the back of Mr Ryan's address, if you like.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. Mr Ryan?

**Mr Ryan:** The minister mentioned the reference group. The Friends of the Albert Hall have been actively working with us over the several months since we have taken back responsibility for the Albert Hall. Accordingly, in terms of the money that has been provided in the budget, there is the \$2.7 million that the ACT government has put forward, and the commonwealth has put forward \$500,000 for that. That will actually be paid next financial year.

We have proposed to put together a reference group involving the Friends of the Albert Hall and the various agencies that are involved, including the heritage unit and the Chief Minister's Department, to actually scope the work that is going to be done. So, at the present time, I cannot say that the stairs will be fixed, but I am sure that will come forward as part of the issues. We are involving the friends right through the process with us—there is a letter going out to the friends asking them to nominate two people. Essentially, we want to get those two people on board for a committee or reference group that will undertake the scoping of the work. We know what needs to be done, but it is more about what is the outcome that they want to achieve. The friends have been quite vocal over several months about the quality of the painting, the quality of the carpets, the quality of the roof and all the rest.

In terms of the ladies toilets, we have already done the initial work on all the toilets. That has occurred over the last six months. But this will be a full rework of the toilets. When we got the building back into our hands late last year, the ceiling was falling down in the ladies. That has been repaired.

**MRS DUNNE:** The light fitting that fell down and hit somebody has been repaired?

**Mr Ryan:** I believe that is the case.

**MRS DUNNE:** Good. I think Mr Gentleman had a supplementary question.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Do you want to talk about Mr Gentleman's organ now?

**MRS DUNNE:** We are, for the purposes of *Hansard*, talking about the mighty Wurlitzer, or whatever it is.

**Mr Ryan:** It is the one that is behind the stage. There is an organisation called TOSA, the Theatre Organ Society of Australia (ACT), that have been looking after the organ, so it is not a territory activity. They lease or sublease space at the rear of the stage,

and that is where they store the organ. They have been restoring it over several years. We are in the process of renewing the tenancy arrangement at the hall, because our original arrangement was with Mr McLachlan, who was the previous manager of the hall.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** You mentioned the ceiling in the ladies restrooms. There was also some damage to the ceiling above the mezzanine.

**Mr Ryan:** Upstairs?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes.

**Mr Ryan:** That has been repaired as well. We have also repaired all the fire doors so that they now operate.

**THE CHAIR:** That is a very good idea.

**Mr Ryan:** When we took it over, we discovered the fire doors were all chained, so that has all been repaired. Our initial work at the Albert Hall is to go through and handle all the safety issues.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, of course.

**Mr Ryan:** So it has been looking at wiring, lighting, exit doors, making sure ceilings are safe. The big problem with that mezzanine was that I think the roof had been removed because of drips coming from the roof when it rained. Fortunately, it has not been raining all that much, but that has been fixed.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. Can I ask other property questions?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, but can I just congratulate Madam Chair on her expertise at the Albert Hall in recent times with the celebrations of the Monaro folk festival. The dance was spectacular; it was brilliant. I shared that evening with Madam Chair, and she was absolutely magnificent.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**MRS DUNNE:** I wanted to talk, minister, about the situation with some of the closed school sites.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not know if I can answer your questions, but I will try.

**MRS DUNNE:** The first question relates to Flynn primary school. There has been a spate of window breakings going on there. When I first inquired about it I was told that when the windows were broken they would be boarded up rather than replaced.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is my understanding.

**MRS DUNNE:** Why is that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Because somebody finds it more difficult to break a boarded-up window one than a glass one.

**MRS DUNNE:** Flynn primary school is now becoming—

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is only a preventative measure; there are no other issues at play here. That is all it is; it is just to stop the windows from being smashed in. Remember, too, if we board them up people will not get access to the inside of the building through a broken window. It is only as a holding pattern.

**MRS DUNNE:** It gives the impression that the facility that has been taken out of the suburb has now become derelict as the amount of boarding in places on it—

**Mr Hargreaves:** I accept that some in the community might feel that, but that is not the case at all. We are just doing it as a method to prevent further damage to the place. There is nothing more to it than that.

**MRS DUNNE:** The safety issue at Flynn—I should have done this earlier in the week—I was there on Saturday, and on the corner of the building facing the street that goes down past the preschool, the name of which escapes me at the moment, there are a whole lot of spoon drains that are about 18 inches square. The grating on one of those is broken, so a child can fall in, and they are quite deep.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Okay, we will attend to that.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. What is happening with Rivett?

**Mr Hargreaves:** You need to take this matter up with Ms Gallagher; I can only really relay to you what is in the public domain at the moment. Rivett is scheduled to be removed, and it is what use that will be put to which is out for public consultation at the moment. The government has indicated—

**MRS DUNNE:** I am actually asking about the fabric of the building.

**Mr Hargreaves:** The same thing, same story.

**MRS DUNNE:** Who manages it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We do.

**MRS DUNNE:** That is why I am asking you about the fabric of the building.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, the fabric of the building. We will treat it the same as we do Mount Neighbour. The building will eventually go but we need to have the community consultation process happen at the moment to talk about what use that would be put to. Our preference, because we think the area is consistent with that, would be for it to have aged care facilities of some type in it—not aged care but older persons.

**MRS DUNNE:** I am not talking about the consultation; I am talking about the

building.

**Mr Hargreaves:** The point here—and what we need to appreciate—is that, once the use of that particular site is determined through community consultation and all the rest of it, that will determine whether we undertake demolition or whether we get the developer to do it or what. In the meantime, we will be treating that building in much the same way as we did Charnwood High School; we will keep it in as intact a way as we can in the meantime.

**MRS DUNNE:** At Rivett, some of that building is planned to be retained for a range of uses. Who will manage that and who will be responsible for maintenance and things like that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Mr Ryan will answer that one for you. He was passing me notes. He might as well tell you himself.

**Mr Ryan:** The Shepherd Centre was placed into the preschool shortly after the preschool closed. Noah's Ark, which is in the existing school buildings, is going to stay on site. So the Shepherd Centre will stay on site, as will Noah's Ark. We have responsibility for maintaining the buildings associated with that. If a window is broken at Noah's Ark we would replace it in the building that they occupy.

We are looking after the fabric. The government, in the budget, has proposed money for the total refurbishment of both those buildings.

**MRS DUNNE:** Is the Noah's Ark building a discrete building?

**Mr Ryan:** Yes, it is a building that is situated on the edge of the site and has a walkway that attaches it to the rest of the school. It will be basically disconnected, separated and protected.

**MR PRATT:** Residents are very concerned about the amenity of their suburbs and the look of the city, and that is why residents are concerned not to see our closed schools become derelict, is it not? What other measures do you have in place to try to ensure that standard? Given the challenges you clearly face, what other measures do you have in place?

**Mr Hargreaves:** For what?

**MR PRATT:** For keeping these closed schools intact?

**Mr Hargreaves:** They have security arrangements around their perimeter; the police, for example, are aware that they are a sensitive particular target, shall we say. Essentially we are keeping them as intact as we can through a range of fencing and security firm visits—irregular ones, quite deliberately irregular ones, so that people cannot predict a pattern of the visit from the security guard—until such time as the community can say to us what they want to use it for.

The Deputy Chief Minister has indicated that most of the buildings will be retained for community use and that will require certain refurbishment internally. For example,

some primary schools have got toilets which are for littlies and they need to be changed to adult levels. That timeframe dictates how long it is going to be in a secure state.

**MR PRATT:** How can you be trusted to upkeep these closed school properties when you have this standard of deterioration on your own parks and gardens depot at Braddon? I will show you these two photographs, which I will again table, showing the before and after some months apart. There is no change at all to the cleaning of the Braddon depot which has been vandalised to billyo.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Your question was: “How can we be trusted?” The answer to your question is: “Very readily we can be trusted.”

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Pratt, can you please find the dates.

**MR PRATT:** I table those. I pre-empt the minister’s cynical response. Yes, I will have the dates.

**THE CHAIR:** And venues.

**MR PRATT:** Yes.

**Mr Hargreaves:** There is something that I think needs to be put on the record here. Mr Pratt has for some time put up photographs of the Braddon depot, saying, “You folks are not looking after your own property so what makes you think—

**MR PRATT:** And you are not.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Can I advise the committee that the Braddon depot is not government property. It is leased out; it is not a depot.

**MR PRATT:** Is it not a parks and gardens installation?

**Mr Hargreaves:** It was but it is not any more. Get with the program.

**MR PRATT:** When did those leasing arrangements change?

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is a private show; it is private property, private lessee. Get on and do your homework. It is subleased.

**MR PRATT:** If this is a body which is providing a government service, particularly in the area of landscape maintenance, why do you tolerate that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Mr Pratt is trying his best to wriggle out from under this rug and I suggest that we move on.

**MR PRATT:** Why do you tolerate that standard of building maintenance?

**MRS DUNNE:** For the record—and if you need to take this on notice, Mr Ryan, I am relaxed and I am sure Mr Pratt will be—what is the building used for? Who holds the



lease or the sublease and when was it taken out?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, we can take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** I believe that there is a program of removing graffiti throughout the city but could you inform the committee, when graffiti is on private property, what the procedure is? Unless it is offensive, there are two different regimes, I believe.

**Mr Hargreaves:** In fact, I will take part of your question on notice so that we can put some stats down on the table of the committee in terms of just how much graffiti has been removed in the last 12 months. We have done some extensive work in that area. Our strategy, I believe, is starting to work.

One of the big strategies we have is to encourage people on private properties to put murals on their exposed walls rather than allow people to come along, tag it and put obscene remarks on it. If it is private property and it has obscene stuff or it has violent stuff on it, we will remove it within 24 hours of notification. If it is just dirty and ugly, it is the responsibility of the building owner to do it. And they do it within the time that it takes. We have a priority on the violent and obscene stuff and we apply that. You will never have a city like ours which will be free of graffiti. We need to minimise it and I believe we have a strategy to minimise it.

Every single time I come before this committee at an annual report hearing, Mr Pratt produces a photograph of somewhere in town that has had graffiti on it for some considerable time—every single time that I have come here.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Not that underpass at Woden, is it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Not the underpass at Woden, no. And I am surprised he was not fronting this particular lessee and saying, “Can I scrub it off your wall?” The point that I make is that we have a strategy; we have an action plan; we actually do the work that is contained in that action plan; we have preventative measures and we have educational messages. All Mr Pratt is able to produce is photographs of a bit that still exists.

He has actually produced nothing in the way of a proposed program to address it. He has never produced a policy or a program which can address it. So I wait, perhaps in vain, for such a thing to appear. But if it does appear, I am sure it will appear on the wall of some private premises around town. And he can see the writing on the wall, this fellow.

**MR PRATT:** How long is it going to take to clean the graffiti off the street furniture? I have identified particularly the street corner safety sign in Braddon outside the particular depot in question. There are three pieces of street furniture, which is your property, covered in graffiti and have been for about six months. I will be happy to table the photographs of those items—same graffiti, no change, six months, public property. Why haven't you? Where is your program working, with that example in place?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We actually find quite a fair bit of the stuff around the city which

gets cleaned up. You will find that information contained in the response that I have taken on notice. But in relation to this particular one, I will go back and find out how long it will take.

**MRS DUNNE:** My understanding is that the consultation on what to do with former school sites, which was undertaken under your auspices, was delayed, for a start, but then the consultant's report came to you in late January or early February. What happened with the consultant's report after it came to you?

**Mr Hargreaves:** My memory is that it formed the basis of a submission to cabinet. After that, the responsibility transferred to the Deputy Chief Minister and you would need to take it up with her.

**MRS DUNNE:** You took the cabinet submission; you were the lead minister?

**Mr Hargreaves:** There was a cabinet submission taken forward. It was a joint cabinet submission and that is the conclusion of my remarks on it.

**MRS DUNNE:** Joint cabinet submission with whom?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have just told you it was a joint cabinet submission and I am not going to speak any further on the matter.

**MR SMYTH:** Why can you not answer as to whom the submission was with? What is the problem?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Because I have already, and if you were not listening I suggest that perhaps you wake up.

**MR SMYTH:** It is a reasonable question. There is no need to be offensive.

**MRS DUNNE:** I did not hear you. When did you say—

**Mr Hargreaves:** For the benefit of Mrs Dunne, for whom I have a respect—

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair, this is unnecessary.

**Mr Hargreaves:** We can go on, if you like. I wish fishing was this easy. There was a joint cabinet submission put to the cabinet by me and Ms Gallagher and it was considered by the cabinet. Then any further questions on the matter need to be addressed to the Deputy Chief Minister.

**MR SMYTH:** The accountability indicators, on page 289, occupancy rate for properties designated for use by non-government tenants, state—and it is a new measure—it is to achieve 95 per cent occupancy. What is the current occupancy rate?

**Mr Ryan:** It depends on your definition of the properties of course but we would say, in terms of the ones that are ready for occupancy, we are probably sitting at about 95 per cent to 96 per cent.

**MR SMYTH:** Of the properties, what percentage are ready for occupancy?

**Mr Ryan:** I am sorry, would you like to clarify?

**MR SMYTH:** You said, “Of those properties ready for occupancy, 95 per cent.” How many properties do you have and how many are ready for occupancy?

**Mr Ryan:** Could I take that on notice? In terms of the numbers, it is quite extensive.

**Mr Hargreaves:** For clarification for other members of the committee—Mr Smyth will probably know this—the actual properties that we have are owned by us and leased by us as well. So there is a difference in there. We will try to split it down so that you actually get a clearer picture.

**MR SMYTH:** Is there a reason for properties not being let? I assume some are up for regular maintenance or whatever.

**Mr Ryan:** Some come to us and they are not ready for use. Some come to us and are evaluated. We are talking surplus properties in the main. Essentially, in terms of the non-government tenancies, we are talking about buildings that over the years have been declared surplus for other government needs. They get evaluated and some of them are used to accommodate non-government tenants. So we will have properties that are non-government, potentially, users but are still being evaluated.

For instance, there is one that has been on our books for some time. The Land Development Agency has now signed an arrangement for the O’Connell Centre at Griffith to go to the Baptists for aged persons accommodation. That has been on our books but will come off our books when we transfer that to the Land Development Agency to be on sold. We have properties like that.

We also have organisations that leave properties, leave their tenancies, and we have to rehabilitate the area they have left behind in order to reuse it. Essentially, from the day that a place is vacated, you have then got to go through a process of identifying who will be the replacement organisation to go in there and negotiate the tenancy documentation with them. So sometimes it goes really quickly; sometimes it takes a bit longer because of the negotiations that are involved in what will be usually a five-year sublease or licence.

**MR SMYTH:** Indicator f in the same area, accommodation costs per employee, looks like it has gone up about 5½ per cent this year but you are only projecting that it go up about 1.3 per cent in the coming years. Is that in anticipation of the market softening or is it that we have locked in our leases and we do not anticipate any significant renewal of leases?

**Mr Ryan:** Essentially, you will see that the utilisation rate stayed the same, target and actual, last year but we are anticipating lower. All the signs are already that we will achieve a possibly even better rate than 18.2 next year. Essentially, the greater you get the utilisation rate, the less the cost per employee, because you have got this mass of money and the more employees we can get into a smaller amount of accommodation the more the amount per employee reduces.

**MR SMYTH:** I know you have a significant number of different leases. Is there an inflator in the leases so that the value of the leases goes up by CPI on the cost of the leases or are they fixed rates?

**Mr Ryan:** It depends on the landlord. Bear in mind that we have got a mixture of owned office buildings and leased space. In terms of owned office buildings, we work on the government's normal increase rate, so that rent will normally go up on 1 July in owned office buildings like Mac House and the health building by the government's rate. So, if the government's rate this year is 3.1 or whatever, that is what the rent will go up by as well.

