



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT**

**(Reference: Annual and financial reports 2005-2006)**

**Members:**

**MR M GENTLEMAN (The Chair)**  
**MR Z SESELJA (The Deputy Chair)**  
**MS M PORTER**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**TUESDAY, 31 OCTOBER 2006**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Dr H Jaireth (Ph: 6205 0137)**

**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 Territory and Municipal Services .....</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Office of the Commissioner for the Environment.....</b>	<b>42</b>

## **The committee met at 1.28 pm.**

Appearances:

Office of the Commissioner for the Environment

Ms Pauline Carder, Administration Officer

Dr Rosemary Purdie, Commissioner for the Environment

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to this public hearing on the annual financial reports of the environment and Urban Services portfolios. On behalf of the committee, I would like to thank you for making yourselves available this afternoon. Although you are probably all familiar with the nature of this hearing, please bear with me while I read the statement of rights and responsibilities.

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 attached to parliament, its members and others necessary to the discharge of functions of the Assembly without obstruction and without fear of prosecution.

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May I remind each witness that, as you respond to any question or make a statement, you must state your name and the capacity in which you are appearing. In relation to questions taken on notice, would you please note that it is the responsibility of each witness, in consultation with the department liaison officer, to check the transcript and respond to the questions. Responses to questions taken on notice are required within five full working days. The transcript will be emailed to the minister and departmental contact officer as soon as possible.

These proceedings are being broadcast to government offices and the media, and may be recorded for filming proceedings. The Assembly now also provides webstreaming access to its public proceedings. Would you please ensure that all mobile phones are turned off or in silent mode. May I remind you that they are not to be used in the committee room. We will be breaking for afternoon tea at 3.00 pm. With that, commissioner, would you like to make any statement from the annual reports?

**Dr Purdie:** Thank you, chair. There is only one thing I would like to say. You obviously have my annual report. I welcome any questions that you have in relation to it. The main thing I would like to say is that this will be the last time I appear before this committee. I have flagged with the minister, and it has been publicly announced, that I intend to stand down from the position at the end of the year. I would really reinforce what I said to the minister: this is for purely personal reasons. I can elaborate on those if you like, but it is about my aspirations for what I would like to do. Although the appointment is for a five-year period, I would have only sought a three-year period. It was an accident that I was not available at the time, to be asked the question. June next year would bring me to that three-year period.

What I have felt very strongly about in the period I have been in the job is that it is important for the commissioner, who prepares an ACT state of environment report, to be there for the 12 months to shape that report and to own that report. It is an important job to then communicate that report to government and to work with government about the implementation of the recommendations. That is certainly one of the several reasons why I have decided to leave. Otherwise, I am open to questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, Dr Purdie. We will start with questions.

**MR SESELJA:** Welcome, Dr Purdie. On page 8 of your report it states:

While the number remains small, it indicates there is some level of community dissatisfaction with environmental management in the ACT.

Are you able to expand on those comments for us, and maybe in doing that compare for us perhaps the level of complaints and inquiries in the last financial year versus previous financial years?

**Dr Purdie:** Yes. The level of complaints this year was very similar to the number last year. I think I made a comment in last year's annual report that we really had no sense of the reason for the small number of complaints—whether it was because people did not know that the commissioner existed, whether it was because they genuinely are happy with the way the government is managing the environment, or whether they simply do not care and there is no interest there.

What I have done since I was here this time last year was to make sure that on our website it is easier to bring up the Commissioner for the Environment if you type in the words “complaint” and “environment”. Previously it was not coming up. I fixed that so it did. I know that, to that extent, we are a little bit more visible. I think it is a comparison with, say, the Ombudsman, who gets hundreds of complaints. I suspect there is a nuance with people being aware of who the Ombudsman is. That is just part of the culture we are brought up with.

I think in terms of environmental complaints, people are a little bit hesitant about whether it is an environmental complaint or not. Certainly a lot of the inquiries we get that never lead to a formal complaint are because people are not quite sure where to go. They often do a web search or they go into the telephone book, come up with our name and they phone us up. Quite often it is just a matter of us putting them onto the correct part of the government so they can follow up their own inquiry.

I think the other thing that is important with our role is that we are a point of last resort. If people have a problem but have not followed it up in other areas of government, it is only then that they come to us. What I was saying there was that, really, even though the number is small, I think it is an important function for the commissioner to have.

**DR FOSKEY:** I am sorry that we are meeting you for the last time, Dr Purdie. I wish you all the best in the future.

**Dr Purdie:** My response to that is I am not withdrawing from any input to public life.

**DR FOSKEY:** You will still be here.

**Dr Purdie:** I will still be here. I will still be continuing as a private individual to comment on public documents and things like that. This is not a total withdrawal.

**DR FOSKEY:** That is excellent. Is Helen still with you in the office?

**Dr Purdie:** Helen has been on much deserved long service leave for the last two months. She has only come back to the country within the last week. We have yet to work out where she would like to go. She has expressed some desire, understandably after 14 years in the office, to do other things. We have not had a chance to talk with her, now that she is back, to look at whether she will stay within the office or whether she will go within other parts of TAMS. That is an open question at the moment. Pauline has been acting in her position while she has been away.

**DR FOSKEY:** This is my third annual report hearing. I note that you remark, as you have remarked in the last three annual reports, that you feel hampered by limited resources. Assumedly that is your budget allocation for staffing. Are there any other issues there?

**Dr Purdie:** Yes, there are two things. I think it has been a consistent message, even with my predecessor. With the review I have done in the job, I feel as though, for the commissioner's work level, it is a three day a week job to do the work required to do justice to that, and that it warrants one additional position. I do not think that is any new news. I think that has been a consistent message. Obviously, in the recent context of the government's changes following the Costello review, I take it as a good sign that we were not abolished. There were independent bodies larger than us that were abolished.

**DR FOSKEY:** Were you moved?

**Dr Purdie:** Moved in what sense?

**DR FOSKEY:** Physically relocated.

**Dr Purdie:** No. We are still located in exactly the same place as we have been. I have said to Mike Zissler, just as part of general discussions, that even though we are administered through TAMS it is really important for the commission to remain

physically separate because of the perception of independence. I know how important that can be. I have continued to talk with the minister about the resource issues from the government for us.

**THE CHAIR:** Was it within your office or with the support staff that the resources were more needed?

**Dr Purdie:** No, it is within the office. We are provided with administrative support, and always have been, through an external department. It is usually the environment department, whatever name that department has. They provide the support on recreational leave, managing the budget and things like that. It is within the office to do the office's functions that I am talking about.

**DR FOSKEY:** Your position is assumed to be two days a week, is it not?

**Dr Purdie:** Yes, I am currently paid two days a week. That has been endorsed through the remuneration tribunal, who set the level of work. The minister originally approved it. They endorsed that. I am very conscious that there are other functions that are legislated that I have never really had the opportunity to do. There has been some discussion about whether some of the roles of the commissioner might be expanded. If that is the case then I think the resource issue will be even more critical.

**DR FOSKEY:** You mentioned that some of the structural changes as a result of the functional review might slow down some of your work. Could you expand on that, please?

**Dr Purdie:** Understandably, many departments have been focused on bedding down the new structures and therefore have not been able to place as much focus on other things. But there is also the potential for a loss of corporate knowledge where people have chosen to take a job elsewhere or may end up getting redundancies of some sort. It is just something I have flagged. I do not know whether it will be a problem or not. Certainly some of the contacts we have had in the past now work with the commonwealth government, and things like that. My sense has been that, where you are losing staff who have been around for the period we have to do the next state of environment report for, which will be a four-year period, that can leave quite a substantial gap in that corporate knowledge.

**DR FOSKEY:** Good point.

**MR SESELJA:** Going back to staffing, on page 33 of the report you comment:

The continual use of short-term staff is not cost-effective and is an inefficient long-term method of operation for recurring outputs such as state of the environment reports.

Are you able to expand on those comments for us and maybe tell us what you think would be the most efficient, cost-effective staff configuration?

**Dr Purdie:** Yes. We do the state of environment report for the ACT. At the request of the regional leaders forum, we prepare state of environment reports for what are now

the 17 local governments in that region. It is similar sort of work, but our operational budget is not sufficient for us to have enough staff on board to do all of the work that is required to prepare those reports. What has happened historically is that we will get contract staff. We will bring them in for a six-month or 12-month period.

We are lucky if they stay for 12 months, because most people want a permanent job. For example, with the recent regional reports we have been doing, we engaged one officer for a 12-month period. Six months into that, he took up a permanent job elsewhere. It is an enormous drain having to re-employ those people all the time for what is essentially the same task. You train them up and then you lose the expertise. That is, for me, not an efficient way of using money. Every time we get a new person, the existing permanent staff have to train them up. That takes away their time to do other things. From my point of view, having one extra permanent staff would be the most cost-effective way to use the money.

**DR FOSKEY:** I know this is actually post annual report, but I am interested to know if processes to replace you have been set in place yet.

**Dr Purdie:** You would have to address that question to the minister, but certainly I have had discussions with senior people in TAMS about it. Certainly some activity has started. I think you need to ask the minister.

I guess what I have said to both departmental staff and to the minister is that I think it is really important to have continuity. I think that, for whatever reason, there was a gap between Dr Baker leaving and me being appointed. I know that was a period which was really difficult for the staff in such a small office. Not having a boss there makes it very difficult to operate.

**DR FOSKEY:** And to hand over as well. I notice on page 37—and I think this one came up last year—that you and your staff are still taking recycling home because the office lacks facilities. Is that true of the TAMS department as a whole?

**Dr Purdie:** Again, you would need to direct that to TAMS. There are some facilities that we can share within the building, but it is really a reflection of the fact that, for an office of three people, there is a limited degree to what you can do. It has just been the most effective way to do it.

**DR FOSKEY:** This one is of interest to us because, as you are probably aware, Telstra is setting up a system of new 3G towers around Canberra. My office has received a lot of concerned calls about that. I note that air pollution is an area that is closely watched in your state of the environment reports. Given the increase in electromagnetic radiation as these facilities are built, and given the concerns of the community—rightly or wrongly based—and paucity of information, I was wondering if this is an area that could be monitored by the commissioner and reported against in the state of the environment reports.

**Dr Purdie:** It is certainly not something that has been raised previously. I suspect we would have the same problem that you alluded to, which is a lack of information. In state of environment reports, we are really dependent on existing information to be able to say what the situation is. Having said that, if there are community concerns

about it, it could be something that is flagged more for the health people to make sure they are recording adequate information. So if it does become a health problem, there is data down the track that can be included in the state of environment report.

**MR MULCAHY:** I have a supplementary question on that issue. With noise pollution, close proximity to the emitting device could cause injury but awareness of it is more of an inconvenience and disturbance—which we regulate. Even if the science is not there yet to establish that there are adverse health effects from electromagnetic radiation, given the fact that there are concerns and there is an amenity issue, could we not regulate for shutting down these facilities within, say, 300 metres of a school or an aged persons facility?

**Dr Purdie:** I am not an expert on this at all. I imagine it is part of the EPA's functions to do that. I imagine you would have to have reasonable evidence on which to base a decision. Intuitively it sounds sensible, but I think governments would need to make the decision based on some reasonable evidence. Even if it is operating on the sense of the precautionary principle that “we are not sure; we will put in an exclusion zone for three years until the evidence is better” that may be one option, but I would assume that the EPA would look at a range of options like that.

**MR MULCAHY:** We do it with noise, but not necessarily radiation.

**Dr Purdie:** Yes. Noise is slightly different because you can hear the noise—well, most of us can hear noise. It is just that we do not have the mechanisms to know whether, in a personal sense, we are being affected by radiation or not. I suspect there is a public education process, but I think it is very much an EPA function of trying to work out what the information is like and what is the most appropriate approach to take.

**THE CHAIR:** Members may be interested to know that it is certainly being dealt with in the planning and environment committee. We have seen reports and queries on the stationing of those towers. I think ACTPLA is doing a lot of work on it. I do not want to hold you back from your discussions on it either.

**DR FOSKEY:** Just to finish on that, some baseline information would be useful, and to then track increases, simply because it is unknown and people are really concerned. Notwithstanding Mr Gentleman's comments, there are concerns about that process as well.

**Dr Purdie:** Yes. I am very happy for us to note that it is something we could consider. Whether or not it is included, I do not know. Obviously we would have talks with Bob Neil's people and look at what the options might be. I do not even know whether the government is in a position at the moment to measure some of the radiation that comes from them. I would be starting from a base of zero knowledge, but I am very happy to take it up and have discussions about it.

**DR FOSKEY:** One of the formal complaints that you mention is at page 9 under “proposed dragway”. It says that a complaint arose from community concerns related to the assessment process and specific content of the draft dragway noise environment protection policy. You say here that a meeting was organised but obviously the report



concluded before that happened. I was wondering if there was an outcome to that meeting.

**Dr Purdie:** I had several meetings with the groups who came to me with those as formal complaints. I think what happened was that, because the draft environment protection policy was the first thing that had been released, it became a trigger for everything that the groups felt was wrong with the dragway. It became the focus for all of those complaints. Because the government had not yet made any decisions on what will happen, there was nothing I could investigate in a formal sense under my act.

I thought the most appropriate thing to do was to try and address some of the process issues that I felt had been raised by the complainants. So I wrote to both Mike Zissler, as head of TAMS, and Bob Neil, as head of the EPA, with a series of what I called preliminary recommendations to try to improve particularly the transparency of the process and that would address some of those concerns the community had about information. The response I have had from Mike Zissler is that he has agreed to all of the recommendations I made.

**DR FOSKEY:** He has agreed?

**Dr Purdie:** Yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** Is that a document that could be made available?

**Dr Purdie:** I am sure it could be, yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** How does that work? It gets tabled to the committee somehow?

**Dr Purdie:** Yes. To the extent I have communicated with the groups that complained to me, I gave them copies of the letters I had sent to government. I have responded to them to give them a summary of what the response was to that letter. So I have no problem in letting you have my letter. I will check with Mike that he is happy to let you have a copy of his letter.

**DR FOSKEY:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** For members' interest, if the committee requests documents from the minister, it does not matter whether he agrees to it, he still has to supply the documents.

**Dr Purdie:** These are documents from me. These are not documents related to the minister.

**DR FOSKEY:** I am not on the committee either.

**THE CHAIR:** It should not matter. The committee has the purview to request any documents.

**MR MULCAHY:** I have a double-headed question for the commissioner. I want to

take your attention to recommendation 2003.9 on page 20, wherein there is a recommendation that the ACT government should extend existing policy and management plans to include extreme event scenarios.

Could you please expand on your comments in this recommendation regarding the ACT government's 2006-07 budget decision to place the ESA back under direct administration of JACS? Could you inform the committee as to whether you believe that the revised structure, in light of your recommendation, will adversely affect the ESA's ability to respond to an emergency, given the recommendations in the McLeod report?

**Dr Purdie:** Yes. The recommendation originally came through the last state of environment report, which was finalised just after the 2003 fires. At that time the whole emergency situation resulting from the fires would have been very much uppermost, I think, for the staff and my predecessor, Dr Joe Baker, who prepared this recommendation.

I guess what I am saying is that I do not know the detail of the government's budget changes and how they will directly impact. I was just aware that—I think it was from the McLeod inquiry—there was a recommendation that the ESA become independent, presumably for very good reasons. My concern was that if, for whatever economic or other reasons, the government has seen fit to put the ESA back into a department, it is important that that does not undermine whatever the benefits were seen to be in the ESA becoming independent. I have no detailed knowledge of the arrangements, when they were independent or how they have now changed, so it was really just an observation.

**MR MULCAHY:** You have had no input whatsoever into this changed arrangement.

**Dr Purdie:** No.

**DR FOSKEY:** I have an additional question related to bushfire prevention. In fact, it is in relation to a constituent's concern expressed to me today regarding smoke in the air at the moment. It was handy to know why the sky was an interesting colour this morning. There is apparently some burning-off occurring.

I will not go into the content of the letter, but this person has asthma and was concerned that, while the government apparently had advertisements or something telling people to stay indoors, it is not usually possible for most people to do that because they have their jobs and so on. Would it have been appropriate for that person to have gone to the Commissioner for the Environment with that concern?

**Dr Purdie:** They could have come to me. But because I am a point of last resort, if you like, it would have been more appropriate for them to talk with the appropriate authorities—either the EPA or ESA. While I have sympathy with the person, I am conscious that you go to Asia in the fire season when they are burning-off and you see everyone wearing masks. No-one worries about wearing a mask there, whereas here people feel very embarrassed about wearing a mask.

That is one way of addressing it, but the real problem here is that the community

acknowledges that there is a need to do fewer reduction burnings. It is very unfortunate that the most appropriate time to do fuel reduction burning is when there is no wind to blow the smoke away. It is almost a lose-lose situation. I think in terms of addressing that and acknowledging the problem, the first point of contact would be the EPA or ESA and talking with them.

**DR FOSKEY:** It is a difficult one, isn't it?

**Dr Purdie:** It is a difficult one, I agree. It is part of the trade-off, I guess, that we as a society are faced with in trying to achieve one objective—minimising risk of fire—with our own personal health requirements. I empathise with the person.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Purdie, it seems we have finished early. Thank you very much once again for coming in. We will get a copy of the transcript to you as soon as possible. We hope to see you again before you finish in the job.

**Dr Purdie:** You may well do. Thank you very much.

**Short adjournment.**

Appearances:

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

Department of Territory and Municipal Services

Zissler, Mr Mike, Chief Executive, TAMS

McNulty, Mr Hamish, Executive Director, Recreation and Land Management

Cooper, Dr Maxine, Executive Director, Enterprise Services

Kennedy, Ms Rosemary, Executive Director, Community and Infrastructure Services

Kiemann, Ms Susanna, Director, Strategic Finance

Watkinson, Mr Russell, Director, Parks Conservation and Land Management

Gill, Mr Tony, Director, Roads ACT

Greenland, Ms Karen, General Manager, Road Transport

Elliott, Mr Tom, General Manager, ACTION Buses

Ottesen, Mr Peter, Executive Director, Environment and Recreation

Neil, Mr Bob, Director, Environment and Recreation

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon, minister and officials. Welcome to the annual financial reports hearings into urban services and ACTION. The Cemeteries Board, which is under the Chief Minister's Department, will be called on later this afternoon. Minister, you are probably familiar with the nature of the hearings, but I hope you will bear with me while I read the opening statement on rights and responsibilities. The committee has authorised the recording, broadcasting and re-broadcasting of these proceedings in accordance with the rules contained in the resolution agreed by the Assembly on 7 March 2002 concerning the broadcasting of Assembly and committee proceedings.

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**Mr Hargreaves:** Thank you, Mr Chairman, for the opportunity to make some opening comments before the committee begins its examination of the Department of Urban Services 2005-06 annual report. If I could begin by commending the department on its professionalism and its focus in completing in 2005-06 a major internal restructure of the way that it delivers services. The restructure was known

within the department as “Taking charge of our future”. The program was a comprehensive and critical examination of the department’s organisational structures, processes and procedures. I am pleased to say that it resulted in substantial organisation reform, edification, efficiencies and savings.

While the program was primarily commenced to achieve savings through identifying more efficient and effective means to deliver services, the change program also realised a range of other important outcomes, including a more unified and streamlined organisation; a better integration of functions and activities; improved consultation and communication between management, people, unions and key stakeholders, including the community; improved focus and clarity of purpose in service delivery, particularly the department’s land management, transport and corporate services areas; a chance to revisit, reassess and revitalise the culture, including identification of a new set of organisational behaviours; and a significant rationalisation of senior management positions.

These organisational reform outcomes were achieved in a relatively short time frame, through the innovative use of an internal project team to drive both structural and cultural change; commitment of people across the department to the process; consultation and communication methods employed to actively involve people in the development of the strategies to implement change, ensuring that everyone was as fully informed as possible throughout the program; the strong leadership of the chief executive and executives; and minimal cost.

It is important to recognise that, throughout the change program, service delivery was not compromised. In fact, the department was nominated for a number of national awards. This is testament to the standard of service that was being maintained while significant change was being implemented. Through this time of change, the department and the professional people who work there kept their focus on ensuring services that they provide to the community were timely, effective and value for money. They remained responsive to the needs of the community and committed to the creation of a safe, sustainable and accessible, naturally built environment.

Some major highlights of the year include libraries. Along the way, the \$3.5 million Kippax library was delivered by this government in August 2005. Stage 1 of the refurbished Belconnen library was completed. With the second stage, also now complete, there is an investment of \$1.1 million. Our new Civic library, as part of the \$15.9 million Civic Link project, has been developing well, ready for its opening later this year.

With regard to taxis, the recommendations of the Wheelchair Accessible Taxi Reference Group set up by me were accepted in full and important improvements to WAT services were commenced and funded. A taxi licence release program has developed an expansion of Canberra’s taxi fleet, complementing this government’s progressive hire car reforms.

With regard to Canberra Connect, we introduced a greatly improved web portal to better access information services and experienced continued increases in its online payments and services.

With regard to the roads, the largest ever road resealing program was undertaken in the ACT. That was completed. Work on the GDE continued apace and we are on track for completion within our time frames. The first section to Ginninderra Drive will be open before Christmas.

With regard to our parks and places, refurbishment around Lake Ginninderra foreshore near Emu Bank was commenced. Our parks had more than 10 million visits, and 91 per cent of the community were satisfied with their experience at town and district parks. The successful round town program of free events entertained thousands of Canberrans at more than 40 events across the ACT.

I am happy to report that my department is a safety conscious workplace. The continuing improvements to workplace health and safety culture resulted in a \$1.1 million premium reduction.

Mr Chairman, I commend to you and the committee the Department of Urban Services 2005-06 annual report. I invite questions from the committee.