In terms of the private subleases we have, some will go for a fixed rate over a period of time, some will build in an escalator and some will have a mixture of an escalator and a renegotiate. So, if you have got a 10-year lease with a private landlord, you might find that it goes up by the CPI for the first three years and then there is a review after that to establish what the market rent is. That is usually triggered with agreement between both the tenant or the sublessee and the sublessor. You will usually get a letter from the landlord saying, "We intend to do a market review and do you want to put your input in?" So we get our own valuers in and put up our own case for why the rent should stay the same or go down or we agree to an increase.

**MR SMYTH:** You mentioned that the utilisation rate has come down slightly. What is the standard and what are you aiming for?

**Mr Ryan:** The government's long-term intention is 15 square metres per person. That is 15 square metres across the building, so essentially you work out the usable space, so that removes stairwells, lift spaces, entrance foyers and public areas that are major public areas.

**MRS DUNNE:** What about circulation space?

**Mr Ryan:** Internal circulation space would stay in, so internal corridors; but external corridors that cannot be used may be removed. There is a definition we could produce, if you wanted it, but essentially you work out the area of the building and divide that by the number of staff to achieve the utilisation rate, and 15 is the current standard. We would think that we are on track to achieve that. The biggest challenge you face is the buildings that have been established for many years, with higher rates and actually getting the new fit-outs put in place often. If you move to a new building, we can achieve it straightaway. Eclipse House, which we redid last year as part of the whole-of-government accommodation standard, came in at 14.1, I think. So 15 is still generous. The private sector is currently working at about 11.6. So for us the challenge with this is that we have gone through redoing a number of buildings but you have still got buildings like 12 Moore Street, where justice department is, which has got a higher utilisation rate.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Madam Chair, may I, and with your indulgence, Mr Pratt, table a letter from Mr Pratt to me regarding the condition of the toilets at the bus interchange, Civic. I have been given a copy here, which I would like to table, of my response to Mr Pratt.

**MRS DUNNE:** I think Mr Pratt already tabled that.

**MR SMYTH:** It has already been tabled.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I would like to point out that he is waving photographs around of toilets with no seats on them—

**MR PRATT:** Of your embarrassing standards.

**Mr Hargreaves:** and in a terrible state. Yet it is explained in my letter:

... I understand that these seats were initially installed as a trial. They were repeatedly vandalised and destroyed and as a result, they will not be replaced. It is standard hygienic practice not to provide toilet seats on stainless steel bowls in public facilities of this type.

Mr Pratt is waving around pictures of damaged toilet seats.

**MR PRATT:** So that is the standard that you accept?

**Mr Hargreaves:** That has been more than adequately answered in this response to him but he has neglected to bring that to the attention of the committee.

**MRS DUNNE:** But he tabled it, Madam Chair.

**Mr Hargreaves:** In case he has not, I would like to have my response tabled.

**MR PRATT:** Point of order—

**THE CHAIR:** I am going to say something, Mr Pratt—

**Mr Hargreaves:** If he has tabled it I have no problem.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, I believe that Mr Pratt did table your reply, so we do in fact have your reply. The committee has your reply.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Wonderful. I draw the committee's attention to that fourth paragraph.

**THE CHAIR:** We will obviously consider both pieces of material.

**MR PRATT:** That is why I tabled the minister's letter, so that you, the committee, could see all of the facts. Of course, the question arising from that is: does the minister accept that standard, that toilets will never be properly refurbished? Clearly he does.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Madam Chair, I reject that notion and the suggestion from Mr Pratt. It says in that letter:

It is standard hygienic practice not to provide toilet seats on stainless steel bowls in public

facilities of this type.

It is such throughout the world. Mr Pratt seems to have a different expectation from most of the people in the rest of the world.

**MR PRATT:** That is not right.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. We will move on. Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** I want to follow up on Mr Smyth's question about the leasing out of buildings to third parties, community groups and the like. There was coverage in the newspaper within the last month or so—I really cannot remember exactly when, Mr Ryan—in relation to one of the buildings that was occupied by community groups—

**MR SMYTH:** ACTSPORT at Watson old primary school.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, it was ACTSPORT.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is up in Downer.

**Mr Ryan:** Hackett.

**MRS DUNNE:** Hackett primary school. In the case of ACTSPORT, who was responsible for the maintenance?

**Mr Ryan:** Just for some context, ACTSPORT were given a crown lease over that building originally. It is actually a separate block from the rest of the parcel of the Hackett primary school. They were given a lease over it in the late nineties, I think. It was returned to the territory because the lease required them to do their maintenance. They were not able to do the maintenance and the building was falling into disrepair. It was given to property group, we spent \$600,000 to meet its maintenance requirements and we have maintained it ever since.

**MRS DUNNE:** You believe that it is in a good state of repair?

**Mr Ryan:** For the building that it is, yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** And the Creeda site at the old Downer primary school: what is the maintenance arrangement there?

**Mr Ryan:** Again, Creeda at the Downer site were given a sublease. It was Creeda and CITDC; there are two organisations at Downer so they effectively share the sublease. The sublease required Creeda to do the maintenance of the buildings. When Creeda went into receivership, we did a condition audit and found that it was not being maintained, so we have since initiated a program of maintenance. As that site was included in the review of former school sites, we have been doing the basic maintenance to make sure that tenants are protected, but if it was to be a long-term future we would do a bit more; and that is still a decision to be made.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay, thank you. On a separate line of questioning, if I may, Madam Chair?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** One of my old favourites is not in the budget this year, which is environmental upgrades to Mac House, so presumably Mac House is completely environmentally upgraded now?

**Mr Hargreaves:** You can assume, Mrs Dunne, that Mac House is a model and a fine example to all public buildings in the ACT.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is some time, Mr Ryan, since that has been completed, is it not? A solar hot water system went in a couple of years ago.

**Mr Ryan:** Yes, the year before last, onto the roof.

**MRS DUNNE:** So could you now give us before and after figures on things like water consumption and energy consumption, perhaps in a per head capacity? I am not quite sure whether that is a reasonable measure and I will be guided by you.

**Mr Hargreaves:** What exactly are you trying to achieve? Then we will put together—

**MRS DUNNE:** I am just trying to work out the performance of the building after you have done all this upgrade. You have changed the lights, you have done water upgrades, you have done solar hot water—those sorts of things. Mac House is one of your big buildings, so what is your performance?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, sure, okay. There would need to be some actual figures like cost of power and all those sorts of things. We are happy to provide those. It might take us a little while to get this. Also, I think there are some assumptions that you can only take through a formula and that is the saving of greenhouse gas emissions because of a certain thing like that. We would have to apply a formula to that, so we will do that for you. I know what you are trying to get at.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, I want to find out how the building is performing. What is your reduction in water use, what is your reduction in electricity use et cetera? Also, are you now in a position to provide that sort of information in relation to Eclipse? And what have you done differently?

**Mr Ryan:** Eclipse is a subleased building; it is owned by a private landlord.

**MRS DUNNE:** Right.

**Mr Ryan:** So the only data we will get out of Eclipse is what we pay for our share of electricity and water.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** But off the back of that, minister, are you looking at rolling out

these sorts of improvements to other government buildings as well?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** As far as the information that the committee is seeking is concerned, could you also provide financial information with regard to that? There has been an increase in the cost of water at least.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, that is right.

**MRS DUNNE:** I do not really want dollar figures; I want—

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. We are talking about how many litres were used before, how many litres were used after. It might be difficult to do it per head because we would need to work out whether or not the same staff numbers existed.

**MRS DUNNE:** That is the thing; I would like some advice that we are comparing apples with apples.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I understand what Mrs Dunne is trying to achieve, Madam Chair. We will try to put forward a package that will answer the question for you.

**MRS DUNNE:** To follow up on Mr Gentleman's question on some of your big landmark buildings, the health building has had some refurb or is planned for refurb, and Manning Clark House?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We have got heating and ventilation and air-conditioning works at Kippax health centre and Callum offices. We have got some work going on at Capital Linen at the Mitchell depot, which is heating, ventilation and air-conditioning upgrade. Hackett community centre is getting similar sort of work. The Dickson Motor Registry is getting fire, landscape and exterior lift upgrades. If it is mechanically better off, it is going to be a better and healthy building. The Fairfax Centre in O'Connor is going to be moved. There are audit works.

We will be looking at some upgrades in some of our other places. You know about Albert Hall, and the Tuggeranong homestead is going to get a bit of work done.

**MRS DUNNE:** One of the things I was interested in is: when you are doing upgrades what element of those is to make the buildings more energy efficient and more water efficient?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We will have to take the question on notice. For example, the climate change strategy has money for solar hot water systems and the installation of waterless urinals. I will have to get some more detail for you from the supporting documents to the budget papers.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** In that regard, minister, I note on page 289 reference to the use of green power, which is 23 per cent, and it stays at 23 per cent.



**MRS DUNNE:** I thought 25 was the—

**THE CHAIR:** Twenty-three per cent is the standard that we need to reach. Is that correct? Mr Zissler is nodding.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** I thought there was a government policy of 25.

**DR FOSKEY:** It has been at that level for some time, hasn't it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** You need to take up the question with the Chief Minister. It is a question of buying it; it is a question of money. It is not something that we do department by department; it is something that we do globally. It is an initiative run out of the Chief Minister's Department, getting all of the departments to contribute their bits and pieces towards it. It is possible in some places and it is a little bit less possible in others because of the extent to which their budget can bear it. But you need to take it up with the Chief Minister in his capacity as minister for the environment.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, and he is appearing before us today. Mr Smyth?

**MR SMYTH:** There might be a crossover here. I notice in the Chief Minister's capital works there is the government office accommodation building project. Does your group handle that—

**Mr Hargreaves:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** or is it only transferred to you on completion?

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is correct.

**MR SMYTH:** Has the property and facilities management group had any input into the building?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, and nor would we expect to at this point. When the Planning and Land Authority and the Chief Minister's Department say they want to do a specifications brief, they would naturally talk to the property group around specifications, such as the number of square metres per person. Essentially, it is not something that the property group would drive. We respond but we do not drive it.

**MR SMYTH:** Was a price not sought on accommodation needs when your leases expired—major buildings?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** So you did have a role in it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** As I say, we have an advisory role; we do not have a driving role.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Foskey, do you have any questions in this area?

**DR FOSKEY:** No. I think I missed my outputs. I have been listening with great interest.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth?

**MR SMYTH:** Indicator “h” on page 289 refers to plant spoilage within industry standard. What is the industry standard? You have marked it in 2008-09 as less than 10 per cent spoilage. Can you explain exactly what that is?

**THE CHAIR:** There is a note for it, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes, it just says that it is a new measure. How does that actually demonstrate that it is operating efficiently in accordance with industry standards?

**Mr Byles:** That is a new measure we introduced so that we could monitor some accountability indicators for the performance of the nursery. I am advised that that is industry standard, but I will take it on notice just to confirm that point.

Obviously, it is only one measure that relates to the performance of the nursery. The other measures are based very much on water usage. You will be aware that that particular business is very much water dependent and environmentally dependent. We have significant measures in place at the moment, including a recycling system at Yarralumla. We have a water usage master plan that has been undertaken at Pialligo. We recently received our eco-warranty certification, which shows we are conforming to environmental practices. That is a new accountability indicator that I asked to be entered into for the performance of the nursery.

**MR SMYTH:** Does the nursery run at a profit?

**Mr Byles:** That is to be determined this year. Generally speaking, yes, but—and I emphasise this point—it is very much weather dependent. Of course, if we do not have rain, that affects the amount of spoilage. It would be premature of me to determine that. We certainly aim to, and that is the nature of our business. However, we will know that as we move towards the end of June.

**Mr Hargreaves:** One of the things that would be interesting for the committee to do—or the P and E committee, in another guise—is to go out and see some of the other things that the nursery does apart from providing plants. I do not know if folks have been out to see their seed repository. We were a bit afraid that we might have lost it in the fire, but it did escape. They have seed stock from the twenties, and even earlier than that, out there. You can actually see the seed stock that the guys at the nursery use to try and propagate plants that were here before the settlement of the ACT. It is well worth seeing.

They have also got the records of plant issue and seed collection. They are handwritten in big volumes, done with dip-pen technology. It is absolutely wonderful to see that stuff out there. That, clearly, is not going to be contributing to the revenue

base, to the running costs of it. We would like to think that there is a certain degree of success in the cross-subsidy of that.

**DR FOSKEY:** Is the Yarralumla nursery not selling any of the plants that are declared weeds in the ACT?

**Mr Hargreaves:** It should not be.

**DR FOSKEY:** We have a number of declared weeds in the ACT. I have noticed them for sale in other nurseries. I am wondering if there is a way to avoid that, but I am wondering if the Yarralumla Nursery itself manages to avoid selling plants that have—

**MRS DUNNE:** They are actually called pest plants.

**DR FOSKEY:** Pest plants, yes.

**Mr Ryan:** Without knowing the actual answer to that, I would be very surprised and disappointed if that was the case. I will get back to you, Dr Foskey, with the answer to that.

**Mr Hargreaves:** If the answer is yes, the answer is no from now on.

**Mr Ryan:** Correct.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Let me assure you of that.

**DR FOSKEY:** One of the reasons I have been distracted is that I have been reading about a town in Britain called Woking, where new buildings, for instance, have brought in co-generation plants for heat, cooling and power. Is any of that taken into consideration with some of the government buildings that we manage here—or in retro-fitting?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Are you asking whether we have taken into account what they are doing in this particular—

**DR FOSKEY:** Have we looked at co-generation, which is the production of power and heat at the same time? It includes cooling as well, with significant greenhouse and energy reductions.

**MRS DUNNE:** Mr Ryan is not in a hurry to come forward and answer that one!

**Mr Hargreaves:** Stay where you are, Steve.

**DR FOSKEY:** Well, he can nod.

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, he can't nod; without my permission he can't nod.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister Hargreaves, are you—

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, I would like to take that question on notice.

**DR FOSKEY:** I will very happily give you a copy of this article. I will email it to you.

**Mr Hargreaves:** And I will very happily receive it, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, minister.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is a very good question and it deserves more than a 15-second answer, which is about what time we have left.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, thank you very much, and Mr Zissler, Mr Byles and Mr Ryan.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Madam Chair, can I again express my appreciation for the work that the officers have done in preparing for this hearing, and also for the work they are going to do in responding to the questions taken on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, and thank you also to the other officials.

**Meeting adjourned from to 12.31 to 2.06 pm.**

Appearances:

Stanhope, Mr Jon, Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Business and Economic Development, Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, Minister for the Arts

Office of Multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs  
Manikis, Mr Nic, Director

Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services  
Lambert, Ms Sandra, Chief Executive  
Hubbard, Mr Ian, Director Finance, Finance and Budget  
Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services

Department of Territory and Municipal Services  
Zissler, Mr Mike, Chief Executive  
Butt, Mr David, Director, Environment and Recreation, Sustainability and Environment Policy Coordination  
Watkinson, Mr Russell, Director, Environment and Recreation, Parks Conservation and Lands  
Thorman, Mr Rob, Director, Environment and Recreation, Sustainability Policy and Programs  
Neil, Mr Robert, Director, Environment and Recreation, Environment Protection and Heritage  
McNulty, Mr Hamish, Executive Director, Environment and Recreation

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, I am aware that you are familiar with what is written on the yellow card with regard to the privilege implications that are contained within it.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Good, thank you very much. Do you want to make any opening remarks? We are going to Indigenous affairs first.

**Mr Stanhope:** I have no opening remarks, thank you, Madam Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** Chief Minister, could you inform the committee how the nominations are going for the new Indigenous elected body, when the voting might take place and what is the time line for that process?