**MS PORTER:** Thank you very much for that overview and congratulations on the restructure and all that recognition that you got through that. You mentioned the round town program. As you know, I am a great supporter of that; I really appreciate that program. You mentioned some figures about how many programs you ran. I was wondering whether you had some figures on the success of it. What feedback have you got?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Thank you very much, Ms Porter. Through you, Mr Chairman, round town is a targeted events program reaching a broad range of Canberra residents, from youth to senior citizens, over a wide number of locations in the territory that other events might miss. The events are, therefore, accessible to everyone in the community. The program aims to promote and maximise the use of territory and municipal services' parks and public places; provide free entertainment for the population of Canberra, with an emphasis on families and young people; enliven the city centre; and enhance community access to and participation in the arts and other cultural activities. Consequently, round town events address several of the government's social priorities as outlined in the Canberra plan. Some events were also timed to celebrate major events in the community such as New Year's Eve, Fathers Day and Mothers Day.

The round town program has gone from strength to strength. It has grown in scope and attracted increased participation from the community. The events foster a community spirit by providing opportunities to meet in local parks and places. They engender a sense of pride in the local facilities in parks and places throughout Canberra. The events showcase Canberra's urban parks and places which, as we know, are well worth showcasing and promote the livability of Canberra as a city. All of the events are outdoors and promote healthy and active living in Canberra. It is interesting to note that the majority of attendees walk or ride to their local party in the park. The program fosters a sense of community, especially in the new and burgeoning communities in areas such as Gungahlin, Tuggeranong and Dunlop.

In the warmer months, there is always something happening in the city centre on

Friday and Saturday nights, including live music, dancing and films. The events provide opportunities for community groups such as the Girl Guides, Scouts, SES volunteers and the CWA to fund-raise, with food and drink sales. All of this is provided to Canberrans free of charge, enabling all to participate regardless of their financial circumstances.

In terms of attendance, the numbers, which I do not have about my person, grow and depend on the events themselves. Clearly, the Mothers Day event in Glebe Park last year was incredibly well patronised. I would have thought that over the day well in excess of 10,000 people attended that event. Indeed, I attended one recently in Telopea Park. It had to compete with the last bits of Floriade, it had the markets at the Bus Depot, there were a whole range of activities on in town, and still well over 3,000 people came and enjoyed the park. It is an incredibly successful event. It shows Canberrans at play. After all, play brings laughter and laughter is healthy.

**MS PORTER:** How do the community groups find out that they can participate in the days? What is the take-up by the community groups?

**Mr Hargreaves:** People can find out about the round town program by contacting Canberra Connect. We have information stalls at each one and information from which people can contact the organisers. I know that people can contact places like Canberra Connect and say, "What's going on? How can I get in contact with them?" I know, from the ones that I have been to, there have been a variety of community groups. We know that a lot of access to information around town through community groups, as you would know from your volunteering experience, is word of mouth through the leadership of those community groups.

Additionally, we advertise the round town program on the ABC very, very regularly. I wish some of the other media outlets would run some of the stories on it as well. Then we could reach a hell of a lot more people in the ACT.

**MR SESELJA:** I understand there was a review of library services undertaken. I could be wrong, but you can correct me if I am.

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, you are not wrong.

**MR SESELJA:** I cannot see any mention of it in the annual report. Was such a review undertaken? If so, whereabouts in the annual report would I find it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** May I compliment you on your incisive reading of the annual report because, in fact, the report was completed after that annual report was put to bed in June. The report came to me, I would guess, about three or four weeks ago. At the time of writing the annual report, it was nowhere near completed; so you would not expect to see it in there. You might expect to see reference to it in the 2006-2007 report. I am sure you will be looking forward to reading about it.

**MR SESELJA:** Given that it happened in that financial year, are you able to tell us what the review found and the costs associated with the review?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to take your question on notice in regard to the costs of it.

It was not commissioned in the 2005-06 year; it was commissioned in the 2006-07 year. The thought processes behind the addressing of specifications for such a review have been going on, I have to tell you, since the original restructure of the Department of Urban Services, when we looked at every single facet of the department during its restructure program. The report, I am sure, to which you refer is Dr Veronica Lunn's report. It was not commenced in the financial year 2005-06.

**MR SESELJA:** Did the decision to close Griffith library flow from that report by Dr Veronica Lunn?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, it did. We need to understand that statistics collection with libraries is an ongoing thing; it happens all the time, monthly. The conclusion by Dr Lunn that this library was the lowest used and the one with the least amount of traffic going through it was not news to us at all; it merely put into one document a relativity across the whole of the library service and a little bit more information than we had before. We knew about the statistics themselves long ago.

It is tempting to think about the closure of Griffith library in isolation to everything else in that report. What was talked about in that report were things like the age of the materials and how we were going to address that. You might notice in volume 2 of the annual report, at page 105—and I draw your attention to the fact—that we have had an improvement in the age of materials in the library system across the board. Thirty-two per cent of our collection was less than five years old; now 44 per cent of our collection is less than five years old. There is an improvement there.

The review of library services highlighted the fact that we have to become more contemporary in our collection. We needed to have a slightly different direction. We needed to have more access to electronic materials; we needed to have more access to DVDs and issues like that.

It also needs to be seen against the background of the library developments that we have had over the last year or so, and included in this annual report. You will notice the \$3.5 million we invested in the Kippax library, the \$1.1 million invested in the Belconnen library refurb and the \$15 million investment we have done in the City Link precinct, which includes a brand new Civic Library. My understanding is that the old Civic library is only 30 per cent of the size of that one.

We are talking about the way and the nature of the delivery of library services that were covered by that report. There is a need for the government to bring our collections into contemporary times. That is not without its cost. We also need to look at the nature.

With respect to the Griffith library, it was not just a simple library where people might wander in, sit down and read a book. There were a number of other activities that went on within there. The call centre, for example, was operating out of the Griffith library. The home lending library service and the mobile library service also operated out of there. Both of those need not operate out of any particular spot because they are mobile and go into people's homes. There was no need necessarily to have them located there.



The report also addressed the positioning of libraries across town. It talked about having libraries where people actually go. For example, it was recommended that we make sure that we concentrate our resources where there are major centres, either in the town centres or significant group centres like Kippax and Erindale at Wanniasa. There is no such significance in terms of shopping centre opportunities at Griffith.

We also, in considering whether to close it or not, considered whether people just use that library full stop. But that is not so. A significant number of people there were cross-referencing, having accessed materials at Civic and at Phillip. Almost half—if I read what it says correctly—of the people went to Phillip as well as Griffith. Yes, they are moving around the libraries other than just Phillip and Civic. We found that, even though it had the lowest usage, quite a number of those people who used it accessed the other libraries as well; so it is not a case of that being the only place they could go to. That gives you a bit of snapshot as to the thinking of it.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Porter has a supplementary to this. Before we go to that, I remind members that this is the 2005-2006 report. While the minister is very keen to answer those questions, we should try to stick to the agenda.

**MR SESELJA:** You touched on the Griffith library. What was the consultation process with users and with local residents prior to that decision being taken?

**Mr Hargreaves:** One of the accusations that we have had levelled at us is that we have not had community consultation over the issue of closing the library. Let me pose a question to you. Suppose I had a consultation process with you and said, “I am going to close Griffith Library. What do you think?” I know roughly what you are going to say; I have got that worked out.

The other thing, as I said earlier in my response to you, is that the library service is an interesting animal in that it deals directly with its clients on a very, very regular basis; it has conversations with its clients. We know whether or not the services at Griffith library are being delivered, from the conversations the library officers themselves have.

This is a report by a world-renowned expert in library services. I have accepted that report and have made the decision that is what is going to happen.

**MS PORTER:** With the minister’s indulgence and with your indulgence, chair, I ask: what was the status of the Belconnen library refurbishment? It is mentioned here. I wondered where it is up to, that is all, if that is all right with you.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Through you, Mr Chairman: the Belconnen library is doing really well; \$1.1 million worth of refurbishment has gone into that. It is completed. As I am just advised, we have got to do some final airconditioning remedial work yet to complete it. As a result of the Griffith library decision, it will also receive the mobile library service and the home lending library service as an adjunct. The reason why that particular library was chosen was that there need to be parking areas for rather large vehicles. Of the library premises that we have across town, Belconnen is the only one where we have that space.

**DR FOSKEY:** Again with the indulgence of everybody concerned, would part of Dr Veronica Lunn's terms of reference have included looking at the demographics of Canberra in relation to library use, noting that they are very commonly used by ageing people, the Griffith population, and young and school children who find it quite difficult to travel? Were demographic issues considered?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Professionally, yes. The answer to your question is yes, the demographics right across town and the travel of those people were considered. We need to make sure that we can provide high-quality library services right across town and not just locate them in one particular suburb. As I said, there were frequent users of other libraries, including the kids. The email campaign in recent times talks about it being like Noah's ark—two by two going in and out of it—where old people use it as a safe haven and all that sort of comment.

I am afraid that a lot of the emotive language that was used was quite inappropriate; it was inaccurate. The report points to where people collect. What are the activities that people engage in and go to the library for? At Griffith, for example, there is no opportunity to do any other business. People do other business when they go to those other libraries as well.

**MR PRATT:** Following on from Dr Foskey's question about the comparative study, can you clarify whether the Lunn review looked at, shall we say, the various library clienteles on a regional basis, that is, the inner south versus other areas which are serviced by other libraries? Were those comparatives undertaken before that decision was made to close that library?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, those considerations were taken into account by Dr Lunn in forming her recommendations which were given to me, to which I added my own knowledge of the library service which, I have to tell you, is relatively extensive.

We need to understand that there are specialty libraries. We have got the heritage library, for example, out in Phillip. We have certain parts of collections which are not accessible to small libraries like Griffith. We have, for example, in Dickson a certain part of their library which is deliberately set up for the Chinese language materials that exist there. There are those sorts of things. Those smaller activities can be catered for in a large library situation.

Similar sorts of things will happen across the road here in the new Civic library. If you have not had a look over it, I invite you to do so. If you have not, we will happily arrange it.

**MR PRATT:** Thank you very much.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is an exceptional library. Quite frankly, we need all the expertise and materials we can to make that an even better one than the designers had intended. But the short answer to your question is absolutely. When I accepted that recommendation, I tested that recommendation against my own knowledge and my own contacts.

**MR PRATT:** It was not a case of a large population of elderly in that area who are

going to be more disadvantaged by not having that regional access versus travelling to town? You are saying that did not crop up in your assessment of the Lunn review?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not believe that that is the case. I do not think that argument carries that much weight. We know, for example, that there are people in the same age group who are living in the suburb of Torrens that have to go to Phillip. We know that there are people in Weston Creek that have to go to Phillip. They have to get there. My own father is in his late 70s. If he wants the library materials, he either gets it from the mobile library service or the home lending library service or he goes to Phillip. That is a considerably greater distance, let me tell you, than Griffith to Civic and Phillip.

Remember, too, that Griffith is roughly equidistant between the new Civic library and the Phillip library, both of which have extensive collections and much greater collections than exist at Griffith. The selection choice is much wider. Further, the electronic application in the library context will be more extensive in the Civic library and in the Phillip library. There are people in the library service who will assist people to access the internet for such things as research information, entertainment or even paying the bills. Those services are not available at the Griffith library to anywhere near the same extent as they are in those other libraries. So the support services are there.

**MR PRATT:** Going back to the point you made earlier about consultation, you said why would you bother consulting when in the process you might say, for example, we are going to shut down the library so we know what the answer in any two-way traffic consultation is going to be. Is it not true, too, that you could have consulted groups of residents and the local community about the viability of that place? Did you not consider that as part of the consultation process?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Firstly, it's not all that long ago, Mr Pratt, that the notion that the library would close was canvassed in that community. The views of the people in that area are very widely known and very widely publicised. It's not the case that nobody had a chance to voice their opinion on it. The reality is that we have to make some difficult choices from time to time and I've made them. I believe the decision that I've taken—and I do insist that if you're going to quote me you don't take it out of context, as will be the temptation—will enhance the library service, very much so.

We're talking about the application of a library service to one suburb, Griffith. No other single suburb has a library to itself. What's also interesting is the number of emails that I've received—I would guess they would be up around 30, if that. Predominantly they are a campaign by the friends of the library service—and we expect that; that's fine—with a pre-worded email. So from where I'm standing that is the opinion of one person, not the opinion of everybody who's done it. Furthermore, I've had people from as far away as Kaleen, Banks and Gordon complain about the closure of Griffith library. Those people would have to go past two or three libraries to get to Griffith.

**DR FOSKEY:** They might have parents living there.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, they might have parents living there, Dr Foskey, but it's

unlikely to be that number. It's also unlikely that people visiting their parents pop into the library on the way, because they don't do that at Griffith; that's not the demographic.

The other thing that people are saying is: "Well, the demographic is older people." I would suggest to you that the Red Hill demographics are pretty much the same. You would know from your own experience the demographics in Yarralumla; there are quite a number of retired people there and now quite a number of young people. They don't have their own library either. They have to go past one to get to Griffith.

**DR FOSKEY:** Just a final one on that. Will that report be made available and can you give an estimation of the savings that might have been gained from—

**Mr Hargreaves:** The savings will be reinvested into the library service, Dr Foskey. With the report, I think it's only reasonable that those people who may be affected by its contents—I don't mean in the wider community—for example, the staff themselves, should have a chance to look at it before I release it. At this stage of the game I don't see anything in the content of the report that would preclude its being available. I beg the indulgence of the committee: I don't want to do anything about its release for a couple of weeks but after that it would be pretty near right. I don't have a fundamental objection to its being released; I just want to do the right thing by some other folks that need to read it before it gets wider circulation.

**MS PORTER:** Minister, page 19 of volume 1 states:

Parks and Places commenced a review of the Domestic Animals Act 2000.

It says that it looked at several issues, all of which are really important issues. I was wondering where we're up to with the 2006 draft bill and what kind of changes you might be looking at in that area.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I'm expecting to be able to table in the Assembly in the November 2006 sittings an exposure draft bill. The Domestic Animals Act is one that touches most families in the ACT in one form or another, so I think it's reasonable to put it out to the people to have a look at. Quite seriously and quite honestly, I'm looking for input into it.

We've given some consideration to outsourcing some aspects of Domestic Animal Services but not very much. We might, for example, talk about the current MOU, which provides for desexing and other veterinary services by the RSPCA and that's an arrangement that serves the community quite well. People ask about outsourcing services, and we're already doing it in part. Domestic Animal Services deal with things like the registration of dogs; there's a list on page 19.

There have also been conversations about cats containment and cages for birds. There has been a whole range of things around dogs and whether or not we should allow cosmetic surgery on dogs just for the sake of cosmetic surgery. Tail docking, for example, is one; the ears on alsatians and dobermans is another. Ordinarily, the ears flop but they can be surgically interfered with to make them stand erect. A view of the breeders is that that's a nice-looking dog. I can recall speaking on the tail-docking

issue quite significantly in recent years, saying that if the ACT says that it's not going to allow tail docking maybe the rest of the world might gradually take notice. The professional judges of the dogs might start to think that the natural form of a dog is a much more pleasant and proper thing to be judging than something surgically interfered with, which I think is an exercise in abject cruelty. So there'll be an exposure draft in the November 2006 sittings, in the next couple of weeks.

**MS PORTER:** You mentioned outsourcing; is part of that discussion paper some discussion around outsourcing? Is that what you meant to indicate?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Only around the relationships we would have with the RSPCA and that sort of thing. For example, the Domestic Animal Services will continue. Any suggestion by observers out there that Domestic Animal Services might be sold off to the RSPCA or something like that can't happen. We have an interesting relationship with Domestic Animal Services and our rangers. They look after injured wildlife—dogs that are injured; when fireworks go off, they have an incredible influx, just as the RSPCA does.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, page 19 of volume 1 goes on to waste and recycling, and I'm interested in the waste levels there. There was a recovery of 550,000 tonnes of material that would otherwise have been disposed of. Has that rate remained the same—the percentage of recovery?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We are picking up the act a bit. I seem to remember putting out a press release recently saying that we've had a significant increase—first time, I think, over 500,000 tonnes, which was a real big milestone, just for your information. The Materials Recovery Facility at Hume—that big building, with Thiess written on it, at the roundabout—

**THE CHAIR:** I've been there many times.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That on-sells the recycling stuff, so if we're recovering 550,000 tonnes of material we've got to have a market for it. So we've got an increased throughput, which you may be interested to know. In 2003-04 there were, say, 38,000 tonnes going through there and on-sold. In 2004-05 it was 45,500 tonnes, which is nearly a 20 per cent increase, and we had nearly a 10 per cent increase in 2005-06, up to nearly 50,000 tonnes.

So what we're seeing happen in terms of our domestic waste recycling—the no waste strategy, if you like—is a significant movement forward. The building waste is also moving forward; that's the recycled concrete, steel, glass and those sorts of things coming out of building sites. What is holding us back a bit, quite frankly, is the soft industries through their packaging. We're doing some more work on the national packaging covenant, trying to get to the manufacturers. You know that if you go and buy a mobile phone it comes in a huge great big box with a tiny little phone in it. The only thing we're a bit cautious about in pushing this too far is to make sure that the packaging protects the product that's inside it. But, apart from that, we want to try and get the packaging down as low as we can and increase that. Once we do that, the soft industries and the retail industries will come on board at the same rate of recovery, we hope, as the domestic and the building industry.

**THE CHAIR:** And with that increase of materials through the MRF, have the staffing levels remained the same or have they increased as well?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Pretty much. I have to pay some credit to the people who run the MRF. If any of the members would like to go out and have a look, I urge them to do that because it's a fantastic thing to go and see. The waste is sorted mechanically. It goes through a conveyor belt, and it depends on the weight of it whether it gets flicked off or not. That's why aluminium cans sit on the conveyor belt until they get to the end then they fly off and just drop into a pile. But also along the conveyor belt are unskilled labour. You think they're unskilled, because they don't have a degree, but, let me tell you, the rate at which they can sort green and clear glass, and other contaminants that they pull out and flick, is phenomenal. Their eyesight and the way in which they can pick it out are just magic and it is a joy to watch them work. Mr Pratt, you've got the shadow responsibility for this and if you want to go out and see that MRF please let us know and we'd be delighted to get you a trip over it.

**MR PRATT:** That's the second kind invitation I've had this afternoon, minister.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I had a Zen moment, Mr Pratt.

**MR PRATT:** I know you did.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, perhaps at a later time the committee itself might want to come out and visit the area at Mugga.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I'd be more than happy to facilitate it—I'd like not only to facilitate it but to encourage it.

**THE CHAIR:** While we're still on the MRF I'll just finish off with another question. You mentioned the sale of products from that recycling facility. How successful is the sale of that product? Are there products that you can't sell, of course?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, a couple. It's a bit cyclical. It depends on the markets that we can attract, and we have people searching for the markets for these things all the time. We don't have any trouble with papers, bottles, cans and those sorts of things—there's a ready market for that. They have a glass-crushing activity out there that crushes the glass to sand grain size, so much so that it can't cut your fingers; it just has a sandpaper feel to it. We are producing so much of that stuff that we're ahead of the market that would use it for recycling. It is used for such things as road making, as part of the top dressing on bitumen; that's one.

**DR FOSKEY:** I'm interested in the relationship between the no waste strategy and the turning waste into resources action plan. Has the no waste strategy become the turning waste into resources action plan, or is one part of another?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The no waste strategy is generating the turning waste into resources action plan. ACT NOWaste has a number of strategies; that's just one of them. There is a whole heap of education programs, including turning waste into resources.

One of the things ACT NOWaste do and a big challenge for us—and I must give Chris Horsey the credit here—is to stop business from becoming as disposable a society as it is. We're trying to show business that not only does it not cost them money by not using such packaging; the business can make money out of the recycling and reuse of this stuff. ACT NOWaste help these people find marketplaces for their stuff.

**DR FOSKEY:** I believe some business guides were distributed to businesses in Civic about recycling disposable waste. I'm not sure that every business got them; I know one at least that didn't and maybe it was the only one. I'm interested in the distribution. Secondly, I'm wondering if business could be encouraged, for instance in Civic, by having recycling facilities that currently are not available to businesses. Most still throw all their rubbish, without sorting it, into the general landfill hoppers. Is there a plan to roll out recycling bins in the city?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We're not going to be rolling out recycling bins in the city at this stage of the game, Dr Foskey, much as we'd like to, because it costs so much. We just cannot afford to do it. However, you need to understand that, in terms of the recycling of those materials, we have different hoppers down those laneways. People say, "What an ugly-looking laneway." But that's private property down there, so that's the first point I make about the ugly little laneways. Secondly, there are different hoppers down there, and it's the businesses that need to accept their responsibility and do the separation at source. We try to work with business on that, and that's why we have the NOWaste Awards for business, to encourage people to follow their peers and do that.

We have trialled a couple of third bins at some activities. I know that at the National Folk Festival we trialled it and it was very, very successful. Where we have large events it may be possible. It isn't possible for us to do it as a standard practice throughout Civic; it costs us too much for the bins and for the collections. We don't have the money to do that.

**DR FOSKEY:** On page 20 there's mention that an evaluation of Second Hand Sunday is or was in process and a new initiative is being considered. This is an issue that quite a few people talk to me about. Is there any detail on what that new initiative might look like?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Not at the moment, Dr Foskey; we're still working on that. The stats on Second Hand Sunday are that interest took a really significant nosedive, which I think cost us about \$100,000 or something like that. In the days when we first kicked it off, some years ago, you might remember that there was almost a half page in the *Canberra Times* of addresses where people could drive by and pick up stuff off the lawns. I think we would have been struggling to get eight or 10 column inches—not even that—in the last *Canberra Times*. There has been a significant downturn in interest. We are going to do it this year—I think it's this coming summer time. During the estimates hearing, a member—I've forgotten which one—asked me if we were going to can it and I gave an undertaking that we're going to do it but we're only going to do it the once.

**DR FOSKEY:** One of the things that people mention to me, and particularly elderly people, is their difficulty—

**Mr Hargreaves:** You really get around those elderly people, Dr Foskey, don't you?

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, well, there's a fair few of them; it's an ageing demographic. They have trouble getting stuff to the tip. It's something I come across myself. People who don't have utes or trailers, or family or friends to help, have trouble getting a bulk load to the tip, including to Revolve. It is a great idea to have a day when that stuff could be put out. I acknowledge that Second Hand Sunday involved a lot of organisation.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It did, yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** I've been to cities where people put stuff out and someone picks it up—that's if it's anywhere usable. But I'm talking here about maybe combining that with a service where people can also put out stuff that is rubbish but not putrescent or in any way—

**Mr Hargreaves:** I said we would do Second Hand Sunday again; we're testing the extent to which interest is there. As I've said, it has taken a huge nosedive in the last couple of years. You have acknowledged the amount of work that goes into it. It costs a fair bit of money to do the advertising and the coordination, so if we're not getting the return in terms of the social responsibility bit we've got to consider whether to continue it or not.