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is still a little early for that, I think, but, certainly, I think it is a very significant and historic occasion. The passage of the legislation to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elected body is very significant. I am very pleased that, after long and significant and close consultation with the Canberra community, we have now, with their support and agreement, settled on a model, and the Assembly has accepted that. The Electoral Commissioner is now engaged in a process that will lead to the election of an Indigenous representative body.

In the context of the detail of the question you asked, it would be perhaps more useful if Mr Manikis could respond to the time lines and the process that is being utilised and the community response to it.

**Mr Manikis:** Nominations close at 12 noon on Tuesday, 10 June, and candidates will be declared by Elections ACT the next day, 11 June, at 12 noon. The process so far is going quite well. We have had an indication, anecdotally, of three nominations so far, and there has been some level of inquiry. The team in the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs have been out at various organisations, non-government organisations as well as commonwealth government organisations that have high levels of Indigenous employees, and have been promoting the elected body and raising awareness about the forthcoming elections and also about the prospects for nominations. That seems to be being well received. There has been very little, if any, criticism at this stage, particularly from that constituency.

We are looking to increase publicity in the next week or two as well. We are really aiming for quite a significant uptake in terms of voting at the election. Voting starts on 16 June and will go through to Saturday, 21 June. The counting of votes will commence on 1 July.

These are the time lines, and we are very conscious of the need to get out there and make sure that every single member of the Indigenous community that is eligible actually knows about the elected body and is in a position to exercise a choice of either nominating or turning up and voting.

**THE CHAIR:** Where will they actually turn up to, Mr Manikis?

**Mr Manikis:** The voting venues, as I understand them, are: Gungahlin community resource centre on 16 June from 9 o'clock to 6 o'clock in the evening; Tuesday, 17 June, Belconnen community centre, again from 9 o'clock in the morning till six in the evening; Australian Public Service Commission training centre over in Phillip, on Wednesday, 18 June, from nine till six, and the reason we have picked that, of course, is because of the high numbers of employees over in FaHCSIA and other commonwealth departments in that vicinity; the Tuggeranong library on 19 June from 9 o'clock in the morning till six in the evening; the Civic library on 20 June; the Erindale neighbourhood centre on Saturday, 21 June; and Southside community service. There is quite a spread, and it provides maximum opportunity for people to get out and make this thing work.

**MR SESELJA:** You talked about publicising it. Is that publicity going to be separately for people wishing to nominate and then separately to encourage people to vote? How many potential voters are you anticipating at this point?

**Mr Manikis:** I can say to you that, in previous experience with ATSIC elections, we are aware that for the ACT division there are around 200 to 220, something like that.

**Mr Stanhope:** People that voted.

**Mr Manikis:** People that actually voted. I do not like setting targets in these things, but we would wish for up to at least 50 per cent of the eligible votes to come in, and

that is about 1,000 out of the 2,000. That is in very general terms, and we are really putting all our efforts into at least achieving that.

**MR SESELJA:** What will be the nature of the publicity? How will you be promoting it in the community generally?

**Mr Manikis:** As I said before, there is a team in the office that is going out, and it is word of mouth. We have been told during the community consultations that the most effective way of conveying these messages is the personal, direct touch. We are in a very compact situation here, and it is quite easy to do that. There have been presentations and sessions. A lot of that that has been going on and will go on—

**MR SESELJA:** Is that just to Indigenous leaders, or is that more broadly to the Indigenous community?

**Mr Manikis:** No, more broadly to the Indigenous community. For example, for the mums and some of the dads that turn up at the Koori preschools with their kids, there have been several sessions in those Koori preschools, and those people have taken away information. The way we promote this is: “Here is a brochure. Here is some information about how you nominate and when the election is on and all the rest of it. Tell your friends, tell your cousins, tell your family friends as well.” It is a mushrooming effect.

We have taken out some ads in the paper as well, but we are not heavily reliant on the print media or the electronic media. We will see how we go over the next week or so, and we will do some ringing around to gauge the level of awareness. We might need to do a little bit more later on.

**MR SESELJA:** Is the advertising just to let people know about the voting, or is it also to inform the broader Canberra community that this is actually going on? I would imagine there would be a lot of Canberrans who would still not be aware that it is happening. Is that part of the strategy, or is it more simply targeted at voters?

**Mr Manikis:** We are very focused. We have a job to do, and that is to get a take-up of at least 50 per cent. That is our job, and just spraying our limited resources and budgets right across the community does not help, I do not think. We would like to be pretty targeted in this, and I think we need to be targeted. The resources are not there to do both of those jobs that you are alluding to. Obviously, the broader community will learn about it, because, as I said before, we are taking out the odd ad here and there in the print media in the *Canberra Times* and *City News* and what have you. They are read by the general community. But I think our efforts must go into the Indigenous community and giving them a fair go.

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, on page 193 of budget paper 4, the amount spent on this area of community affairs is \$6.265 million this year. What is the proportion of that that will be spent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will ask Mr Manikis if he can respond to that.

**Mr Manikis:** Is it page 197?

**MR SMYTH:** Page 193, output 3.2, community affairs. You have got your budget for this year.

**THE CHAIR:** It is at the top of the page, Mr Manikis.

**Mr Manikis:** In 2007-08?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Mr Manikis:** It is \$845,000.

**MR SMYTH:** That is 2007-08. Now, for 2008-09, the coming year?

**Mr Manikis:** It is \$870,350.

**MR SMYTH:** That is about \$25,350 extra. What will that be spent on?

**Ms Lambert:** The chief financial officer can explain that.

**Mr Hubbard:** That additional funding there is predominantly indexation for the administration side of the budget and also for the EBA increases to the salaries and wages.

**MR SMYTH:** It is only a three per cent increase that would cover wages. What about on-costs and indexation?

**Mr Hubbard:** It is all in there. I think that is the right number. I can get you on notice the percentage changes and how they were arrived at.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. That would be lovely, thank you.

**MS MacDONALD:** Minister and Mr Manikis, I wanted to ask about the “new” Indigenous cultural centre, which has been refurbished and opened out on Lady Denman Drive . I was fortunate to open and visit it recently. When I say “new”, I think this is something that has been going on for a decade now in terms of opening that particular site. Are you able to give us a bit of a history as to why it has taken so long and the intended uses for the centre?

**Mr Manikis:** You are right; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural centre has quite a history. It dates back to 1992. It was funded initially out of the \$19 million casino premium, which has funded other facilities around this town, including, I understand, the Canberra Museum and Gallery and the Tuggeranong Arts Centre.

So the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander centre is in great company. It has just taken a little bit longer to implement. It is a good 16 years, I guess. But what we have got out there at the moment is a class facility. We spent around a million dollars towards the end of last year and the beginning of this year to provide some refurbishment. The initial funding was for \$2.5 million; we have spent a million of that on refurbishing it for the community.



We have had other ongoing expenses during that 16-year period—security and other expenses. I must say that it was only in 2003 that we acquired that facility out there, but prior to that there were other expenses in trying to locate a site and consultancies and what have you. Since then there has been a fair bit of expense. Also, some of that money has gone into having a recurrent amount of money come to the organisation that manages the centre out there.

Where we are up to at the moment is that the facility is fully operational. Since it opened in March this year, it has been almost fully booked out, both for meeting rooms and for exhibition or conference facilities. Many Indigenous organisations are using it, including Winnunga, the Indigenous Leadership Centre and other organisations. I am happy to say that it is also being used by organisations like ACTCOSS. The scouts are using it. They are doing programs around Indigenous activities as well.

It is starting to work. The facility is starting to work. It is a peaceful place out there. It has got all the facilities you would expect of a centre of that calibre. We have an agreement that we are just about to finalise with Burrangiri to run the cultural programs. They have provided the cultural program activities for the next 12 months and it is quite exciting. We are helping them to source grants and other revenues to be able to implement their program of cultural activities to the highest possible standard. That will require some additional funding from other sources, and I think that is appropriate as well at this stage.

**Ms Lambert:** Nic brushed over one thing which is quite significant, and that is the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre, which has relocated there. That is a registered training organisation that provides leadership courses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and really works on building capacity for leadership within the community, which is very important. It links in with the work we are doing on the elected body as well. It is terrific to have an organisation such as that there running its courses. It offers nationally accredited courses at certificate and diploma level. That is a great asset to the cultural centre as well.

**MS MacDONALD:** You mentioned the conference facilities as well as the meeting rooms and the exhibition space, but I do not think you mentioned the theatre.

**Mr Manikis:** There is a very well equipped theatre space for about 100 people. Between 80 and 100 people can be comfortably seated. That comes off the exhibition room. We are hoping to have some static exhibitions of artefacts in there—artefacts from the local area and also from visiting Indigenous people from interstate or from other country who may wish to come down and exhibit some of their art. But this takes time. As I say, it has taken 16 years just to get it to this point, but we feel that now we are ready to make the improvements in terms of content.

**Ms Lambert:** It is a good venue. The World Youth Day people who are coming to Canberra will be using that for cultural exposition to the pilgrims who are coming. They have expressed quite an interest in seeing local culture—seeing Indigenous culture. It will be great for that. It is a very easy centre to use. We had our most recent meeting of our Indigenous employment network there, particularly our younger

workers. It is just a very easy venue to use in the sense of being able to get there easily—and, if you like, the ambience of it.

**MS MacDONALD:** With your indulgence, chair, and with the committee's indulgence, I would just like to say that I think it is an excellent facility. I am glad to hear that it is already being well utilised and booked out. It is a fabulous facility so I wish it all the best.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman is next and then Mrs Dunne.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Chief Minister, I wonder if I can bring you to page 212 of budget paper 4. The top dot point there talks about the Australian government's COAG Indigenous working group and the ACT government's participation in that. Can you tell me what community consultation you are having with local Indigenous people to support your ability to converse in the COAG program?

**Mr Stanhope:** The issue of consultation with our business community is very much at the heart of the decision to support an Indigenous elected representative body. We most certainly hope and expect that, through that initiative, for the first time at least since the abolition of ATSIC, Indigenous people within the Australian Capital Territory do have that capacity to know that the people that do represent them in one respect will have been chosen by them through a democratic process. We look forward to proceeding that way. As it stands, there are myriad consultations, formal and informal, that the government pursues—with Indigenous service delivery organs, with acknowledged Indigenous leaders within the community and through the United Ngunnawal Elders Council.

I think it would be appropriate, though, if I asked Ms Lambert to speak. She is the deputy chair of the COAG working group on Indigenous affairs. That is a very significant and important role that Ms Lambert has accepted in addition to all of her other responsibilities. I do not wish to embarrass her, but I might just say that my government is particularly conscious of the work that Ms Lambert is doing and the enormous load of the ACT, state and Northern Territory chief executives who have been nominated as deputy chairs.

There are eight COAG working groups; each state and territory has nominated one deputy chair. Each of the COAG working groups is chaired by a commonwealth portfolio minister, and the deputy chair is the chief executive nominated by individual state and territories. Ms Lambert is the ACT nominated chief executive and deputy chair of the COAG working group. It just so happens that Ms Lambert is the national deputy chair of the COAG working group. It has had quite a serious impact on workloads, which the government is very conscious of. I think it would be of interest if Ms Lambert gave some idea of the work that her COAG working group has undertaken—the methodology and the hoped for outcomes.

**Ms Lambert:** Thank you, Chief Minister. The COAG Indigenous reform working group, as the Chief Minister has said, is made up of all jurisdictions. The work that has occurred so far has been—

**Mr Stanhope:** Chaired by Ms Macklin.

**Ms Lambert:** Ms Macklin, that is right. The work that has been done so far has been to look at a variety of projects that particularly are geared to implementing the COAG targets around the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people. Ms Sheehan can give you more detail in terms of those specific targets, but the ACT in particular is leading the subgroup which is looking at reducing alcohol and substance abuse across Australia and, secondly, looking at effective protective security mechanisms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

The second task was given to us just recently—the one on protective security—but we have been working and scoping the work that is involved. What we are looking to do is provide a broad reform proposal which has some specific actions within it. For instance, in the protective security reform proposal we will be looking at specific services particularly around domestic violence, not only in terms of its effect on children and child safety but also in terms of how you might work with perpetrators.

The work ranges from developing a broad action plan which will be applicable to all of Australia to also thinking about what we need to do right now in terms of making a difference in some key areas—especially around children but not exclusively around children. That is a particular focus of the work we are doing.

Another piece of work that we are directly involved in is the early childhood work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children—looking at an early childhood framework for them. We have been doing a lot of scoping of that work. We have done some informal consultation in that process and we have certainly used the networks that we have—internally to government and externally—to talk about those processes.

We are about to embark on more formal processes which will be linked in with what the commonwealth government is doing. Some of that will be to peak bodies; some will be to more local bodies. For instance, in discussing the work on drug and alcohol, Ms Sheehan talked directly with Winnunga, which is the appropriate body to talk to in this jurisdiction, about the work that had been done to date. We are very keen to not reinvent the wheel with some of these proposals but make sure that we build on the substantial body of evidence there is and look where we can make a difference.

A key piece of work that we are involved in, as part of the protective security, is looking at reducing and dealing with alcohol supply in communities. One of the challenges for us going forward will be—you may have seen this picked up in some of the newspapers recently—not just dealing with the remote communities but also thinking about how we actually apply the principles, the practices and the programs that we are thinking about in urban areas and in rural areas.

We are well advanced in a couple of pieces of the work. The proposal on early childhood for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will go to COAG in July. The protective security one goes in October. The work on alcohol and substance abuse is ongoing work, but we are hoping that that will get specific towards the end of this year. Maureen, who is doing the work and supporting me on this, may have some comments to add.

**Ms Sheehan:** I would add that, in Ms Lambert's role as the deputy chair of the

overarching working group, one of her main roles is to participate in the negotiations around the reform of the commonwealth agenda around specific-purpose payments. The main role of the working group on Indigenous reform is to make sure that in the funding arrangements that the commonwealth has with the states and territories there are specific targets, performance indicators and outcomes for Indigenous people. That is, of course, highly appropriate.

If there are not targets or performance measures and outcomes for Indigenous people when so many billions of dollars are being spent, it is very hard to show how they are being properly served by these financial arrangements. Those negotiations are ongoing between the working group on Indigenous reform and the heads of treasuries group which is progressing that reform.

Particularly here in the ACT, if we think of the major funding mechanisms which underlie wellbeing for Indigenous people, such as the housing agreement and the supported accommodation assistance program—they will be combined into a national affordability housing agreement. To have Indigenous targets, outcomes and performance indicators there is incredibly important. I think that we all understand how important and basic housing is to the wellbeing of everyone in the community, particularly Indigenous people.

**MRS DUNNE:** Chief Minister, how are we going with the implementation, or bringing to fruition, of the Indigenous healing farm? Have we settled on a site? Where are we up to?

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a particularly important initiative. It is an initiative that has been driven very much by the ACT Indigenous community. The government has given real substance to the issue of an Indigenous healing farm through specific funding in last year's second appropriation bill of \$10.8 million for the establishment and the finalisation of the model of delivery. There has been quite detailed and close consultation. I think it would be appropriate for me to ask Ms Lambert to respond or to identify the officer of her department who has been most intimately involved in those negotiations.

**Ms Lambert:** It is probably me, because this particular project is actually being run by the chief executive of Health; it is under the auspices of the health department. I have just received a letter from the head of Health. We work together in a joint cross-government task force, which comprises me, the head of Health and the head of education. We have just started the process of looking at the next stage. So it is progressing, as far as I am aware. It is more appropriate to ask the chief executive of Health these questions, but as far as I am aware it is progressing well. There is a consultative process occurring with the community and we will be part of that process as it moves forward.