We can't do your idea of people putting junk out on the lawn or the nature strip once a year and a nice little truckie turns up, whacks it in the back of the truck and takes it away for you. It would have to be a contract; it would have to go down every street in Canberra on the same day. You can imagine the cost of such a contract—it would be huge. Additionally, we don't have the heavy trucks to do it. You can't stick it in the existing garbage collection vans, because you're talking about people putting out a fridge, a broken chair, an old telly—those sorts of things. They can't just go in an ordinary old garbage truck.

Every single city that I've ever heard of has got the problem of some people not being able to get to the tip. There are a number of ways out of that. One is that they can get the young person who is going past the Griffith library to visit their old person to pick up all their gear and take it to the tip for them, if they like. The other is that you can hire a trailer from a couple of service stations around town. You can also get a Tom's trash pack, if you want. You don't have to have it as a regular thing; you can get a one-off. There are a number of opportunities available to people. Elderly people are not the only people that don't have trailers and don't have that opportunity; many people are in that position but they seem to manage.

**THE CHAIR:** I have a question about the gas that's produced at Mugga landfill. On page 20 it says that gas continues to be extracted and provides electricity back into the grid in Canberra. How much is driven back into the grid from that concern?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Before I start to answer that, if the committee hasn't been to visit that we could wrap it into the same visit, if you like, because the turbines there are well worth seeing, and also a trip up to the tip-face where you can see the rods that go



into the body of the landfill. It's a good idea to see how it works.

The Mugga Lane and Belconnen landfills now have active landfill gas extraction systems. This methane gas is dried and combusted to generate green electricity. Methane is 21 times more potent a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide, and by combusting it we generate electricity at the same time. The ACT generated 27.268 million kilowatt hours during 2005-06, and this is put into the Canberra grid and made available as green electricity purchased by consumers. This 27¼ million kilowatt hours is equivalent to powering approximately 4,500 Canberra homes.

We have plans for the new cell at Mugga Lane to have a leachate reingestion system which will speed up landfill stabilisation and significantly increase gas generation rates; that is, recycling landfill liquids back through the waste materials to enhance their natural decomposition and the production of landfill gas and green electricity. This process will also assist in stabilising the landfill materials in a much shorter period than the usual 80 to 100 years. This new process is anticipated to be operational in 2007-08 when an adequate body of waste has been deposited in the new cell.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks, minister. We might break for afternoon tea and then come back to transport, roads and local services et cetera.

### **Meeting adjourned from 2.58 to 3.14 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** Minister and members, we will reopen the annual report hearings and continue with the Department of Urban Services. We had moved on from waste through to road transport, et cetera.

**MR BERRY:** I want to follow up on some labour hire issues which arose last time we were looking at annual reports. I refer to volume 1, page 105.

**Mr Hargreaves:** We are singing off the same sheet.

**MR BERRY:** In relation to labour hire, on page 110 you will see Adecco, involving contract labour hire for \$4.2 million. Last year I raised the issue of labour hire. It was a figure of around \$19 million for labour hire throughout the department. At about that time there was a review announced. What was the result of the review?

**Mr Hargreaves:** My understanding is that it was part of the restructure of the Department of Urban Services from about eight different silos within the department down to two services—into municipal services and enterprise services. A lot of it looked at the use of seasonal hire. For example, we needed to do tree removal. This can be seasonal; it was seasonal for us. There was a whole range of activities which were season-driven. We had a look at that to see whether or not it would be cost-effective to continue with labour hire arrangements or whether it would be more cost-effective to go with either part-time, permanent part-time or full-time officers on strength. I cannot give you an answer globally about that because it was broken down into the various activities of the department. If you have a specific one, we are happy to research it for you.

**MR BERRY:** Somewhere in amongst all of the contract consultant information, I also found mention of Walter Turnbull, who did a review of CityScape Services. CityScape Services was abundant in last year's annual report, but its only mention in this annual report is this review. Has CityScape Services disappeared?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No.

**MR BERRY:** I am trying to draw a connection here.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It has not disappeared, but as part of the restructure it was merged with Canberra Urban Parks and Places.

**MR BERRY:** That helps me. Last year for CityScape Services, Adecco provided contract staff to the tune of \$2.9 million. This year the contract labour bill for Adecco is \$4.2 million plus. How does one relate the contract hire arrangements last year across the department to the contract hire arrangements this year? How can one draw a comparison?

**Mr Hargreaves:** With respect to that particular one or all up?

**MR BERRY:** No, all up. Is there a way you can provide a table which shows what the contract hire arrangements are?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I think it would be more fruitful if we took that away.

**MR BERRY:** On notice, indeed.

**Mr Hargreaves:** This is going to take a bit of reconciliation. I wanted to make that point, chair, because I know the time in which you require responses to questions on notice. Just to complicate the issue, we have had a significant restructure of DUS. We have also had to have a significant restructure of what is now the Department of Territory and Municipal Services. So we have had two very significant and serious organisational changes take place in the organisation.

For example, we talked about CityScape coming together with Canberra Urban Parks and Places. Then remember that we have also brought parts of Environment ACT and urban parks and places into other parts of the organisation. It is not going to be absolutely related, so we will need to do the numbers and then give you an explanation as to where the things go. That might take us a bit of time, but I am happy to provide it for you.

**MR BERRY:** Thank you.

**DR FOSKEY:** Can I ask questions that are covered in the Chief Minister's report?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, you can. Of course you can ask us any questions you like, Dr Foskey. Knock yourself out.

**DR FOSKEY:** Who has responsibility for sustainability now?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do.

**DR FOSKEY:** Where is sustainability reporting to?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Are we talking about the 2005-2006 annual report, chair?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, we are.

**Mr Hargreaves:** We are talking about future stuff. The department is still in the process of undergoing significant structural change. We have an evolving department. The evolution of that department will not be completed in 12 months. I can tell you that this is much too big a task. But we have the office of environment and sustainability. They report through one of the executive directors to the chief executive and then to me.

**DR FOSKEY:** Is sustainability located in a discrete area so it is identifiably a unit now?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We can identify the tasks that we expect the office to undertake. Let me be a little bit more explanatory regarding the changes in the department. It is not acceptable to us at the moment to have people outside the tent, having this particular application or that particular application. We want to get greater than the sum of the parts. I mentioned that in the annual reports hearings last year, and I indicated that in the estimates committee hearings this year. The whole reason for putting together environment, sustainability, heritage and urban parks and places is that we want to exploit those synergies.

I do not see, quite frankly, that we can approach the environment without having regard to what happens in Namadgi national park, what happens in urban parks and places and what happens with our climate change strategy. It has all got to be folded into the same mind-set. We will get greater than the sum of the parts. We know exactly who is doing what with regard to our sustainability programs.

**DR FOSKEY:** Could you report on the progress of the sustainability legislation?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to take that one away with me because I am not quite sure. I would not want to take a punt on it. I will get back to you in a day or so.

**DR FOSKEY:** How many people are in the sustainability area now?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to take some advice on the exact number of FTEs. I will get Hamish McNulty, with your permission, chair, to come and give some numbers. The reason why I was being a bit dodgy there was because, as I said, it is an evolving issue. We need to understand that this is a snapshot in time today. It may have been different three months ago and it may very well be different in three months time as the evolution of the department emerges. We will give you the information as at today.

**Mr McNulty:** The structure as it stands today has about 38 people in a branch called Sustainability Policy and Programs, which is composed of parts of the Office of Sustainability that came from Chief Minister's, ACT NOWaste and the natural

environment part of Environment ACT.

**DR FOSKEY:** That is the environment department now kind of thing?

**Mr McNulty:** No.

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. There is no such thing as an environment department. We do not have a department of the environment anymore. It is part of the territory and municipal services group.

**DR FOSKEY:** So the Sustainability Policy and Programs group now includes programs related to the environment.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, like ACT NOWaste, for example.

**Mr McNulty:** Yes. It includes natural resource management programs—those sorts of programs,

**DR FOSKEY:** With 38 people?

**Mr McNulty:** Yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** What about the other people that are on the ground in environment?

**Mr Hargreaves:** For example?

**DR FOSKEY:** Rangers, et cetera.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Rangers are still there. They are out there in the field.

**Mr McNulty:** They are in a branch called parks, conservation and lands.

**DR FOSKEY:** So there is some meeting there?

**Mr McNulty:** What has happened is that the old Canberra Parks and Places and CityScape were combined with Canberra Parks and Places; they were combined with Environment ACT and the Office of Sustainability as it came over; and ACT NOWaste and ranger services. We have built a new structure that integrates all those activities. It takes advantage of the synergies, as the minister said, but also avoids a lot of the duplication that was inherent in putting all those groups together.

**THE CHAIR:** Is there still a duplication at all between the two?

**Mr McNulty:** No.

**Mr Hargreaves:** One of the major impetuses, or one of the driving factors, behind the decision was that we found that there was a fair amount of duplication, and just as much of a greyness about where people's responsibilities started and finished. And there was an overlap of a number of people—whether it was just what they were doing that was not conducive to good administration of the city. Putting all these

things together we can get greater than the sum of the parts by having people in together.

We get the conversations all too often—and I am sure Dr Foskey would know this. All too often we would have people, for example from environment, having a different view from people from Canberra Urban Parks and Places. They would have a different view altogether from the Emergency Services Authority, and everybody in the whole world has a different view from Treasury. We figured that we could tackle at least two of those and put them together so that the conversations that these experts, the rangers, have would actually enhance our services to the community.

I saw evidence of that in my visits around some of the depots just last week. I found there was an incredible amount of camaraderie and high morale amongst the rangers that were previously Canberra Urban Parks and Places rangers. Then there were rangers from Environment ACT, all working in the same area. They were also wearing their parks brigade bushfire gear. We have a much more collegiate approach by having these folks come together.

**THE CHAIR:** You mentioned driving forces. We might move on to transport in the report. On page 22 of volume 1, Urban Services, there is a discussion about cycle paths. It does not talk about any reviews or anything in the report. I want to see whether there has been any review of the bike lanes on roads. Are there any statistics on collisions, which are often talked about in the press?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Firstly, there are no reviews for on-road bicycle lanes and there are none in the pipeline. This government is committed not only to their continuation but also to their installation on new roads as they emerge. Wherever the budget can provide it, we will be retrofitting them across the major transport corridors. However, that is not to say that we have not been taking regular surveys of the use of the lanes.

In terms of collisions, there is no specific data for crashes in on-road bicycle lanes. However, in general terms, bikes constitute about 0.8 per cent of all vehicles involved in on-road crashes.