**Mr Stanhope:** I might say that I understand the most recent negotiations with Indigenous representatives who have been nominated to consult with the government in relation to this issue have identified, from a final selection of three blocks, a block that is their preferred position. But I believe that has only occurred in the last week or two and I do not believe that, in the context of arriving at a formal or final decision, I am able to identify that particular block today.

In answer to your question about how it is progressing, my understanding is that a position has been reached in negotiations and consultation where there is now a level of agreement about a possible site. But there are a range of negotiations and decisions that flow from that sort of in-principle decision. Whilst I think a very significant milestone in the proposal in relation to a location has been achieved, the government is not in a position to specifically identify that site.

**Ms Lambert:** My work has been really with the service model and that is being linked back into the COAG process because it will be looked at as a wraparound service model as well. That will be part of the funding that comes from the commonwealth government as well into the ACT in relation to the drug and alcohol work that the working group on Indigenous reform is undertaking.

**MRS DUNNE:** The discussions that I have had with various people, including Magistrate Madden, were that there were views about the site and that there was a high level of keenness for this to go ahead. There were concerns expressed to me, a while ago admittedly now, that there was a push towards the Kama site, which was not considered suitable by many in the community. Is Kama still on the list of possible sites?

**Mr Stanhope:** I understand Kama is still on the list of the sites that have been considered. You are quite right; it is not a favoured site, as I understand it. But there is a list of sites that are being investigated and on which consultation has been held. My understanding is that, whilst Kama is on the list of sites that have been assessed, it is not a favoured site, as against other sites that have been identified.

**MR SMYTH:** We have had discussions previously on the Billabong Aboriginal Corporation and their licence over their block of land which was to expire early this year but which was extended to 30 June. Can you update the committee as to whether or not there is any money in this budget to assist Billabong in their operations, and what is the status of the licence they have?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will ask Ms Lambert whether she can respond to those queries.

**Ms Lambert:** There is money in our base for the Billabong housing corporation. Some of that is dollars from the commonwealth-state housing agreement to manage the tenancies that they have within public housing. That is some \$93,000, I think. Is that right? Then of course there is the family support program which we are just in the process of negotiating, which is about \$150,000. So those are dollars that are there. I will let Ms Sheehan answer the licence issue.

**Ms Sheehan:** The licence agreement, as you said, Mr Smyth, was extended until June, and the reason for that was to enable Billabong to continue its discussions with the department both on the housing and family support side. Those discussions are almost complete. We are about to enter into a three-year contract with Billabong for all of those services.

With respect to the licence agreement, it is necessary for us to have contracts in place before we address the licence agreement for a longer term option. Because of the

nature of the land out there at Stockdill Drive, it is not possible to have a long lease and, therefore, it is not possible to have as long a licence agreement as Billabong have indicated they prefer. But we are in discussions with them and we have recently involved ACTPLA in those discussions.

**MR SMYTH:** When you say they cannot have a long lease or a long licence, what sort of time frame can they have?

**Ms Sheehan:** At this stage ACTPLA is saying that two years would be appropriate, but obviously that is something that we would need to discuss with ACTPLA.

**MR SMYTH:** That is as a licence or a lease?

**Ms Sheehan:** As a licence; it is not possible to have a lease on that land.

**MR SMYTH:** Why is that?

**Ms Sheehan:** I cannot give you the technical reason for that but I can certainly, with the Chief Minister's agreement, provide that answer on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** How do they have any certainty or go to the bank to finance the operations that they have on a two-year licence? There is something close to \$1 million worth of assets there and they have plans to do other things to serve the Aboriginal community. What guarantee of certainty do they get from a two-year licence?

**Ms Sheehan:** The ongoing operations of Billabong, as Billabong advises us, are dependent upon the income that they have to provide their services. We have just been able to provide you with the details of the income provided by the ACT government for services they provide. That is support to manage their tenancies, and their tenancies are of course in stand-alone properties which are quite separate from the Stockdill Drive site.

Some of those properties are owned outright by Billabong through capital grants provided both by the ACT government and the commonwealth government. Of course they are subject to the normal leases, leasehold arrangements, in the ACT. Then other properties are head-leased from the public housing stock which is owned under the commonwealth-state housing agreement. Those arrangements are ongoing and quite separate from the issues on the licence agreement at Stockdill Drive.

In terms of their funding to provide family support services, family support services are provided to families and they are provided on an outreach basis as well as at Stockdill Drive. In fact, the funding that is provided by the ACT government for Billabong's ongoing services is not particularly linked to the Stockdill Drive site. They are provided to people living outside Stockdill Drive, in the community, and Billabong does provide those services.

**MR SMYTH:** Successive governments—I went out there; the Chief Minister has been out there as a minister; Mr McMullan has been out there as a member—have given support; they have built up an infrastructure base. What certainty do they get—

a large number of their programs are delivered on site and they want to deliver more; the nursery services, chef, they want to have the functions centre there so that they can provide a meeting place for Aboriginal people—by just having a two-year licence?

**Ms Sheehan:** The land is owned by the territory and there is no intention to terminate the licence agreement. The type of licence agreement and the duration of the licence have to be subject to the laws of the territory and I will be able to answer the question that you asked previously about the duration of the licence when I consult further with ACTPLA.

**MRS DUNNE:** Either now or later, if you have not already agreed to take this on notice, could you explain why a licence rather than a lease?

**THE CHAIR:** She did.

**MR SESELJA:** I think the part of it that was not perhaps taken on notice would also be: if it has to be a licence, can it be just two years or can it be a longer licence as well?

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes, we will certainly provide that information.

**MR SESELJA:** When I had a briefing with you some time ago, there were issues on the financial position and the financial bona fides of Billabong. Where is that at? We were told by them that there was a WalterTurnbull report that had given them a clean bill of health. At that point, you said that you had not received that. Have you received that and, if so, when did you receive that?

**Ms Sheehan:** We have certainly received that report. I cannot remember when we did receive it but I am happy to look at the files and provide you with that information. In terms of the financial position of Billabong, as I have previously outlined, the ACT government is prepared to enter into contractual arrangements with Billabong for the provision of family support services and community housing management. At this stage we are quite satisfied that, with the provision of that funding, Billabong will be able to employ the staff who are able to provide that level of service.

**MR SESELJA:** The WalterTurnbull report gave you the comfort you needed in terms of doing the due diligence?

**Ms Sheehan:** The WalterTurnbull report is an ingredient in government decision making. The government has broad requirements to satisfy itself of the financial viability and sustainability of organisations in order to enter into funding arrangements.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Seselja, did you have a substantive question? We need to move to the next output class.

**MR SESELJA:** I did have others but I am at the mercy of the committee as to how much time you would like to give me.

**THE CHAIR:** We do need to move to sustainability.

**MR SESELJA:** I have more on Indigenous but, as I say, it is up to you as chair. Are you happy for me to ask some more?

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps if you ask one. I did promise you a substantive question. If you would like to ask that, then we can go to the next output class.

**MR SESELJA:** Going back to the new Indigenous body—and some of these may need to be taken on notice—I wanted to get an idea on how the support will be provided to the body, what kind of secretariat support, how many staff will be providing support, particularly in the set-up stage. What will be the expenditure on things like legal advice and other things in order for newly elected members, in particular, to understand their role and the extent of those roles? Maybe Mr Manikis can take us through that.

**Mr Manikis:** Obviously one of the things we want this thing to do is work and be effective. We have allocated resources to ensure, particularly from the front end, that there will be training and there will be a planning day. There are several issues that we need to deal with here. Some of them are pretty fundamental and basic—governance, training, conduct of leading; all those sorts of issues that need to be dealt with. We have put funds aside for that type of training.

**MR SESELJA:** What is the quantum of those funds?

**Mr Manikis:** For 2008-2009 we have put aside \$58,000 for administration costs. It will be out of those funds that we will be—

**MR SESELJA:** \$58,000 is the total administration costs.

**Mr Manikis:** Englobo, yes. We have set aside some funds for research, members sitting fees and allowances and for the secretariat salaries and oncosts.

**MR SESELJA:** And that all comes out of the \$58,000 or it comes out of the bigger pool?

**Mr Manikis:** No, that comes out of the \$300,000 that has been allocated, but \$58,000 at this stage we have nominally put aside for administration costs where you will have a consultant probably come in to work with the elected body and work up protocols with its interface, with UNEC, the United Nggunawal Elders Council; a planning day for the elected body to go through those issues of governance and meeting practice and all the rest of it. Any legal costs or anything else like that will come out of that \$58,000.

You asked a question about the staff for the secretariat. We have set aside \$172,000 for the secretariat, which is two positions and oncosts; it is a SOGC and an ASO4—SOGC for policy and support and research support, and the ASO4 for administration and support.

**MR SESELJA:** I imagine part of the promoting of the organisation would be things like branding and the like. How much is allocated for that?



**Mr Manikis:** Most of those costs are taken up in this financial year. We set aside \$35,000 for advertising and promotion but it is out of this year's money, not next year's money obviously, because we are branding the body and getting out into the community, as we have discussed earlier.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Mr Manikis, Ms Lambert, Ms Sheehan, Mr Hubbard and all the officials. We will go to 1.3, sustainability.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Zissler, welcome back. We are dealing with output 1.3—sustainability.

**MRS DUNNE:** Madam Chair, as this is the first time the Chief Minister has appeared before us as the Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, could we ask general questions about some of the initiatives, or should we go straight to the output classes?

**THE CHAIR:** We do have a list of initiatives. Some of them are from 1.3, so you could certainly ask questions about those.

**MRS DUNNE:** I actually wanted to ask about the—

**THE CHAIR:** We can then go to the 1.4 initiatives.

**MRS DUNNE:** Can I be very difficult and start with budget paper 5, page 35—the capital initiatives in relation to climate change. They are there as capital initiatives rather than output classes. Chief Minister, can you say something about the future provisioning elements shown there? Some of them are inside your areas and some of them are not, but as the lead minister on climate change, can you talk about future provisions?

**Mr Stanhope:** There is provision under the future provisions for additional trees at \$5 million a year in each of the outyears. This is a future provision. These moneys have been allocated but not appropriated. It is a future provision for the funding of a replacement urban forest.

The government has asked TAMS to undertake a major investigation of issues that we face in relation to our urban forest. That work has not yet been concluded, but the advice the government has is that Canberra faces a significant issue with its urban forest—its age and its maintenance. So the provision for future trees is a recognition of that.

The “where will we play” outdoor sports facilities water reduction strategies are a recognition of the targets that we have set in relation to water reduction. We have a target of reducing water use by 25 per cent by 2023. We have invested heavily in outdoor sport and outdoor recreation water reduction strategies. Over the last year I believe we have invested \$5 million in such initiatives.

In this budget we have allocated \$8 million over the budget estimate period, and we are indicating that that is an area of investment which we will almost certainly need to

continue. There is future provision for climate change works of \$40 million. Without being pre-emptive, this is an acknowledgment of the investment which we all know we will need to make in climate change and in a capital way in relation to strategies for advancing our climate change strategy and other initiatives which we propose to pursue.

Most particularly, Mrs Dunne, as you are aware, the government has commissioned a feasibility study into the potential for the construction within the Australian Capital Territory of a solar power farm. In terms of preliminary discussions that I have had, whilst we will, of course, go to the market, it is quite likely and very conceivable to have a business case for a solar power station. We have asked through the feasibility process for an investigation of costs, the benefit and the feasibility of constructing a solar power farm that would potentially power up to 10,000 average homes.

**MRS DUNNE:** What is the wattage capacity of that?

**Mr Stanhope:** We anticipate that a cost-benefit analysis will reveal that it would not be attractive to the private sector in terms of cost generation as against the cost of power or electricity and that, if it were to proceed, there would most certainly be a need for government support.

I am mindful of proposals and announcements that the commonwealth government has made. I am aware of co-investments that the commonwealth is engaged in, most particularly in Victoria and South Australia, in relation to solar power generation. Some of my thinking, and the government's thinking, in relation to the decision to jointly sponsor with ActewAGL a feasibility study was, through our initiative, an indication from the ACT government that it would be prepared to consider co-investment with the commonwealth government and the private sector.

This is potentially a very significant initiative for the ACT to be engaged in. It will cost, and that provision has been made in advance. I give this by way of example of a quite significant climate change initiative. At this stage, whilst the government have made no decision on it, we have made provision for a capacity for the government, subject to the outcome of studies that are not yet completed, to co-invest in a significant solar power transmission station in the ACT.

**MRS DUNNE:** On the understanding, Chief Minister, that this is an ongoing feasibility study and the outcomes are not known, if the advice comes back that it would be a difficult thing to do without changes in policy, both here and probably more specifically at a national level, are you prepared to go in to bat for changes in policy, say, in mandatory renewable energy target certificates—those sorts of things?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** You are?

**Mr Stanhope:** Our response to climate change will evolve as our understanding evolves and changes. I had the privilege of being present at an address by Professor Garnaut on his interim report in Adelaide some months ago. The clearest signals that were part of Professor Garnaut's address were that the nature of our understanding is

changing rapidly and dramatically in relation to the extent of the issue that we face, that the nature of our understanding of appropriate responses is changing rapidly, that a strong word of caution is that we must not underestimate the dramatic nature of the issue that we face in relation to climate change and that we should not take major decisions that are not based on evidence or understanding of the impact.

I believe there is another role for government and, whilst I accept the need for an evidence base in making decisions, particularly where large expenditures are concerned, and particularly where there are equity issues between residents and generations, in showing leadership and engaging with the community, there are initiatives that a government should fund, invest in or support, even knowing that the evidence is that a particular initiative might not have a particularly dramatic effect on greenhouse emissions. It would have a very strong educative effect. As you know, we are investing in a technology display at the Canberra Stadium. I am not sure it is particularly efficient but I do not think its efficiency is at all relevant.

**MRS DUNNE:** We could have that debate.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, we could. What I am saying, Mrs Dunne, is that whilst I do not need to be persuaded that it is particularly efficient, I think it is potentially very effective. I would be happy to do it again and perhaps to replicate it on a range of government buildings around Canberra, and that is very much part of my thinking.

**MRS DUNNE:** I think Mr Gentleman had a suggestion for the roof here.

**MR STANHOPE:** That is probably a very good suggestion. As the parliament, I believe it is imperative for us to show leadership. We should seriously consider how we might provide for that in this building or in the museum and gallery—at least in acknowledged government buildings.

**MRS DUNNE:** On the feasibility study, Chief Minister, is it possible to see the terms of reference or whatever the—

**Mr Stanhope:** I would be more than happy to provide the documentation that we have, Mrs Dunne.

**MRS DUNNE:** It may be answered by the terms of reference but I will ask this here: have you asked the consultant to look at innovative ways of funding such an approach?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will defer to Mr Zissler. He is actually on the steering committee, Mrs Dunne, and could give that information.

**Mr Zissler:** Indeed, the consultant has looked at a whole range of different technologies. The intention of the feasibility study fundamentally is to give us a matrix. It will look at different sizes—small, medium and large—and different types of technologies and then do a cost-benefit analysis on those.

**MRS DUNNE:** But are you looking at possible ways of funding this?

**Mr Zissler:** Absolutely, yes. It will come to a cost-benefit analysis and it will look at how much the territory government might choose to contribute to each type of those and, indeed, what the private sector may bring to the table.

**MRS DUNNE:** When you talk about the private sector, are you just talking about going to the market with a share float or are you looking at some of the different approaches that you might have seen?

**Mr Zissler:** There were certainly different approaches. One of them was looking at—again, it has to come out in the report finally—having the capacity to choose. People could actually choose—Canberrans, the community—to buy into it as well. I do not think shares would be a way of offsetting their greenhouse emissions.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you repeat that, Mr Zissler.

**Mr Zissler:** It would be possible to develop a way for them to buy into the scheme to offset their greenhouse emissions themselves. So you and I might choose, instead of putting a solar panel on our roof, because we cannot do it because we live in an apartment, to buy a share in the new enterprise.