I have some statistics here that you might be interested in. Going back to 2001, the total number of crashes on the road was 8,627. The total number of vehicles involved in the crashes was 16,396. The total number of bicycles involved was 122. The numbers stayed static all the way through to 2005.

Going to 2004, the total number of accidents dropped. That was 7,275. The total number of vehicles involved in the crashes was 13,720. So it dropped a couple of thousand vehicles. There were 112 bikes involved. These are on-road figures. There have been no bike accidents involving deaths on or due to bike lanes.

Furthermore, people have been saying, “Hang on a sec. What about the near misses?” We do not hear people talking about the number of near misses that motor vehicles have. I reckon I would get about one or two a day coming to work. The number of near misses in bike lanes, I would suggest to you, is minuscule compared with the number of near misses if they had to share the whole lane with a motor car.

What these lanes have done, which to me is the really big thing, quite apart from encouraging people to be environmentally responsible about their commuting, is give the cyclists their own piece of the road. They do not compete for the major lane as they did in the past. We were finding that episodes of road rage were considerably greater in number if people had seen a bike in the lane to be used by motor vehicles. We have seen an accommodating use of the road between bicycles and cars and an improvement in the relationship with the instigation of those bike lanes.

In terms of where they come from, of course, in some places we build specific bike lanes according to the Australian design rules. We also use shoulders on the roads, as long as they conform with the design rules. The reason why we paint the green bit is so that the motorists can see the cyclists a little easier.

There have been some comments recently that those green lanes are, in fact, dangerous. I have to say that cyclists coming up slip lanes and into the traffic have exactly the same obligation as motor vehicles coming up there into the traffic. When vehicles are proceeding along a carriageway where there is a slip lane, such as Adelaide Avenue or Commonwealth Avenue, there are the same obligations in respect of bikes entering there as there are for cars. There is no difference to the road rules. I think the negative picture being portrayed about bike lanes is quite out of order at the moment.

**MR SESELJA:** Minister, you talked about having statistics on usage. What have those statistics shown? What has the take-up rate been of the on-road cycle lanes?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I am sorry, Mr Seselja—

**MR SESELJA:** You mentioned in the beginning of your answer about taking some statistics on usage. What have been the results of those? What is the take-up like for the on-road cycle lanes?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to get the up-to-date information. I will take that bit on notice, if I can. I am happy to get it for you. I remember off the top of my head that, when we said we would introduce the Dickson to Woden cycleway, inside 12 months there had been a 17 per cent increase in the number of bikes.

I have just been handed some statistics. The sustainable transport plan has a target and is hoping to increase cycling modal use from 2.3 per cent of all journeys in 2001 to five per cent in 2011 and seven per cent in 2026. We would like to see by, say, 2011, which is closer to where I can envisage, five per cent of all commuting journeys done by bike. That is why we have the bike racks on the front of buses.

The good bit about the bike racks—and I know a couple of people who use them—is that, funnily enough, they travel downhill to work and then they have to pedal uphill going home. They go flogging downhill to work and catch a bus home. At least we have them 50 per cent out of the car and onto the bike going there, and then we have them 50 per cent again out of the car going home. From an environmental perspective, we have 100 per cent success with that character, and from a health perspective at least 50 per cent success.

**MR SESELJA:** Those are the targets. Just to clarify, you have taken on notice the usage.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes sure. I am happy to.

**MR PRATT:** If I can follow that line of questioning—

**Mr Hargreaves:** Sorry, Mr Pratt. Can I interrupt you for a second, please? I want to take this opportunity to send our sympathies to the family of a cyclist who crashed on the weekend. That cyclist died today, but there were no other vehicles involved.

**MR PRATT:** Was that the one south of Tharwa?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. The cyclist was on the Boboyan Road. That was really tragic. Tragic as it was, it did not occur on a bike lane. It was in another part of town. That brings us to nine fatalities this year. I make the point that last year there were 26. The average across the last few years has been around the 10 to 12 mark. It would appear as though the ACT's level, which I am sure everybody will agree is an unacceptable level anyway, is around the 10 to 12 mark. With another two months to go, we have nine. So it is about average. I think the average is too high. You can see now that last year was a dreadful spike. I am sorry, chair. I stopped Mr Pratt.

**MR PRATT:** Minister, I refer to those statistics you quoted for 2001—the 122 bicycles, 16,000 cars and 8,000 crashes. Was that 2001, before the commencement of the cycles lanes work?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, 2001, in the sense that we had just commenced that. You might recall—not to rub it in too much—that it was in fact in October 2001 that—

**MR PRATT:** You made the promise.

**Mr Hargreaves:**—the Good Lord gave us victory in the election. Clearly, those figures were prior to the introduction. Having just come into government, we had to do a budget, get the money and then start the roll-out. The roll-out was in 2002. For your information—I am happy to give you these figures—in 2002, total crashes were 8,247. The total number of vehicles involved was 15,493. The total number of bicycles involved was 121. In 2003 total crashes were 8,288. The total number of vehicles involved was 15,757. The total number of bikes involved was 120.

You can see that, when I said the figures are pretty consistent, that is what I was getting at. I have given you the 2004 figure. The 2005 total number of crashes is 7,003. The total number of vehicles involved was 13,291. The total number of bikes involved was 111.

**MR PRATT:** So there has been about a three or four per cent decrease—no, not even that—in 2001 to 2005 in bicycles involved in collisions with cars. Is that right—122 to 111?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I think you will find that, if we take it down from 122 to 111, it is just over 10 per cent.

**MR PRATT:** It is about eight per cent.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. I think it is also important to point out the sheer volume we have. We are talking about 8,275 or something road crashes in the beginning and we are down to 7,000—still. You have 7,000 crashes involving 100 bikes. I think those statistics speak for themselves.

**MR PRATT:** Certainly the number of crashes does.

**Mr Hargreaves:** And also the number of vehicles involved, remembering that not every crash involves two vehicles.

**MR PRATT:** Yes. Looking at page 22 on this question again, you state that Roads ACT engaged extensively with key stakeholders such as Pedal Power, local road and traffic consultants, et cetera. Did you consult with the NRMA on the roll-out of the cycle lanes?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. Have a look at the NRMA's website, as I did when I saw a couple of press releases recently with which I disagreed quite heavily. I noticed two things. Firstly, the NRMA had commissioned Monash University to do a study into these things. You will recall something being put out stating that Monash University's accident investigation unit was saying there was a bit of a problem about the width of the roads, and those sorts of things.

If you have another look at the same website, you will see a report from the NRMA-ACT Road Safety Trust to Monash University saying there was no basis for that at all. That was a bit earlier. On the same website by the same academic institution there are conflicting things. I am quite happy—if you like before the end of the day—to provide copies of those two reports released from Monash University to the committee so you can see those contradictions.

**MS PORTER:** You prompted me when you were talking about the bike racks on the front of buses, minister. I wondered about the success of those and whether we have any way of measuring that.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to get the numbers of the take-up. It is a measure of the success of the place if people are complaining that they cannot put the bikes on racks going up the suburban routes to the degree they want to take them up. I will get some statistics on the uptake and provide them to the chair. I am thrilled to pieces. I think Mr Corbell needs to be congratulated on the initiative, because it is a good one.

**MR PRATT:** In their media release where NRMA was commenting on the on-road cycle lane system, they said that ACT on-road cycle lanes are a safety hazard. Have you taken note of their comment that, of the cyclists they have interviewed using on-road cycle lanes, four out of 10 of those surveyed said that they had had near misses with cars, essentially around those green lanes and intersections? Have you taken note of that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I took note of that.



**MR PRATT:** Do you agree with it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not mean to be adversarial at all about this but I wish to make a point. Have you seen a copy of that report yet?

**MR PRATT:** No.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Then guess what—me neither, because it is not available.

**MR PRATT:** That is right.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Quite frankly, I do not intend—and I am sure you would agree with this—to make or amend policy through a media release that some people might want to put out, particularly when I can go to the very same website and pick up the actual information which contradicts their own report. You have to then ask yourself which is the right answer. We know, in respect of the cycle lanes, that the lane widths and the road pavement widths are within the design rules.

**MR PRATT:** Australian standard, yes.

**Mr Hargreaves:** If they are within the design rules then there is, presumably, a safety factor which we are acknowledging. We also need to understand that there has been no comment from the NRMA on what would be the situation if those lanes were removed. The answer to that is that the cyclists would be in the motor vehicle lane itself. I can tell you that that is a far more dangerous exercise than having your own lane.

**MR PRATT:** Does the NRMA not say that those cycle lanes are fine on Adelaide and Commonwealth avenues, for the very point that you have just made?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** It is fine to separate the cyclists from the cars, but they are highly critical of the merging, via the green lanes, of cycles and cars. Do you not take note of that information?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, we do. I reject their view on that, on two levels. The first point is that, with the green lanes there, the cyclists are more visible. The fact that there may be something merging into the lane is a problem. That motorcycle accident at Conder was a merging exercise. That was because the motor vehicle going along that street did not acknowledge that there was another vehicle coming into the lane. Cyclists, motorcyclists and motor vehicles are all subject to the same road rules here. People merging into those lanes have to give way to vehicles going past.

If we take as an example the intersection near the Archbishop's House—it is on Commonwealth Avenue—if you are coming around Vernon Circle and proceeding down to Commonwealth Avenue bridge, you will see that the merging lane coming up from Parkes Way has green paint on the road. Going along there, the vehicle that is coming along from Vernon Circle, on Commonwealth Avenue, has right of way, full

stop. If a motor vehicle comes up there and refuses to give right of way to another motor vehicle and there is an accident, that motor vehicle is at fault. When a motor vehicle comes up that ramp and there is a cyclist going past, the cyclist has right of way, in the same way as an ordinary motor car would have right of way.

The problem is that sometimes people do not see it; they cannot see the cyclist coming. The painting of that green lane is to highlight to the motorist merging into that traffic that there is a likelihood that there is a cyclist using that road. It is as simple as that.

**MR PRATT:** In that particular case, the broken line on the edge of that green lane which the car is facing coming up—

**Mr Hargreaves:** Coming up the ramp.

**MR PRATT:** It is not a stop sign, is it? So the car can make a judgment to carry on cruising across that green lane if they think they cannot see a cycle. Isn't that what the NRMA is saying?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, they are not.

**MR PRATT:** The speed differentials of cycles versus cars is the problem. Motorbikes are different because—sorry, go on.

**Mr Hargreaves:** If we took away the green lane, the scenario that you paint would still exist.

**MR PRATT:** No, the bicycle would have to give way. Isn't that what the NRMA is saying?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The bicycle should not have to give way. It cannot.

**MR PRATT:** But the NRMA is saying that, if cycles were to give way instead of taking right of way, everything would be hunky-dory.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Can I suggest to you, firstly, that that cyclist is a vehicle travelling along a carriageway with the right of way, in the same way as a motorcyclist would and in the same way as a truck, a bus, a motor car or even a horse and cart would. They have right of way down that carriageway, according to the Australian Road Rules. The Australian Road Rules are national road rules. You are suggesting here that there would need to be a change to the Australian Road Rules to say to a cyclist that, different to any other vehicle, they have to give way to somebody cutting across their bows on that carriageway.

**MR PRATT:** Which is precisely what the NRMA is saying.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not believe that is so.

**MR PRATT:** I do not know; I think you will find they are.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I think you have misinterpreted what they say.

**MR PRATT:** We will leave it there.

**THE CHAIR:** While we are still on bikes—and you have raised this in discussion a couple of times at the moment—I bring you to page 21 of volume 1. It talks about options to improve motorcycle rider licensing arrangements. You are aware that we are into Motorcyclist Awareness Week. Can you tell us what has come out of the examination of options to improve the licensing arrangements and any movement towards more awareness of motorcycles?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have to acknowledge your contribution. I do not mean to flatter you too much, but the committee would be interested to know this because of some of the initiatives we have taken. We want to make sure that motorists are aware of motorcyclists on the road. There are a number of ways in which we can do that. One was to put on the registration label “Watch out for motorcyclists” and “Don’t drink and drive”. For the record, it was the chairman’s initiative to put that on the registration certificates. I wish to pay credit where it is due.

We are also drafting a road safety strategy and action plan for the ACT. As you know, there is a road safety strategy, but it has to be an evolving and living document; it has to go on from year to year; and we need to refine it. We are doing that. This strategy will include measures and initiatives in the engineering, education awareness and enforcement fields. It will also address all road users, including motorcyclists, as part of an overall road safety campaign. We will be consulting with the Motorcycle Riders Association and other groups before finalising the strategy that is planned.

At this point, I pay tribute to the work of Pete and Robyn Major from the MRA who have, between them, raised the issue of motorcycle visibility in this town. They have got a number of programs—education programs, training programs—and are in very regular dialogue with me or my office on motorcycle safety.

It is a worry, when we look at the stats, to see how many motorcycle accidents are preventable. The number of single-vehicle accidents involving motorcycles is far too high. We are working towards education programs on that and will see how we get on.

**DR FOSKEY:** First of all, the—

**Mr Hargreaves:** What page and which volume are we looking at, please, Dr Foskey?

**DR FOSKEY:** Page 42, volume 1. It is about the wild dog control program. Sorry, it is in environment and Chief Minister’s. It is a bit confusing, I know; so I will seek a ruling from the chair on this.

**THE CHAIR:** It might be best if we progress through urban services, as the agenda recognises, and then go to the question.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Having regard to the time, I am happy to take that one on notice, Dr Foskey.

**DR FOSKEY:** I hope not. I would like a chance to ask two or three questions about

CMD and environment.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Why don't we give it a bash, with your leave, Mr Chairman? I will give it a bash. Wild dog control.

**THE CHAIR:** There are other members with other questions, I would imagine.

**DR FOSKEY:** I am sure there are, and I do, too.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Is it page 42?

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, the wild dog control program in Namadji. Has the number of wild dogs decreased as a result? Do we know how many dingoes are present in the ACT? I know dingoes are not protected.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to take both of those on notice; they are numbers, and I do not have any.

**DR FOSKEY:** I am also very interested to note that the ACT uses 1080.

**Mr Hargreaves:** The short answer is yes, we do. We have been advised by a number of expert groups. We had discussions with the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee on feral pig eradication. You might be aware that we were using Warfarin. That is a particularly nasty way to die—so is 1080, for that matter—but we have been advised to use 1080; so we are giving that a go for a while. The wild pig eradication program is using 1080.

**THE CHAIR:** Let us go back to urban services. Members still had questions on urban services.

**MR SESELJA:** We have been jumping around a bit, chair. With your indulgence, I ask a couple of questions on a couple of different areas because we have been going back and forth and we probably won't come back to them. Firstly, I will get you to take this one on notice. It just came to me during the discussion about crashes. I remember—I think it was at last year's estimates—we asked for and received crash data for the spots around Canberra where there are red light cameras. We asked for and received stats on crashes prior to the implementation and after.

**Mr Hargreaves:** So you want an update on those same ones?

**Mr SESELJA:** I was looking for an update on that because I remember some went up immediately after. We want to see whether that had flattened out or gone back down after that. That would be very helpful for each of those sites.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I am very happy to do it.

**MR SESELJA:** More specifically, if we turn to volume 2, page 107, output class 1 is principal measures. Output 1.2 is roads and infrastructure. Municipal road system annual maintenance cost per lane blew out significantly by 18 per cent. Are you able to talk us through the reason for that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Can I also indicate to you the territorial road system maintenance cost per lane, the previous one.

**MR SESELJA:** Yes, that has gone down.

**Mr Hargreaves:** You noticed it has gone down?

**MR SESELJA:** Well done.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That shows you the focus has shifted from territorial roads to municipal roads. That is all that is. If you did the combination of the two of them, you would see that the original target was, for both of them, in round figures, \$6,500,000. You will notice that the result, in fact, was \$6,200,000. Combine the two of them, and we have had a reduction in that cost.

**MR SESELJA:** The focus has changed to municipal roads?

**Mr Hargreaves:** These are millions, too, by the way.

**MR SESELJA:** I know. I am reading from the page. It is not 100 per cent clear that it is in thousands, but I assumed that.

**MR SESELJA:** Chair, with your indulgence, I go back to a different topic that we dealt with before. That was in relation to recyclables. It is in table 1.3 on the next page. The increase there is in relation to cost of recyclables processing per tonne from \$18,5000 to \$22,390. There is a note. It talks about one-off contract claims and unscheduled payments. Are you able to elaborate on those one-off contracts claims and unscheduled payments?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The one-off contract claim is about syringes. The syringes, of course, are treated differently. Sharps is different from the others. That was a one-off claim on that.

**MR SESELJA:** That was a new contract?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, it is a claim.

**MR SESELJA:** What was the amount of that specific claim?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to take that away and get back to you on the cost of that.

**MR SESELJA:** The two things were unscheduled payments and one-off contract claims?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I do not think I have it in the detail that I ought to have to give it to you off the top of my head; so I will take that one on notice as well.

**MR PRATT:** Would you look at page 22, volume 1, the Tharwa bridge.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have been waiting for this. You are a good man, and true.

**MR PRATT:** I know.

**Mr Hargreaves:** A good and faithful servant.

**MR PRATT:** Did you record that?

**THE CHAIR:** It has been recorded.

**Mr Hargreaves:** If Hansard have not got this down, I express my undying gratitude to Mr Steve Pratt MLA for his generosity.

**THE CHAIR:** Let us go to the question.

**MR PRATT:** I will come down from there, thanks, chair.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is a long drop, though, isn't it?

**MR PRATT:** Yes, it is. It is a bottomless pit. Page 22 of the report, about halfway down, talks about discussions with the community. Further down the volume—I cannot remember exactly where it was—the last community discussion about that bridge was in December 2005, which is in this reporting period.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is correct.

**MR PRATT:** Can you summarise what that meeting was told in December 2005 was the state of the bridge?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I can.

**MR PRATT:** I do not want to ask about the upgrades.

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, I am not talking about that. I know exactly what you are saying. The state of the bridge was that it was not to be used for any vehicle traffic at all, at the regional meeting that I addressed at Tharwa Hall.

**MR PRATT:** That was in December 2005?

**Mr Hargreaves:** It was about then. I am assuming that is correct. I went down and addressed them. There were subsequent meetings on site with various members of the Tharwa community, notably Mr Jeffery and a couple of others, who were apprised of the deteriorating condition of the bridge. We believed at that time that the bridge could be propped up by Bailey supports and that we would have the bridge in such a condition that it would allow for vehicles under five tonnes to go across it whilst we explored options for its rejuvenation, replacement, whatever. There were a number of options that I advised to that meeting.

**Mr McNulty:** It was an options meeting.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I know; I was there. The condition of the bridge was, as you may remember, that there was a significant amount of wood rot and white ant present. It had also got to the point where some of the cross-slats were in particularly poor condition. We got these Bailey supports on a contract from New South Wales for up to three years. We figured at the time—and we told the people there—we were trying to get the bridge at least usable, and we did.

In the ensuing period, we were exploring a number of options and what we could do. In the exploration of those options, we had to have regard to costs, heritage issues, environmental issues and traffic survey—the degree to which traffic would go across that bridge; whether or not, for example, you are talking about two lanes or four lanes, that kind of thing, or one lane. All of those sorts of things were put in the mix and we thought about it. We thought we would have probably three years use out of the existing bridge, in the course of which we would get a new one up. Such was not the case.

What, in fact, happened was that vehicles in excess of five tonnes were using it. There were a cement truck, at one point, and large buses. One rather large vehicle got wedged on it. That extra stress buckled the bridge itself. So when we closed the bridge again most recently it was because—whilst it is a bit difficult to see with the naked eye, if it is pointed out to a person you can see it—the bridge has buckled and is buckling down towards the downstream side of the bridge, so much so that the technical experts have advised me that not only is it unsafe for vehicles to go across it but it is unsafe for pedestrians to go across it. That is why it was closed.

**MR PRATT:** The only reason why that bridge deteriorated was overuse by oversized vehicles, nothing else?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Not as far as we are aware. We had hoped to be able to keep that bridge open for the duration of the decision to replace it or not. I pay credit to the office and the department under Tony Gill's leadership. They went down and had a lot of conversations with the people in the village. They explained a lot about the processes and the structures. The experts have advised those folks, "No, we can't go ahead with it." They had inspections on a very regular basis. You might recall we discovered it was cactus so many years ago. It was because the routine check of it did not see those things and, when we did the detailed check of it as part of our bridge rejuvenation program, we discovered all these things. After that, there were reasonably regular visits—monthly, I think it was. Is that right?

**Mr McNulty:** Weekly.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Weekly; there you go. Interestingly, when it buckled, if my memory serves me correctly, it buckled on a Friday, was discovered on the Thursday and was closed on the following Monday.

**MR PRATT:** I presume we are not asking questions about what happens beyond this point.

**Mr Hargreaves:** You can ask about Tharwa bridge, though, if you like. They have been pretty good.

**THE CHAIR:** If it is related to the report.

**MR PRATT:** No, it is not because we are talking about what action has been taken.

**THE CHAIR:** Go ahead, Mr Pratt.

**MR PRATT:** Why not the low-level, fording crossing?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will give you the technical reasons.

**MR PRATT:** I have asked you this in a different way in the chamber.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is okay.

**MR PRATT:** What is the cost of such work? What is the duration of a temporary crossing, which it would be? It would be an expendable, temporary river crossing.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**MR PRATT:** Why not?

**Mr Hargreaves:** There are a number of reasons why we cannot do it. I am happy to explain them to you now. One of the considerations, not the engineering considerations, is that a low-level crossing would cost in excess of \$1.3 million.

**MR PRATT:** You are joking.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I am not joking, and I will explain to you why in a minute. That bridge that was put across at the Cotter after the fires cost about \$35,000. The bits of bridge that we would do for a low-level crossing will be considerably more expensive than that, up around 100 grand, 200 grand or something like that, because the concrete support for the bridge has got to go three metres down into sand. It did not at the Cotter. It was on a rocky base. The actual cost of dropping concrete three metres, which is a heck of a lot of concrete, I can tell you, down into the sand would be a couple of hundred thousand dollars.