**MRS DUNNE:** Or a solar farm is considered more efficient than—

**Mr Zissler:** Correct. So they are looking at all those options. At the moment it is very high order—just to see whether it is feasible in the ACT, given that we have a number of parcels of land you might choose to use. There is a range of technologies you might choose to use, there is a range of sizes you might choose to use. So you end up with a sort of matrix, and then they are going to run through the various cost-benefit analyses on those, which will leave the government to draw some conclusions. We are not at that stage yet—close, but not yet.

**MRS DUNNE:** And the timetable for the feasibility study?

**Mr Zissler:** It is very near completion now. There was a meeting this morning; unfortunately I was here, not there. The feasibility study is due to be with the steering committee at the end of July, so I imagine we will draw some conclusions, package that up and then provide it to government shortly thereafter.

**THE CHAIR:** On page 286 of budget paper 4, accountability indicator “n” talks about the implementation of national reforms in energy and water. You have already talked about the way that we are responding to the need for national reforms in terms of energy. How are our discussions going with the states, territories and the federal government with regard to the water side of it? Do you want to make any comment about those discussions, as far as water and/or energy are concerned?

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you, chair. Certainly, as everybody knows, over the last recent years at a national level there has been very significant discussion around water. Canberra is encased wholly within the Murray-Darling Basin, and, as we all know, much of the national discussion has focused on the Murray-Darling system and its health. As a member of that basin, much of our interest in our own circumstance is tied to national and state responses to issues which the basin faces.

I think we would all concede that in the context of something that we know has been an issue for perhaps decades, over this last three to four years there has been a major shift in government and community attitude and response and preparedness to invest in issues which the basin faces. I acknowledge that that was very much spearheaded by a \$10 billion commitment by the previous federal government to the Murray-Darling Basin and to a range of other programs.

In the context of a national response to water and the ACT government's involvement in that, there are a range of streams, which I will not go to; suffice to say they are significant. The Living Murray initiative is an initiative in which we are partners to the tune of \$5 million and through which we committed to reduce our take from the Murray-Darling Basin by two gigalitres. That \$5 million is part of a commonwealth-state and territory arrangement of fifty-fifty, with the commonwealth providing 50 per cent to that \$500 million Living Murray project. We have committed \$5 million to a \$500 million program, one per cent, which I thought was a very good contribution for a jurisdiction of this size.

There is the \$500 million Living Murray project, and there is the \$10 million which is very much at the heart of the proposals to trade water. The most significant portions of that are for new irrigation infrastructure to reduce evaporation and wastage, which really is quite colossal within the irrigation areas. I think \$6 billion of the \$10 billion is devoted to irrigation infrastructure, and, of course, we—

**MRS DUNNE:** We do not contribute to that part of it, do we?

**Mr Stanhope:** We do not; that is commonwealth funding, and I must say it is very significant. I give the previous Prime Minister, Mr Howard, his due in relation to that commitment—a commitment that has been carried forward by the current government. It was a commitment that was made by the previous government, and it involves \$6 billion for irrigation infrastructure; \$3 billion for the purchase of water rights for environmental flows; and \$1 billion for what I am not sure.

Some of my concern around the \$10 billion in a parochial sense is that, because we do not have irrigation, none of that \$10 billion fund is likely to be invested in the ACT. But, over and above that, there is a \$1 billion urban water fund, which I believe is a Rudd government initiative. In the context of water over-allocation, I have to concede, with some reluctance, that the ACT does not loom large in the thinking of others in relation to infrastructure or investment. Nevertheless, we are at the table making submissions in relation to projects that might be funded.

I do not think it is pre-emptive of me to identify that we are in the process of working up two proposals to submit to the federal government for potential funding under the \$1 billion urban water fund. One is a proposal to significantly upgrade the salt-catching capacity of the lower Molonglo water treatment works. We deliver—it is a sum that staggers me—40 tonnes of salt a day through the lower Molonglo water treatment works into the Murrumbidgee River. We believe that if we significantly upgraded the facility we could reduce significant amounts of that salt.

There are different technologies that are potentially applicable. The lower Molonglo is

a world-class facility operating consistent with its licence and with Australian standards. But, at the end of the day, we deliver 40 tonnes of assorted salts through the lower Molonglo into the Murrumbidgee River. That is six semitrailer loads, I understand.

**MRS DUNNE:** Probably eight if it is a five-tonne truck.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, I understand. I am told that when one tries to visualise how much salt 40 tonnes is, we are talking about four B-doubles or eight semitrailer loads. Mrs Dunne is obviously a truck person. It is stunning to conceptualise that much salt and to realise that we, as a community, are dropping eight semitrailer loads of salt into the Murrumbidgee River every day. We propose to apply to the commonwealth for support in upgrading the lower Molonglo to allow us to deal more effectively with that salt.

The second of the initiatives which we propose to raise is the potential for the commonwealth to work with the territory in relation to the Tantangera option in terms of securing the ACT's water future. We are still very much at a developmental stage in relation to that, but we are discussing with the commonwealth the potential for the commonwealth to look favourably upon those particular initiatives.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman has a supplementary, and then Mrs Dunne.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thanks, chair. Minister, one of my constituents, Professor Peter Collignon, has emailed us all regarding the negotiation for the cap, suggesting that a 40-gigalitre cap is too small for the ACT. His arguments tend to be a little bit circular, but I wonder if you have any comment on his argument that 40 gigalitres is not big enough?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, I received the same letter from Professor Collignon. I have responded to Professor Collignon. I have very politely sought to point out to him some of the assumptions within his thesis with which I do not agree. We believe—and I think it is a belief that has spread across the spectrum here in the ACT from the water utility Actew to the Conservation Council, whom I met with yesterday—that the capital outcome we achieved is excellent.

The range of support is not just from the utility or the government; it is actually from our representative on the Murray-Darling Basin community advisory committee, Professor Ian Falconer. Professor Falconer, who is the Deputy Chair of the Canberra Conservation Council, is the ACT representative on the community advisory council to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. We did consult with Professor Falconer on this, as we do on all issues that affect us and our membership of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.

It is a cap that was supported by everybody I have spoken with—all of my advisers, TAMS, Actew, the community advisory committee, the Conservation Council, the National Water Commission, which actually feels it is over generous, and the Independent Audit Group. It needs to be understood that some of the assumptions that Professor Collignon has relied on—namely, that there is no cap, but, if there is a cap, it is actually 220 gigalitres, in other words, the water potentially available within the

jurisdiction of 220 gegalitres—just completely misunderstands the issue.

Since the then Chief Minister, Kate Carnell, first sought standing on the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, the territory operated under an assumed cap of 37 gegalitres. That was applied in 1997, and successive governments, without accepting its validity, have accepted a notional cap for the Australian Capital Territory of 38 gegalitres. We have never felt that that properly reflected our particular circumstances—a major urban centre as the national capital. One does need to look at the history. The arrangement is a bit convoluted and it is hard to explain simply, but we have agreed on a 40-gegalitre net cap with a growth factor.

I might say that the Independent Audit Group, which is a group of independent experts that audit jurisdictional compliance with caps, argued strenuously in their report—the report is publicly available—that the ACT government's argument for a growth factor could not be supported and was not consistent with the notion of a capital with the cap that other jurisdictions within the Murray-Darling Basin have accepted.

I am happy to say, without breaching any confidences, that the discussion around the Murray-Darling Basin Commission tabled last week was that the commission was being overly generous if it were to support a growth factor. South Australia, most particularly, objected quite noisily.

**MRS DUNNE:** But not enough to veto it.

**Mr Stanhope:** Well, my nervousness is that the Murray-Darling Basin Commission operates, as Mrs Dunne indicates, on the basis that it is all in or all out. It is consensus based. There was some anxiety, and we played a game of blindman's buff, as one does. In the end, it was South Australia that blinked and not the ACT, and the cap was accepted.

It is a good cap; it allows for growth. No other cap in the basin allows for growth of 75 per cent on a per capita population growth basis. It is a good cap that grows as we grow, but it applies the stringency that is required and necessary, and it allows us to ensure that water usage is sustainable, which is what it is all about.

We operated in the old days when irrigation licences and water were allocated on the basis that there was no cap. That is why we are in such serious strife. Water within the Murray-Darling system was treated as an infinite resource, and we now see that it is not. The Murray-Darling Basin is sick, and some believe it is sick to the point of expiring. You should see it. Just go down and have a look at the Murray; it is a sick river.

The other aspect of the cap is that it is accepted that, because we have never exceeded 38 gegalitres, we have accumulated somewhere in the order of 110 gegalitres of credit, and the credit has been retained. So we have 110 gegalitres in our back pockets and, whilst it is dangerous to guess, I would hazard a guess that we will not reach 40 gegalitres for decades.

**MRS DUNNE:** On the subject of the 40 gegalitres, can I congratulate you on the

growth factor. I think that will be of considerable benefit to us. I have had a briefing from officials about it and I am particularly pleased with the growth factor factored in. I am pleased that South Australia blinked before anybody else did. I have been there and I know how hard those negotiations are. Mr Smyth does as well.

On the 40 gegalitres—and I have had the benefit of a briefing on this earlier this week—is it envisaged that we can keep under the 40 gegalitres only because of the somewhat permanent implementation of stage 2 or stage 3 water restrictions?

**Mr Stanhope:** The population will continue to grow. We used 26 kilolitres last year.

**MRS DUNNE:** But on stage 3 water restrictions?

**Mr Stanhope:** Absolutely, and on permanent conservation measures and water restrictions, yes, we did. I think we dropped from 31, 32 historically, to 26. But that is a response to permanent water conservation measures and water restrictions; there is no doubt.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is more than permanent conservation.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is, yes. It is a combination of both. But I think, in the context of commitments that the government has made to which we are responding in relation to water use, there is an enormous amount of work which is proceeding around the territory—whether it be in the installation of water tanks, whether it be in the decisions that we are taking in relation to water sensitive urban design or whether it be the National Water Commission project which is now underway in relation to the catch and use, as a replacement for potable water, of stormwater. There is another name for it.

The Flemington Pond has now, I believe, been completed. We have committed to actually replacing 1½ gegalitres of irrigation, using potable water with irrigation from a range of ponds which we have committed to construct with a \$10 million provision from the National Water Commission.

**MRS DUNNE:** There are others in addition to Flemington?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, there are. Flemington, I think, is now complete. At this stage it is envisaged that the second of the ponds, which will incorporate the ACT government's contribution of the \$16 million total, will be the Weston pond on Weston Creek, adjacent to the parks depot, and the decisions on other ponds will be determined subject to the conclusion of the CSIRO model.

The ultimate target to which we have committed is by 2015. The first target of 1.5 gegalitres, I think, was to be achieved by 2010, with a second 1.5 gegalitres to be achieved by 2015. Three gegalitres is a lot of water within an urban area. We have sought the assistance of the CSIRO in ensuring that the catchments, or the creeks, that we would seek to identify are capable of actually producing three gegalitres of water. So decisions beyond Flemington and Weston have not been made.

**DR FOSKEY:** I have two things. First of all, in relation to what you just said, you



were talking about the \$17 million funding from the federal government to restore waterways?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes. I think it is \$16.8 million. Actually \$10 million is from the commonwealth and the rest is from us.

**DR FOSKEY:** You just talked about ponds. Are you also restoring wetlands?

**Mr Stanhope:** As I say, I was not sure about the terminology of it. I call them ponds. Yes, it is. The first, at Flemington wetlands, is at the head of Sullivans Creek and it is a wetland, I think.

**DR FOSKEY:** I just wanted reassurance because I thought that was what the money was for.

**Mr Stanhope:** The one at Weston Creek I would call a pond and not a wetland. It is a big dam.

**DR FOSKEY:** And what about the switch your thinking programs which seem to be an update on—

**THE CHAIR:** I do not know whether that is a supplementary.

**DR FOSKEY:** It is about water.

**MRS DUNNE:** Hold that thought because there are a couple of questions about the cap and some other things.

**DR FOSKEY:** I guess it helps us achieve the cap if we can conserve water.

**MRS DUNNE:** Going back to the things that you said about salt, can I get some clarification. The 40 tonnes, is that net? Do we have an idea of how much salt load is coming into the territory?

**Mr Stanhope:** I must say I am not across the detail of this particular proposal yet and, as such, it may be that Mr Butt can add to it or we can certainly take it on notice.

**Mr Butt:** I cannot give you a figure off the top of my head but it roughly, I understand, works out that probably about a third of it comes in as a natural salt flow out of the rivers that come into the ACT; it is just part of the general salt movement coming down. A component comes from the addition from human activity in the territory—basically, what we eat, what we put down our washing machines and things like that—where salts are used in the process. A small component, I think, comes from the processes used out at lower Molonglo.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you give the committee a breakdown on that?

**Mr Butt:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** The other question is: if we are looking at an issue to reduce the salt

load coming out of Lower Molonglo, would one of the planks of that initiative be to try to introduce some behavioural change by using low-salt soap powders and detergents and things like that which add to the salt load?

**Mr Butt:** That is certainly one of the actions that can be taken and it is being examined. It is a component but not a major component of the salt loading that goes in, as I understand it.

**Mr Stanhope:** We will take the detail of the question on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** In that case, is there some way of giving a breakdown of where the salt comes from? From human activity that is not coming mainly from soap powder and stuff like that, where is it coming from?

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Foskey, do you have a supplementary?

**DR FOSKEY:** No. I was just going to say that one way of dealing with that is that, rather than or in addition to treatment works, reducing the salt load in the human contribution is something which could be done. It could be tried, could it not?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** In budget paper 2, page 41, you referred to \$22.4 million to care for the natural environment and greater protection of high-conservation areas. Can you go into a bit more detail on those areas? There are also a couple of graphs in budget paper 2, following the speech.

**Mr Stanhope:** Could you read the line again?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes. "The Budget also allocates \$22.4 million to care for natural environment, and greater protection of high conservation areas." My main interest is the work you are putting into the high-conservation areas.

**DR FOSKEY:** And what they are, if you could add that, please.

**Mr Stanhope:** I think we actually garnered together a number of initiatives there for the sake of simplicity; so it is perhaps not quite easy for us to disaggregate. I will ask Mr Watkinson whether he might, in the first instance, respond to the initial funding for protection of high-conservation areas which you referred to.

There are a number of initiatives that the ACT is involved in in relation to protection of nature reserves and the addition of areas of high-conservation value to our nature reserve system. I know some of the funding there but there is a broad range of funding that goes to protection of natural environment. Some of it is in relation to the addition of areas or the protection of areas that we would either add to our reserve system or that we would seek to protect.

Other issues that would be relevant, for instance, include: is there funding? I would have to actually go to the budget papers more particularly. But there is funding for caring for our country initiative, funding for the Mulligans Flat predator-free sanctuary. There are a range of initiatives that are specific to the natural environment and I believe that they were more aggregated to actually deliver that particular sum.

I am not sure whether it is Mr Watkinson I would have to go to. I think it is in one of the other budget papers.

**MR SMYTH:** It is mentioned on budget paper 5, page 35, as a TAMS initiative, recurrent, protection of high-conservation areas, \$440,000.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, that is part, but there are others. We would be happy to go through them, Mr Gentleman. I will ask, but I think I can nominate them. They are: caring for our country; the predator-free sanctuary at Mulligans Flat; issues such as pest control; issues in relation to additional protection for high-value areas through inclusion into the nature reserve system such as Tidbinbilla et cetera.

**DR FOSKEY:** What does the et cetera include?

**MRS DUNNE:** Could I just seek some clarification, Chief Minister? Have we morphed into output class 1.4—

**THE CHAIR:** We have morphed into 1.4.

**MRS DUNNE:** or are we just going to have a free-ranging discussion?

**THE CHAIR:** No. We will finish the answer to this question and then we will go back to members' questions in 1.3 and exhaust those, and then go to 1.4. Sorry, Chief Minister.

**DR FOSKEY:** In that case, can I ask a supplementary of what is the et cetera in "Tidbinbilla et cetera"?

**Mr Stanhope:** Mr Watkinson can respond to the et cetera; he reads my mind.

**Mr Watkinson:** In terms of the continuation of the development of new nature reserves, the properties that we are looking at in the next financial year will be Kinleyside, which is 250 hectares, Jerrabomberra East, which is 220 hectares, Kama South, south of William Hovell Drive, which will be another 155 hectares, and Jedbinbilla, which is 486 hectares. So they will be additional to the existing nature reserves.

**DR FOSKEY:** And that funding is different from protection of high-conservation value areas?

**Mr Stanhope:** That is a part of it.

**DR FOSKEY:** A different bit of funding.

**Mr Watkinson:** That is capital funding.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is specific funding, yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** In what sense is it capital funding? You do not have to acquire land, or is it to acquire land—

**Mr Watkinson:** It is primarily for fencing and making sure that the areas are managed with stock some of the time.

**MRS DUNNE:** What steps are we going to take in relation to connectivity with some of those areas, because Kinleyside is a bit out there?

**Mr Watkinson:** The issue of connectivity comes back to the budget item of protection of high-conservation areas funding. There we have funding to engage an officer who will work with rural lessees specifically to ensure that land management agreements protect areas of high conservation value and to make sure that we maximise use of rural land for connectivity between our reserve systems.

**MRS DUNNE:** They are called land management agreements these days, aren't they?

**Mr Watkinson:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Is there some sort of offsetting of land rents if you are actually going to say to a leaseholder, "We want this area; you can't fertilise it or do anything on it"? To what level are we going to be looking to compensate landholders for their reduced capacity to use particular parts of their property?

**Mr Watkinson:** It is not so much an issue of compensation, but one of the roles of this officer will be to facilitate rural lessees accessing grants that they can get primarily from the commonwealth to positively manage for conservation values. So it is more a question of accessing grants than compensation.

**MRS DUNNE:** Excellent, really good work.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, yours is on 1.3, is it?

**MR SMYTH:** I am assuming it is. On budget paper 5, page 75, there is an energy-efficient street light program for \$3 million. I was just wondering how many street lights is that going to move over to the energy-efficient street lights and can you tell us where, when and how?

**Mr Stanhope:** From memory it is 5,700, but I will defer to Mr Thorman. I think it is 5,723.

**MR SMYTH:** So what is that—a suburb, a couple of suburbs, all of Weston Creek?

**Mr Thorman:** I can clarify that.

**Mr Stanhope:** From memory it is 5,723. We would be happy to take it on notice.

**DR FOSKEY:** Is that the full complement of our lights?

**MR SMYTH:** In general terms is it a suburb, is it a town centre?

**Mr Stanhope:** Actually, it is 5,600. I beg your pardon. We have already installed

1,713; that is where the 700 came from. We have installed 1,713 and we propose to install an additional 5,600 with the \$3 million. But I must say I am not quite sure about the answer to the second part of your question, Mr Smyth. The 1,700 I think was a \$1 million commitment, which has already been implemented. We have provided an additional \$3 million for an additional 5,600 new lights, but I am not quite sure of the geographic spread or the areas.

**Mr Thorman:** We will take it on notice. It is actually being implemented by the roads area. My understanding is it is a mixture in new areas and also part of a rolling program replacing street lighting.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that full cut-out lighting or is it just replacing the bulbs?

**Mr Thorman:** It is replacing the bulbs with more efficient new high-efficiency lighting.

**MR SMYTH:** In the new areas, will we be installing full cut-out lighting so we get 100 per cent downward direction of the light?

**Mr Thorman:** I will have to take that on notice and check with the technical people. We can get the full specifications.

**MR SMYTH:** And is this a step-by-step program, Chief Minister? Do you intend to do the whole of the ACT eventually?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, I would expect that we would, Mr Smyth, but I will have to take some advice on that. I am not aware of the geographic spread, but, yes, we should do the whole territory, but I will take advice on how far the \$4 million investment to date advances the replacement.

**MR SMYTH:** It is just that there is nothing in the outyears. So we will do this on a case-by-case basis?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne, did you say you had another one? It is just that I think we need to move on to the next output class.

**DR FOSKEY:** I have got quite a number of questions that I have been waiting to ask as well.

**MRS DUNNE:** There is a whole range of sustainability programs listed in the budget under the heading of “sustainability”. Chief Minister, you have talked about some of them—the caring for our country and those sorts of things. We have actually got four lots of tree planting as well.

**THE CHAIR:** I think we answered the tree one.

**MRS DUNNE:** No, that was the future provisioning. We have got four lots of tree planting. Is that just four different buckets of money? Which one is the best value for

money tree planting? And if you answer “arboretum” that will be wrong.

**Mr Stanhope:** We could debate that. There are quite distinct programs that are reflected through the funding for trees. The one aspect of tree planting that I did refer to was the urban forest replacement program. We have funded in the second Appropriation Bill, I think to the tune of \$300,000, \$350,000 or somewhere in that order, for, for want of a better word—I do not know what was referred to at the time—a scoping study.

The broad advice that the government has is that we face progressively the death of our iconic urban forest, the trees that were planted 100 years ago. Many of the species that were planted at the request of Weston and Burley Griffin 100 years ago are reaching an end point and we are concerned that if they were, for instance, to begin to die street by street rather than individually—they now die and are removed on an individual basis—that will progressively advance to a point where if we do not begin to deal with this issue in a sequenced strategic way we potentially face whole streets dying at the same time. We need to look at how we manage the progressive death of our iconic trees.

Secondly, many of the eucalypts that were planted do not live for quite as long, are not quite as robust, as many of the exotics that are a feature of the ACT. So we have accepted that the exotics that are such a feature of Canberra have a life of a century, 100 years, but that eucalypts have a life perhaps of only 70 years. So TAMS has been tasked—and it may be that some update on that particular task might be given—with beginning the process of developing, essentially, a strategic plan for the replacement of our entire older urban forest.

**MRS DUNNE:** There was an audit done a few years ago and is this the next step from there?

**Mr Stanhope:** This is the next step. The next step is a strategic plan and the next step is to progressively fund. Indeed, in this budget there is—and I do not know where the sum of \$731,000 came from—\$731,000 provided in this coming financial year, which is a recognition that the work needs to start. We are still awaiting the strategic plan and the development of the strategic plan, but in the meantime some trees are dying and we do need to begin to replace them.

But, as I mentioned earlier, there is future provision for additional trees of \$5 million a year. And we anticipate that over the space of the next 30 years—this is a program that will take 30 years to complete—it will almost certainly cost more than \$200 million. We anticipate a cost of in excess of \$200 million over the next 20 to 30 years. So that is that package of funding.

The second package of funding is the arboretum, which we do not need to debate here, but it is a modest additional funding. The arboretum will one—

**MRS DUNNE:** I promise you we will not debate it this afternoon, Chief Minister, unless you want to.

**Mr Stanhope:** Right. The arboretum will one day be a feature. Our children and our

grandchildren will thank this Assembly for the arboretum. They will look back and, without distinction, acknowledge the wonderful thing that this particular parliament did in establishing the arboretum; but we will not pursue it further than that.

The third allocation of \$1 million is an acknowledgement that in this period of drought we have lost significant numbers of trees. I believe we have current contracts for the removal of in excess of 4,000 dead trees. There is an extant contract. Currently, we have a tree removalist, I think, with a contract to remove 4,000 trees, was it?

**Mr Watkinson:** We have lost 10,000 in the last four years.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, 10,000 trees died in the last four years. We currently have a contract for the removal of, I believe, over 4,000 dead trees. Whilst we acknowledge the drought continues, one can never tell. I believe we need to be prepared, money needs to be allocated and preparations need to be made. There is \$1 million for just streetscapes to allow us a capacity to begin the process of replacing the 10,000 trees that have died over the last four years.

It is not featured in this page I have here but, for instance, there is a significant landscape plan for areas such as Mount Stromlo, which was seriously denuded. There is a quite detailed landscape plan for Mount Stromlo which recognises the need for us to ensure that issues around fire and bushfire are taken into account. So the plans are quite strategic and we are progressively funding—I believe there is somewhere in the order of \$200,000 in this budget—for Mount Stromlo.

Of the \$1 million, \$250,000 has been allocated to each of Tuggeranong, Belconnen, Gungahlin and central Canberra and at this stage, subject to advice, I anticipate that most of those \$250,000 funds will be planted in the vicinity of our urban lakes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Sorry, on the strategic plan, Chief Minister, are we looking to replace like with like or are we having a reassessment? And one other thing: are we looking at different approaches to management in more straitened water circumstances?

**Mr Stanhope:** I fear there are philistines amongst us, Mrs Dunne, that would suggest that we not replace like with like. I will need some convincing that we should not replace like with like. But I believe—

**MRS DUNNE:** Well, somebody could start trying to convince me now.

**Mr Stanhope:** I do not want to subvert or pre-empt the advice which my fearless advisers will give me on this subject, but—

**MRS DUNNE:** I am sure it will be frank and fearless, but you have the right, as Chief Minister, to ignore it once you have got it.

**Mr Stanhope:** But I must say—

**MRS DUNNE:** We see that every day in the broadsheets from the federal government.

**Mr Stanhope:** My initial first-brush attitude to this is that we should replace like with

like, but I think there are, as they say in the classics, a range of views on that. Mr Watkinson?

**Mr Watkinson:** As the Chief Minister has mentioned, one of the exercises that we will be commencing is setting up an expert panel to advise on the appropriate selection of species in light of climate change impacts. We will certainly be looking at which species have done the best over the last 30 or 40 years and we will be looking at the whole landscape character of the different suburbs. So it will be quite a big exercise in looking at what are the appropriate species to use in the replacement program (1) to maintain the landscape character of Canberra and (2) that will be best able to cope with predicted climate change.

**Mr Stanhope:** I can hear Charles Weston and Burley Griffin turning in their graves already.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, and they would be right to.

**DR FOSKEY:** I think they would have been out at the front on climate change if they were alive today.

**MRS DUNNE:** There is an expert panel. Is this going to be open for public consultation as well?

**Mr Watkinson:** There will have to be extensive public consultation on the whole program. As the Chief Minister has indicated, when we go into streets and try and replace them systematically, rather than waiting for them to die, it will involve taking out trees which are currently alive, so that we try and maintain whole streetscapes. That will upset some people in the streets, so community consultation is going to be a very big part of the program.

**Mr Stanhope:** With some of the issues that we need to consult on, there are costs and cost issues. I have a concern that there is a view that we replace all trees in the street at one time. I am terrified by the prospect of that. Do you replace one in five trees, one in 10 or one in three? They are the sorts of issues that need to be consulted on and decided upon.

There would be a view that, for the sake of efficiency, the lot should be removed and then you could replant. I do not think that would be a favoured option. But you then could ask: would you replace one in three and then come back every five years, or would you replace one in 10? This is the nature and scope of the task we face.

**MRS DUNNE:** I think the record should show that the Chief Minister and I agree on like with like, and that is the second time during estimates that we have agreed on something—the third time.

**Mr Stanhope:** That is a worry. That is enough. That is my instinct, but I am open to advice on that.

**MRS DUNNE:** We are always open to advice.



**THE CHAIR:** Dr Foskey, we are going to have to move on to the next output class. Can you ask one of your questions, please?

**DR FOSKEY:** I note that there are two quarterly reports on the climate change action plan in 2007-08. Who are those reports given to? Are they available now to people like us?

**Mr Stanhope:** I am not quite sure, so Mr Thorman will respond to that.

**Mr Thorman:** The first of the progress reports was as part of a cabinet submission that was circulated around various departments several months ago. The next one is due in May, and we are within days of having that completed for review by the government.

**MRS DUNNE:** I hope so.

**DR FOSKEY:** And what happens to those? Do they just go to cabinet and then it is like a black box as far as the rest of us are concerned, or are they made publicly available?

**Mr Stanhope:** These actually are documents that the cabinet has requested. Certainly, I am more than happy to assure you, Dr Foskey, that each of the measures and the information reflected in those reports will be included within the annual report.

**DR FOSKEY:** The annual report of?

**Mr Stanhope:** The department.

**MRS DUNNE:** They will arrive in the caretaker period.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much, Chief Minister. We will have an afternoon tea break.

**Meeting adjourned from 3.50 to 4.07 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** We will deal now with land management, 1.4.

**MRS DUNNE:** On the Mulligans Flat predator-free fence, there is \$1 million and \$300,000 in the outyear. Originally the project was, I thought, \$640,000?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** There is another \$300,000-odd there.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes

**MRS DUNNE:** What is that for? I am not going to give you a hard time about it. I think it is a good project.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a good project. That is the fence. I would defer to Mr Watkinson

in relation to the costings for the fence. It is true that the costings have changed. They have increased but so, too, has the area that has now been determined that might be enclosed. I think the area to be enclosed is now 450 hectares.

**MRS DUNNE:** As opposed to the original?

**Mr Stanhope:** I believe, in earlier iterations of this, our estimates have been made based on assumptions on the size of the area that might be enclosed. There is now a steering committee. It might be of interest to have Mr McNulty or Mr Watkinson actually go to the notes from the steering committee.

There is now, I think, quite a unanimous consensus about the work at the Mulligans Flat predator-proof area. I think it is a very significant project that does allow us to expand on some very significant research now being undertaken at Mulligans Flat. As a result of some initial seed funding by parks, Professor Lindenmeyer and the ANU have leveraged a significant Australian—

**MRS DUNNE:** A research council grant?

**Mr Stanhope:** An Australian Research Council grant. There is some very interesting, I believe in terms of woodlands, and significant research being undertaken at Mulligans Flat, some of it involving the reintroduction in the Mulligans Flat of wood, of logs, in different tonnages over different areas, to undertake some longitudinal work on the effects or indications of that.

I will ask Mr Watkinson to give some brief outline of the steering group—it is quite an expansive steering group—that is now overseeing the development of a plan of management and developing some of the finer details about the Mulligans Flat predator-proof fence. What are we going to call it? Has it got a name? The Mulligans Flat predator-excluding reserve?

**Mr Watkinson:** It is called the predator-proof fence at the moment. But I am sure we could come up with a better name than that. In terms of the first question on costings, the costings have increased primarily because, as we got into the project and did detailed site assessments, the terrain has proved more difficult than we originally thought. There are a number of waterways where we have to do specific modifications to the fence; otherwise when it rains there is a danger that the fence could get breached.

Following public consultation, we have had to put in more access points; we have had to meet the ESA requirements. There are a combination of factors which have led to the final design costing more than was originally anticipated.

In terms of the steering committee, there is a steering committee that is working with us to develop a management plan for Mulligans Flat and that will be looking at a whole range of issues about how we maximise the potential of having a predator-proof enclosure and the opportunities to reintroduce endangered wildlife.

As the Chief Minister has said, we are working with the ANU already on a number of experiments within the enclosure. From memory, the timing of having a draft

management plan is in the next two to three months.

**MRS DUNNE:** The \$300,000 recurrent, I presume that is staff to man the fence, inspect the fence and maintain the fence?

**Mr Watkinson:** Primarily a staff member and a little bit of operating to ensure the integrity of the fence.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a supplementary. On page 287 of budget paper 4, accountability indicator “i” says, “Implement identified activities arising from action plans for threatened species.” How many threatened species do we have in the ACT?

**Mr Watkinson:** I do not know that number offhand, I am sorry. I would have to take that on notice and confirm it.

**THE CHAIR:** I would be interested to know the number and what they actually are.

**Mr Watkinson:** Sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that.

**MRS DUNNE:** I think this is the place to ask this. There is money in the budget—and I cannot quite put my finger on it—I think it is \$70,000 for the review of the Heritage Act. Does this come under this output cost? I do not particularly want to ask about the review of the Heritage Act; I want to ask a more high-level question. There is also underway a review of the Nature Conservation Act but there is no funding for that.

My question to you, Chief Minister, is: the Heritage Act is only four years old and the Nature Conservation Act is 15 or more years old. Why is the Heritage Act being funded before the Nature Conservation Act?

**Mr Stanhope:** There is a statutory requirement within the Heritage Act for a review within the first five years. As Mr Neil has just indicated, this is one year earlier than we are perhaps meant to commence that review of the Heritage Act. At the time of its passage, it was determined by the Assembly that the act should be reviewed if it is appropriate.

Having said that, there have been some aspects of the Heritage Act which did suggest to us that bringing forward the statutory review by a year might be beneficial. You might wish to go over with Mr Neil some of the issues that, in their application, have raised questions.

**Mr Neil:** Some of the issues are, I think, some concerns by members of the public and others that the Heritage Act seems to tie assets up and fails to recognise this bit between formally listing and the way you manage the asset after the listing. Because of the disquiet, we thought it would be more appropriate to try to deal with it early, rather than wait for another year.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you give me an example of the problems of implementation?

**Mr Neil:** There has not been a problem with implementing it; I think the problem has been in what actually happens when something is registered by the Heritage Council. The council has a set of criteria. If the object or place meets the criteria, they may or may not register it. Following that process, there is then the management of that place or object. And there has been some confusion on the two separate parts. The review of the act will give us a chance to look at that and to look more closely at the representative Aboriginal organisations.

**MRS DUNNE:** That was probably the most contentious thing during the passage of the bill.

**Mr Neil:** And there is still some concern about how that works, how people become RAOs, registered Aboriginal organisations. There were a set of rules on that. In the interim, we have had applications from the Indigenous people who are claiming to be RAOs. In order to try to sort through that question, a review of the act was opportune.

**DR FOSKEY:** The initial question, I thought, was about the review of the Nature Conservation Act.

**MRS DUNNE:** There are a couple of things about the Heritage Act, with your indulgence, Dr Foskey, and then I would be quite happy to go back to my initial question. I have a couple of questions about heritage and Indigenous heritage. At the time of the passage of the legislation, there was a considerable backlog of items and places that were to be studied, reviewed and decided whether or not to be listed. I cannot remember whether it was a large number. The number escapes me at the moment.

**Mr Neil:** It was around 300. It is now down to about 260. Whenever you register something, there is a fairly drawn-out process. There is the forward consultation period and then you have to address all the issues that arise. We have slowly worked on making sure that the processes are right so that when we do register these items or objects we can actually administratively deal with that. You have got something like, I think it is, two days to actually get all the paperwork out once the decision is made. Administratively, we need to make sure that we comply with the law, and to do that we need to spread them out a little.

**MRS DUNNE:** On the Nature Conservation Act, why is there no funding for that?

**DR FOSKEY:** And when will there be?

**Mr Stanhope:** The review is being pursued; it is being funded internally. Mr McNulty can give details of the process.

**Mr McNulty:** The Nature Conservation Act review is happening at the moment. It is being funded within the departmental budget. There were enough funds to do it at the time; there was not for the Heritage Act review. That is why we sought initiative funding for that.

**MRS DUNNE:** So how much do you anticipate that the review of the Nature Conservation Act will cost and what is the timetable?

**Mr McNulty:** Mr Butt, whose area is managing the project, can give you that detail. I do not have it with me.

**Mr Butt:** The review has been underway for some time. We have engaged consultants, Marsden Jacob Associates, to do some preliminary work. They are in the process of finalising their report that we have commissioned. We have set up internal review committees to work through various areas of our network to make sure that we are covering all the right officers and picking up the issues from the officer level as well as the high-level type things that will come out of the consultants' report. We are anticipating drawing that together by the end of June.

**MRS DUNNE:** And where to from there?

**Mr Butt:** What we will be putting forward then will be a report to the government and seeking the government's advice on the way forward that it wishes to go.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is a high-level question. I am going to mention the K word. If we ever get a situation where we are dealing with another kangaroo cull of the debacle we have had recently, will the review of the Nature Conservation Act give the minister and the officials more power to deal with this expeditiously? It is not a question, I suppose.

**Mr Stanhope:** I must say, in the context of the Nature Conservation Act, I am not sure that I have enough information to be able to answer that question but I would be more than happy for Mr Butt or Mr McNulty to respond in relation to those aspects of our legislative framework that impact on a kangaroo cull. Certainly, separately funded within the budget, of course, is funding for the development of a kangaroo management plan.

**MRS DUNNE:** But when it gets to the pointy end—

**Mr Stanhope:** I am not quite sure which aspects of our conservation or realistic regime impact on our capacity. Issues in relation to a kangaroo cull are never taken lightly, but I am not aware that, in the imbroglio over this particular cull, the law was really the issue. The issue was political will.

Actually Mr Zissler makes one point that perhaps is relevant. I must say, at the height of our negotiations with the commonwealth and having regard to the advice which my government was in receipt of in relation to the impact of the numbers of kangaroos on the natural environment, the question was raised whether or not an offence was being committed by the relevant land manager—

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, it was certainly something that Mr McNulty and I had discussions about.

**Mr Stanhope:** Maybe that is an issue that needs some clarity. The offences and who might be susceptible is an issue that might be clarified.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Foskey has a supplementary in this area, and then we are going to

Mr Gentleman and Ms MacDonald.

**DR FOSKEY:** Actually I was going to ask about that, but in relation to the Nature Conservation Act, is it planned to strengthen it so that—this is following up from Mrs Dunne’s question—action can be taken to protect species when they are under threat?

**Mr Stanhope:** I am at something of a disadvantage, I suppose, Dr Foskey, insofar as I have not yet been briefed on the nature of the review. The review is a review into all aspects of the operation of the Nature Conservation Act and of the legislation which interacts with it. So I would expect all of these issues to be the subject of the review, but I cannot answer specifically that, yes, we have specifically looked at that issue of offences and the prosecution of offences. But it is quite obviously a significant issue and I would expect that, yes, it is going to be part of the review.

**THE CHAIR:** Mrs Dunne has a quick supp and then we are going to Mr Gentleman.

**MRS DUNNE:** It is by way of a question that could also be taken as a suggestion. The planning and land acts and various other legislation have the capacity for officials to intervene and take steps and then bill the leaseholder for steps, like compliance in the old land act, and there are still compliance rules. Is that something that has been looked at as a model?

**Mr Butt:** Part of the review, as the Chief Minister said, is to look at all the various pieces of legislation that are drawn into or linked somehow with the Nature Conservation Act, map that through and then clarify how a lot of the provisions work. It is also looking at making recommendations on the power of the conservator under the Nature Conservation Act. So the issues that you are identifying are issues that are being looked at, yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Excellent.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Chief Minister, there is some additional operating funding for Tidbinbilla, recurrent funding, in this budget, under 1.4, of \$150,000 extra, but also in budget paper 5, page 41, there is quite a deal of funding for the sanctuary at Tidbinbilla, stage 2, and I think a link there to Birrigai. Can you give us some more detail on stage 2 of the sanctuary at Tidbinbilla?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will ask Mr McNulty or Mr Watkinson whether they are able to expand on that. I am not sure that it is fair to say that final decisions have been made. I have asked the department, in relation to the sanctuary, to look at the possibility, with the additional \$1 million in 2008-09 and \$1.2 million in 2009-10, of what I call a treetop walk; the department calls it something else. The department calls it a swing bridge. It sounds very boring to me, so it is a treetop walk.

**MRS DUNNE:** They tend to swing in the wind.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes. But it is a swing bridge/treetop walk. There is a very good site.

There are two major pieces of infrastructure that the department advises me would enhance the sanctuary: one is a swing bridge/treetop walk and the second is a footbridge across the Tidbinbilla river, which would actually enhance the capacity to view most particularly platypuses, which are a real feature. There are not very many places that I know of where one can travel and visit and not necessarily be guaranteed the sighting of a platypus in the wild but have a fairly high chance of seeing one. We believe that a real feature of the sanctuary is that it does have platypus.

So there are two bridges: a swing bridge and a more conventional footbridge. At this stage, the department will scope in the first instance a swing bridge/treetop walk but subject to the outcomes of studies and that scoping. I guess this is my hesitation. So the initial priority will be to scope a swing bridge and, if it were decided not to proceed with that, for whatever reason, then certainly the department would proceed to construct a footbridge. But at this stage my expectation is that we will construct a swing bridge/treetop walk.

**MRS DUNNE:** So you can guarantee that we will get a bridge out of it.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, there will be a bridge.

**THE CHAIR:** A bridge of some description.

**Mr Stanhope:** And I would say there almost certainly will be a swing bridge, but you understand that there needs to be some engineering work done and some scoping. But this was the cost that we anticipated, we believe, for a swing bridge, which would be a significant enhancement. In my thinking and the thinking of some officers—I am not sure that it is a universal view; I do not want to verbal my colleagues here—there is a close and, I think, an enhanced relationship developing between Birrigai and Tidbinbilla, and most particularly the sanctuary.

Whilst nature and the sanctuary itself are wonderful facilities with a range of attractors, for one cohort, perhaps younger teenage children or teenage children, I think there is something to be said for providing a real inducement or enticement into the sanctuary, forcing them to walk a bit, such as a swing bridge.

I am through that stage of my life, but I remember the trial of trying to get 15 and 16-year-old boys to walk two kilometres through a nature reserve. It was something of a trial. Whilst we want to encourage people into Tidbinbilla and into the nature reserve to learn and to explore, I must say I see this as something of a significant inducement to families trying to get their teenage kids, most particularly, out into nature. So that is some of my thinking.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms MacDonald has a question and I know Dr Foskey would like to ask a question on this output class, but then we will need to move on to the next one because we have only got half an hour left of this hearing this afternoon.

**MS MacDONALD:** I will try and keep it brief, and I hope I am in the right—I get confused, I am sorry, with 1.4 as to which minister I am supposed to be addressing this to. I note there is mention about the recurrent money for Mount Majura walking track, which put me in mind of the—

**Mr Stanhope:** It is capital.

**MS MacDONALD:** Yes. It is written down as recurrent on this piece of paper, but that is okay; it is a mistake. But that was not my question. My question was about the Mount Taylor walking track, which was part of last year's upgrade. I confess I have not been for a walk up Mount Taylor for over two years so I do not know where it is at and I am curious to know where the—

**MR GENTLEMAN:** It is just up behind your place, isn't it?

**MRS DUNNE:** It is your electorate, Ms MacDonald.

**MS MacDONALD:** I meant where the upgrade of the trail was, because I know there are a number of people in my area who are interested in its progress.

**Mr Stanhope:** This is the Richmond walking track. The Richmond walking track has just been completed. I believe it is now open.

**Mr McNulty:** There is an official opening in June, I think.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, an official opening, but the track is now open and I believe it is now being utilised by Mount Taylor walkers. Indeed, the Mount Majura track, the main track on Mount Majura, has suffered, in the same way as the Richmond track had suffered, with some significant erosion. Actually, there is some quite horrendous erosion in different places. The Richmond walking track, or trail, has been replaced at a cost, I understand, of around \$90,000 and we have agreed in this budget to provide similar remediation to Mount Majura.

There are some significant issues. There is a very active community group involved with Mount Majura, the Friends of Mount Majura, and they, I must say, to their great credit, worked very well to maintain Mount Majura. They face a number of issues, as we do in all of our park areas, of weeds. There is an emerging issue with rabbits, and this budget also contains \$100,000 for additional control of rabbits around the urban area.

**MRS DUNNE:** So that is additional pest control?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, it is.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could somebody tell the committee on notice how much money is set aside for pest control? There is only that one—

**Mr Stanhope:** We would be happy to take it on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you.

**Mr Stanhope:** That is an additional \$100,000 and it will be devoted to controlling rabbits.



**THE CHAIR:** Dr Foskey.

**DR FOSKEY:** Have ranger numbers now been increased back to levels previous to the 2006-07 budget, and is there funding for specialist rangers in this budget, for instance to manage grassy woodlands, riparian zones, grasslands et cetera?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will ask Mr Watkinson to respond to that.

**Mr Watkinson:** I am not quite sure what the official number of rangers was in the previous year.

**DR FOSKEY:** If you just give me the numbers, that would be helpful.

**Mr Stanhope:** Could we take that on notice?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, that is fine.

**MRS DUNNE:** If you are taking it on notice, can we back-cast it for a couple of years as well, please?

**Mr Stanhope:** Sure. We would be happy to do that.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, I would appreciate that. Also, will the Fenner school research into fire, fallen timber, biodiversity and ecosystem function be informing the ACT of bushfire operational plans and other management plans?

**Mr Watkinson:** Certainly, the research work that we are doing will be fed into the subregional fire management plans, which are currently under preparation. We are constantly looking at improving our knowledge about how to find the right balance between asset protection and burning for ecological values. We are hopeful that this work will further improve our knowledge on that.

**DR FOSKEY:** Why did the RSPCA only receive half the funding that they need to run their services? I know this happens year after year but it is so clear that so many of the services they do actually save the government money, and \$200,000 would have done it. That probably would be two positions. Given that they do animal welfare inspection, domestic animal services, veterinary, ambulance and awful things to cats, which is really useful, I wonder why the government did not fund them fully.

**Mr Stanhope:** We could ask that question about any funding initiative contained in the budget: “Why didn’t you give this particular initiative more?” With an additional \$200,000 a year in the budget year and the outyears, the government has committed an additional \$800,000 to RSPCA operations. That is a really significant recognition and contribution of the role of the RSPCA. One of the initiatives within the budget that I am particularly pleased about is that we have been able to provide certainty over a budget, an estimates period, to the tune of \$800,000 over four years to the RSPCA, in addition to its budget.

It is a recognition of precisely the things that you raise, Dr Foskey—of the exemplary work which the RSPCA does. Of course, the funding was not linked to any particular

aspect of the RSPCA's functions but the role that Mr Michael Linke, the Chief Executive Officer of the RSPCA, has taken in relation to a most distressing issue, namely the kangaroo cull, particularly for an organisation devoted to the protection of animals, is exemplary. I think Michael Linke's standard, his strength in relation to the issue of the kangaroo cull, has been outstanding. In fact, from the community sector, acknowledging the role of the Limestone Plains Group, Michael Linke has stood out like a beacon, as has the RSPCA, in relation to its commitment not just to the humane treatment of animals.

I must say I find it ironic that from the community sector it is the RSPCA, of all community-based organisations, that has stood up in relation to the assault on native fauna and flora and our threatened ecosystems. It is at one level almost unique to see a society established for the protection of animals taking such a broad sweep at its powers and being the voice, the community voice, that was prepared to stand up for the perunga grasshopper, the sun moth and the Ginninderra pepperpress.

I must say, without pointing the finger, the silence of other organisations that one might have expected to be at the forefront of protecting our natural environment has been deafening. So I am really pleased that we have provided an additional \$200,000 a year to the RSPCA. I might say, Dr Foskey, in terms of the implied criticism within your question, that other states choose not to fund the RSPCA at all. On a pro rata comparative basis, the ACT supports its RSPCA to an extent far greater than many other jurisdictions in Australia.

**MRS DUNNE:** On this it says that it is increased funding. What is the base funding?

**Mr Stanhope:** It is a doubling of their funding from the ACT government.

**MRS DUNNE:** So they were getting two and they are now getting four.

**Mr Stanhope:** They are now getting four.

**DR FOSKEY:** I am sure that they were very happy to receive that assurance, because I know that so much effort goes into fundraising that could be going elsewhere.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Foskey, Mrs Dunne reminds me that quite a while ago we asked you to hold the thought about your switching your thinking program question. Do you still have that—

**DR FOSKEY:** Are we allowed to go back there?

**MRS DUNNE:** I was very conscious that I asked you to hold that thought and then we did not hold the thought.

**DR FOSKEY:** That is so nice. Thank you.

**MRS DUNNE:** And besides that, I want to ask questions as well. I thought it was a reasonable way of getting an opening.

**DR FOSKEY:** In fact, I think we are all being nice today. It would be an interesting

sociological study watching an estimates committee through two weeks.

**MS MacDONALD:** No, no, not at all interesting.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you ask the question? We have got only 20 minutes to go.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes. Could we get more information about the switch your thinking program, which is back to water?

**THE CHAIR:** Maybe we could take it on notice.

**DR FOSKEY:** You are poised, Mr Thorman.

**MRS DUNNE:** Perhaps you could take on notice what the breakdown of the funding is between sectors.

**DR FOSKEY:** It is a whole budget item. It is big.

**Mr Thorman:** You are wanting to get an idea of what sorts of items come under switch thinking?

**DR FOSKEY:** That is right, yes.

**Mr Thorman:** I will just skip over a few of them. It is funding for some ongoing projects like the garden smart program, which is aimed at saving water in the home; the audits under the sustainable schools initiative; the dual-flush toilet rebate; the rainwater tank rebate; and some projects in relation to energy—the HEAT program. It wraps up a number of projects that have already been running and also some new initiatives.

**DR FOSKEY:** It is a rebranding plus a couple of others. How will people be informed about this?

**Mr Thorman:** Part of the funding is for a communication strategy. Rather than looking at things in silos under water, energy and waste, the idea is to bring them together in a more integrated way.

**MRS DUNNE:** Minister, if I could ask your indulgence, could officials provide the committee with a breakdown of—I know you are saying that you are not silos, but this is residential, government, business and schools—how much money you envisage going to that? Also, on the relationship between switching your thinking and the sustainability programs, where do they overlap and where do they meet? And what is the breakdown on those, on notice?

**Mr Stanhope:** We would be happy to take that on notice.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, now we are going to environmental regulation, 1.5.

**MRS DUNNE:** While we are on the subject of reviewing legislation, where are we with the review of the Environment Protection Act? There was a discussion paper about three years ago, or maybe longer. Where are we?

**Mr Neil:** From memory, there were about 52 or 51 options.

**MRS DUNNE:** Initiatives, yes—a lot.

**Mr Neil:** We have been working through them progressively. I am happy to take it on notice to give you the exact amount, but we are down to the last couple. One is to review the act or set in train a review of the act at some point in time. Apart from that, I think most of them have been addressed in one way or the other.

**MRS DUNNE:** Was there not a five-year statutory review date which has now well and truly passed?

**Mr Neil:** That was the review. Following from that review, the recommendation was that we review it into the—

**MRS DUNNE:** Review the review?

**Mr Neil:** No, review the act again.

**DR FOSKEY:** In five years.

**Mr Neil:** The initial review was within five years. It was after five years.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, but there have not been substantial amendments?

**Mr Neil:** No.

**MRS DUNNE:** There were no substantial amendments following the—

**Mr Neil:** There have been amendments to the act in response to the review done almost five years ago.

**MRS DUNNE:** The act was passed in 1997.

**Mr Neil:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** There was a review in 2002-03 or something like that.

**Mr Neil:** Yes, 2003.

**MRS DUNNE:** Were there amendments then?

**Mr Neil:** No, but there have been amendments done since then—incrementally, to implement the findings of that review.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could you, on notice, let the committee know what they were? I seem

to have lost track of those.

**Mr Neil:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Chief Minister, this is another sort of policy question. In the review, would you consider changing the provisions in relation to environmental impact assessments? With the way things stand at the moment, you, as the environment minister, do not really have any powers if there is a DA in place. Given your experience over the last little while, would you consider changing the powers so that the minister for the environment may have overriding powers to call for an EIS because of the interaction—

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes—

**MRS DUNNE:** The planning act seems to have supremacy.

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, I understand. It does. It is embedded in the planning act and it is a power that is vested in the Minister for Planning as things stand. It is not an issue I have given consideration to.

**MRS DUNNE:** Would you give consideration to it?

**Mr Stanhope:** I will always give consideration to any proposal. I would take advice. I would have to take some advice. It is not something I have given consideration to; it is not something the government has considered. But you have raised it and, yes, I—

**MRS DUNNE:** The experience over the last month or so in relation to the Macarthur power plant highlighted some problems there. I know that Dr Foskey called for an EIS. With the way things stood, you are strictly correct: there was no power for you to do so, but—

**Mr Stanhope:** There was not, but there is a power vested in the Minister for Planning. That is a planning issue. I would have thought that it was consistent with the planning regime. I must say, in response to your question, that it is not something I had considered and it is not something that I had considered to be an issue. But I am not one of those who would ever say I would not ever consider a proposal that has been put seriously in relation to how to enhance our legislative framework, whether it be in relation to planning or the environment.

I do not believe that the circumstance you refer to—the case, your example—has illustrated a failing, a difficulty or a particular issue in the context of where the issue is at in relation to the approval process. It is simply not a point along the continuum that we have arrived at. It may very well be that we will arrive at that point at some stage and that the appropriate decision will be made by the minister in whom the power is vested; namely, the Minister for Planning. I do not dismiss what you say as not being a suggestion worthy of consideration, but I do not accept that the example you refer to has thrown up an issue.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay.

**MRS DUNNE:** Just to clarify, Mr Neil, there is another review of the Environment Protection Act in train?

**Mr Stanhope:** No.

**MRS DUNNE:** We are now 10 years down the track since it was passed.

**Mr Neil:** There is the opportunity to respond to that question or to that recommendation that was put forward as a result of the original five-year review.

**MRS DUNNE:** So it is only a one-off five-year review? It is not to be reviewed every five years?

**Mr Neil:** No. Our intention is to try and achieve what was recommended in the first place.

**THE CHAIR:** Before you start your other line of questioning, Mrs Dunne, can I clarify whether the commissioner for the environment is with us here this afternoon? No? Okay.

**MRS DUNNE:** One of the other issues that has come up in relation to the Macarthur power station is the national environment protection measure in relation to air quality. I understand that there is a national review going on. Where are we with the national review?

**Mr Neil:** That is air quality more generally. That is a work in progress. They have included air toxics in some of the national environment protection measures, which would obviously include nitrous and sulphur.

**MRS DUNNE:** It has been place since 1997 or 1998.

**Mr Neil:** They are implemented. The assessment of any power station is—

**MRS DUNNE:** I am not asking about the power station. I thought that there was a national review in train for the national environment protection measure in relation to air quality. Am I mistaken? You can take it on notice.

**Mr Neil:** Could I take that one on notice? There is a lot of work on air quality being done at the national level. It is just a matter of which bit it is.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thanks.

**DR FOSKEY:** I see that water quality is one of the outputs of this, one of the accountability indicators. In regard to post-fire recovery in Namadgi, I am interested to know whether water quality has been restored to anything close to pristine levels and whether there is any funding in this budget to help cover water quality management in Namadgi.

**Mr Neil:** Not specifically in Namadgi unless Russell has something in particular. No, not specifically for Namadgi.

**DR FOSKEY:** So where was it?

**Mr Neil:** The lower Cotter catchment.

**DR FOSKEY:** That was a question too. Are the pine wildings that are still extensive throughout the Cotter catchment regarded as a weed, and does weed control funding cover the removal of those wildings?

**MRS DUNNE:** It would have to be a big bucket of money.

**THE CHAIR:** Greening Australia does remove some.

**Mr Watkinson:** The pine wildlings are being removed in the lower Cotter. That is being done through a number of mechanisms. We have had and still do have Greening Australia working closely with us doing pine wildling removal; we have employed contractors to do pine wildling removal; and we have also had some people from Corrective Services helping us with pine wildling removal.

**DR FOSKEY:** In terms of removing them, I suppose that there is a problem if they are not replaced by some other vegetation. Is that part of the program as well?

**Mr Watkinson:** Yes, of course.

**DR FOSKEY:** I know it is with Greening Australia, but with the people from correction services?

**Mr Watkinson:** Not with corrections particularly, but certainly with Greening Australia. With a lot of our volunteer planting days—there is one coming up shortly—there is active regeneration of areas where we are pulling pines out. Most of the pines are coming up amongst natural regeneration anyway, so it is really getting rid of them to let the natural revegetation come through.

**DR FOSKEY:** So it is regenerating naturally anyway, which is very good news?

**Mr Watkinson:** It is regenerating very strongly in some areas. It is a bit patchy across the lower Cotter, but generally we have been very pleased with the amount of regeneration coming up.

**DR FOSKEY:** Does that include in areas where there was significant soil loss due to rain after the fire?

**Mr Watkinson:** As I have said, the regeneration is patchy where we have had wash-outs and we are having to actively intervene, first of all to stabilise the soil and then coming back to regenerate.

**DR FOSKEY:** It is a huge project and a huge area. Does it feel possible? Does it feel as though you are getting somewhere?

**Mr Watkinson:** Most definitely. It is a project of noteworthiness in terms of the scale

of regeneration that has been achieved there, particularly in an area that has been subject to commercial forestry work. Indeed, we had some representatives from other jurisdictions come through only last year and have a look at the project. We will probably write it up for the journals towards the end of the project.

**DR FOSKEY:** Good.

**MRS DUNNE:** In the list that was kindly provided today—it has been provided by all areas—under 1.5, environmental regulations, it refers to expansion of existing capital upgrade programs. It is \$10 million with some indexation in the outyears. It says that it is across multiple outputs and ministerial responsibilities and that dollar amounts represent the total costs of programs. What are those capital upgrade programs? You can take it on notice if necessary.

**Mr McNulty:** I can respond in terms of the issues in this output.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes.

**Mr McNulty:** There is willow control and revegetation along the Molonglo River, heritage signage and park signage.

**MRS DUNNE:** If I wanted to get what the whole \$10 million was I could put that on notice?

**Mr McNulty:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Can it be taken that I have put it on notice, Mr Zissler?

**Mr Zissler:** Yes.

**Mr McNulty:** Yes.

**MRS DUNNE:** Thank you. I have one question for the commissioner for the environment but she is not here.

**DR FOSKEY:** I have some questions for her.

**THE CHAIR:** She is not here.

**MR SMYTH:** When is the *State of the Environment Report* due?

**MRS DUNNE:** It is due in March.

**DR FOSKEY:** It was due in December last year.

**Mr Stanhope:** It is progressing. I understand that the *State of the Environment Report* is progressing well. In my last conversation with the commissioner, she informed me that the report is virtually completed. I do not have a date, but I am advised that it is almost complete.



**DR FOSKEY:** What will be its path after that, Mr Stanhope.

**MRS DUNNE:** The commissioner releases it.

**DR FOSKEY:** Well, when?

**Mr Stanhope:** I understand that, when it is complete, the commissioner will provide it to me and I will release it.

**DR FOSKEY:** Will you release it this year before the election?

**Mr Stanhope:** I am sure I shall, just to highlight the outstanding successes of my government.

**DR FOSKEY:** Can you give us a progress report on the report at all?

**Mr Stanhope:** The latest advice I have from the commissioner is that the report is, firstly, incomplete. That was the advice she provided me. I did not ask her for a date, but I am more than happy to find out an expected date of submission. I will, of course, then release it. I assume it will be some time in the next month or so.

**MRS DUNNE:** Chief Minister, the kangaroo action plan is not here, but the grasslands action plan is here. What was envisaged in giving the commissioner money for the grasslands action plan?

**Mr Stanhope:** Particularly in the context of the degradation of Lawson and the concerns we have at Majura, I thought that it would be appropriate for the commissioner to undertake an inquiry into the management of grasslands within the territory. She is doing that in a number of steps. She has completed her inquiry into the Lawson grasslands, and she now continues with a review of other grasslands within the ACT.

I must say I am not aware that she has provided an anticipated completion date for that inquiry. But this additional funding was an acknowledgement by me, by the government, that the government had requested this review from her and that she did not have funding that she could access to undertake the review that had been asked of her. This funding provides that capacity.

**DR FOSKEY:** I notice that there are some studies involved in this. Obviously she produces a report, but is there an overlap in the work that is being done by Environment ACT on grasslands? I am just interested to know why the money did not just go to Environment ACT,

**Mr Stanhope:** I think the utility of the request or the inquiry is revealed in relation to its impact in the debate or discussion with defence in relation to its appropriate management of the Lawson grasslands. Whilst the early scientific work is in relation to the development of plans of action for grasslands, which have been developed and championed by the parks unit, this work of the commissioner is essentially an audit of the extent to which the strategic plans for the management of grasslands that have been developed by parks—they are outstanding works of science—are being

implemented.

It is an inquiry of a completely different purpose. The action plans were to develop strategic plans and plans of action for the management; the commissioner's work is to review the way in which the grasslands are being managed. Mr Watkinson would like to expand on that.

**Mr Watkinson:** It would be true to say that the commissioner is drawing quite heavily on research that has been undertaken within parks, conservation, and lands. We are providing a lot of data to the commissioner as part of her study.

**DR FOSKEY:** With the funding from the second appropriation last year, how many staff will the office have?

**Mr Stanhope:** We should take that question on notice. The government has accepted that this is the first time since the position has been established that the position is full time. The commissioner is now funded as a full-time officer with a complement of staff that reflects the fact that the position has converted from part time to full time.

**DR FOSKEY:** Will there be legislation to officially back up the commissioner's new title as commissioner for the environment and sustainability?

**Mr Stanhope:** I must say I have asked the commissioner to advise the government or to work with the department in developing a new statutory framework that would better reflect the full-time nature of the position. As a result of the commissioner's concentration on preparing both the state environment report and undertaking the inquiry into grasslands, she simply has not been able to devote time to that exercise at this stage. But yes, Dr Foskey, we anticipate, in consultation with the commissioner, that there will be legislative change to reflect the breadth of her new role.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Mrs Dunne has a question.

**MRS DUNNE:** Could I hark back to output class 1.3, Chief Minister, and ask you where the energy policy is?

**Mr Stanhope:** The government is developing an energy policy, Mrs Dunne. It is not yet complete. It has not been given a priority; water issues have dominated Mr Butt's energies in recent times. We acknowledge that an energy policy is very important, and we do not resile from that at well. We do not resile from our commitment to the development of an energy policy, but water has dominated the work of the section over the last few years.

**DR FOSKEY:** I notice there are a few advertisements in the gazette for more officers for the sustainability office. Are any of those officers going to help get the energy policy going?

**Mr Stanhope:** Yes, I understand.

**MRS DUNNE:** So how far is away is it?

**Mr Stanhope:** Mr Butt?

**Mr Butt:** I read a draft last night.

**MRS DUNNE:** Yes, but is it a first draft or a final draft?

**Mr Butt:** I have undertaken to the Chief Minister that we would have a draft energy policy for his consideration by the end of June. We have recruited people to the energy area. It is a constant fight; we have recently lost officers from there as well. This is an area where there is very high demand and it is difficult to resource properly. Notwithstanding that, we are working on it and finalising it.

**MRS DUNNE:** Okay.

**DR FOSKEY:** Does it have any relationship to the discussion paper that was—

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Foskey, it is past 5 o'clock. We just cannot keep on asking questions. Members may put the rest of their questions on notice. Thank you, Chief Minister, Mr Zissler, Mr Butt, Mr McNulty and all the officials.

**Mr Stanhope:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The committee adjourned at 5.03 pm.**