The bridge at the Cotter cost us about \$600,000 for 12 months to maintain. When you add that kind of cost on top of the low-level crossing, you are up around the \$900,000 mark. That is just for that bit. We then have to add to that the road approaches because you have to adjust the road, as you would imagine, and that is not cheap at all.

Now come the engineering problems. There are two. The first one is that we would have to build it on the downstream side of the bridge if we were going to put one in there at all. You have to replace the bridge on the upstream side of the current bridge, because you do not want an unstable, even if preserved, old bridge being upstream from the new one, in the event of a 100-year flow, because it picks that bridge up and takes both of them out. The trick is to have the new one upstream of the other one. That is the engineering issue with that.



With the low-level crossing, the likelihood of getting a flood in there in the next 12 months is pretty slim. However, it is a risk. I am not prepared to take the risk that there may be something on such a crossing if that old bridge did go. Given that it is on a lean now, I am a bit worried about that.

Additionally, people have to understand, too, that the banks on either side of the river at that point are alluvial soil. It is 9/10ths sand. You would have to scrape away the angle of the bank, probably something of the order of 10 degrees or 15 degrees, which is an enormous amount of roadwork that would have to be paid for. Then you are starting to take it up past the \$900,000 that we had just a minute ago. On top of that, you would have to build another part of the road to match that and you would have to take the road way back towards the Lanyon Homestead because of the actual angle that you have got that gradient on.

All of that is for 18 months use. We have to get heritage approval, which is unlikely because you have got to do so much damage to the bank. You cannot put the bank back. The whole ambiance of that part of the village will be interfered with in a heritage sense. You would be unlikely to get Environment ACT to approve it in the preliminary assessment because you have to interfere with the flow of the river when you are going 3 metres down into the sand. That is unlikely.

On top of that, because it is a bridge, like it or not, you still need to have planning approval to go across it, which includes those environmental impact statements, et cetera. That would take us about a year or so if we were to fast-track it. We are talking about building something for \$1.3 million for six months use, and in a dangerous position. That is why I took the decision. Sorry about that.

When we also did the traffic testing, I acknowledged the fact that the Tidbinbilla road is not a good one. I acknowledged that up front. I also know that it adds about 10 minutes to a journey for somebody living in Banks that has to go up to Point Hut Crossing and right around back again because I have done it myself.

**MR PRATT:** That is stretching it.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is not.

**MR PRATT:** We won't get into a debate on that. Given the seriousness of the concerns expressed by the community—they believe they need some sort of fording, particularly through the summer months, the bushfire season—did you explain this complete model you have gone through now, the costings, with the community at the community level?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. I went down there recently.

**MR PRATT:** I know. I heard.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I met the community down there.

**MR PRATT:** Did you brief them?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I did. I explained to them the three problems of our attack on the crossing of the river. The first one was no low-level crossing, and I explained why. They were the safety reasons, the cost reasons and unlikely—

**MR PRATT:** And everything you have just outlined here?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Everything I have told you, I told them. Furthermore, there were some engineering experts that live around there. We got our engineering expert, upon whose advice I rely, to meet those people on site and go down below the bridge and talk about it.

The other thing I explained to the people at Tharwa was that it would be a one-lane bridge, with walkways on it. I explained to them why. The reason for that is that the amount of traffic flow is less than that that goes across the Murrumbidgee River at the Cotter.

**MR PRATT:** People accept that.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. I also said we would put traffic lights up, like at the Cotter. I asked the community how they feel about that. They said they do not want traffic lights. So I ruled that out there and then, on the spot. Then I also said that we would do some work to see the extent to which we can conserve and preserve the bridge itself, the old one, to be used for a pedestrian walkway.

**MR PRATT:** What is your latest assessment now on the cost for the new bridge? The figures have changed fairly significantly, from what I have heard.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is about \$9 million. You might remember in the earlier days the cost varied between \$5½ million and \$30 million. The one that we are running with now is about \$9 million. You have got to add a contingency on top of that of course.

**MR PRATT:** And the time frame from—

**Mr Hargreaves:** Go to whoa, 18 months. I would like to see people driving on the thing, with a bit of luck, in August 2008.

**MR SESELJA:** Just in time for the election.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, just in time for the election. It is good, isn't it? As I mentioned to you before, though, it is going to take us 12 months to get the PA approvals and all that sort of stuff. The tender process takes a certain amount of time. There is nothing much I can do about it. I would like to fast-track it.

**DR FOSKEY:** Can I ask a question about the Office of Sustainability?

**THE CHAIR:** No. If we could finish urban services and then go to—

**DR FOSKEY:** Sorry, I thought that was with urban services.

**THE CHAIR:** I suppose it is.

**DR FOSKEY:** It was a minute ago.

**Mr Hargreaves:** With due respect to the committee, it has been fairly wide ranging and perhaps it is time to come back.

**THE CHAIR:** It has. We are going to Chief Minister's and areas of the environment later, but we have got to look at ACTION as well. I want to see whether there are any other urban services questions directly relating to that.

**DR FOSKEY:** In regard to public trees, it is noted in the report, at page 18, that 10,000 public trees have died due to the lack of rain and persistent drought.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I am good but I am not that good.

**DR FOSKEY:** Given the drought is continuing—and I gather that by this stage some thousands of trees have been removed—are there plans to replace these trees, as they die and are removed, with more drought tolerant species? How are we coping with this? I note that there was a report, which is extremely interesting, by the Australian National University to estimate the asset, economic, environmental and social values of Canberra's urban forest estate and the role that street trees play.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. We agree with you. We know that there are 10,000 trees being killed or affected badly. We know that they are dying back. We know that the drought is killing more of them—remembering too that trees have a certain age; they do not live forever. A lot of the natural trees, and also the exotics that were planted in Canberra in the 1920s and 1930s, are getting to the end of their natural lives anyway. All they need is significant stress like a fire or a drought and that will accelerate their death. Accepting that, we have had to remove a whole heap of them. We have done that. We got an extra \$500,000, I think, in the budget in the financial year we are in currently, to remove some more. Or was it last year? No, it was the previous year, and last year.

One of our problems with replacing the trees at the moment is that we have to give them water to keep them up. We have noticed this in recent times with some of our tree plantings. I received advice from Russell Watkinson from the department only the other day—and I appreciate the work his officers do. We have an awful lot of young trees that were planted in the replacement program that we now cannot keep the water up to and they are dying off. The answer to your question of whether we intend to replace them is yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** With more drought tolerant species?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The answer to that is where we can, remembering that we have to have the stock to do it with. There is work being done at the Yarralumla Nursery about those sorts of developments. We have some really top people working on that. We would be replacing them with trees that are not drought resistant. They are drought tolerant.

**DR FOSKEY:** No tree is drought tolerant and resistant in its early years, but

eventually—

**Mr Hargreaves:** They are resistant, yes. We have to keep those trees alive until we can get them over the hump. We will be replanting as money and water become available. Remember that, like the Gungahlin Drive Extension, where we had to take out some native trees to put the road through, we are putting them back at the rate of two to one from seed stock from those original trees. Every one of those trees has to be watered. We know it is a real challenge for us as to just how we can keep the water up to them, given that we do not have a lot of it at the minute.

**DR FOSKEY:** Are there issues about heritage streetscapes in some areas that would mitigate against your being able to replace trees with a more drought tolerant species?

**Mr Hargreaves:** That is a challenge for us. You can imagine what would happen if I went up Arthur Circle in Red Hill and said, “Have I got a tree for you! It just happens to be a eucalypt.” They would say, “That does not go well with my elm.” I have to say to you that the guys from the tree section in the department do not just rock around to somebody’s house, dig a hole and stick it into the ground. They go to the people whose house is adjacent to that block and talk to them. I was up at the department talking to those people the other day.

The department have conversations with the home owner or lessee. They give them a range of trees to select from having regard to the type of tree, drought tolerance and all that stuff. They can go down to the Yarralumla Nursery, pick a tree out, go and stick it into the ground themselves and look after it, if they so desire. We have those conversations one on one. I do not want to go out and put that in the public arena, particularly. I do not want people to think that we are trying to walk away from our responsibilities, but that opportunity is available to them.

**DR FOSKEY:** I think the opportunity for people to water a tree is something that we might be coming to anyway.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It might be. We will just have to see. But remember too, as I said, the good guys up at the trees part of Russell Watkinson’s area actually have that conversation with people. As I have just been notified, we had three millilitres of rain in October. I defy you to put three millilitres of rain in that glass there and see how much it is.

**DR FOSKEY:** I know quite a bit about rain.

**Mr Hargreaves:** You could not stifle a cough with it. Do not forget also, in terms of what we would like to do and what we can do, that we are in stage 2 restrictions tomorrow.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes. I have a view about water, of course.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I think so. If you pass that up here, I will water this plant.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks, minister. Mr Pratt, you had a question on urban services.

**MR PRATT:** Perhaps I could ask the minister to take on notice a question related to page 22, regarding the Roads ACT asset management plan. Can you come back, minister, and let me know?

I want to ask one more on page 92 before we finish up. Can you take on notice what the amount of money is, what funding you think you have available in this updated management plan for road maintenance and routine pot-hole filling over a couple of years?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I am happy to do that.

**MR PRATT:** And over the next couple of outyears.

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. We can only give you the figure that is in our base.

**MR PRATT:** Can you come back with that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I am happy to do that.

**MR PRATT:** Fine. I refer to page 92. Referring to the Yarralumla brickworks bushfire, at the bottom of page 992 you have four sentences which relate to that particular incident. The report states that the fire was pushed along by that westerly wind, et cetera. Why does this report not also state that the fire was carried by a lot of fuel, a lot of grass, that had been left around behind the brickworks in the quarry?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I think you can understand that if you read the second paragraph there. It says that we had to achieve it by removing dead burnt pine trees and reshaping slopes to further assist mowing and stump removal. You would know that that had a lot of rocks and stuff like that in it. It was not just a case of putting the mowers through it. It was a slashing exercise.

You would also know that two weeks or 10 days before that fire went through, the slashing happened. You would also appreciate, I am sure, that the devastation that was visited upon those homes was assisted by the fact that there were brush fences up the sides of the houses. One led straight to a pergola and the fire went straight in. Quite frankly, from the government's perspective, I do not think there was anything else anybody could have done at all to have stopped that—ESA or DUS. I think they did as good a job as they could. If you go and cut the stuff down 10 days beforehand and something still goes through it, you have to ask yourself why.

You have to also recall that the person who was responsible for the rubble was not the government; it was the operator there. I think it would be incorrect for either of us to speculate on the contribution of whom, given that we have a coronial inquest into the fire.

**MR PRATT:** Yes, but is it not true that, up behind the rubble, up against the back fence line adjacent to where those houses were destroyed, there was a firebreak of no more than five metres? There will be photographic evidence to prove that, if you wish me to table it.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Look, I am not going to have a firebreaks contest at 50 metres with you today, but I can say this: the fire mitigation treatment was done according to the standards that were applicable at the time. We can all go back and say in hindsight, “Look, we would like to have a double distance,” but there are standards to be applied. My office has applied those standards. They applied the standards 10 days beforehand. I have to say that, of the houses which were affected, one of them, as you well know, contributed in a sense because they wanted a really nice outlook and had a brush fence. You might as well stick a whole stack of burning material or fuel at the back of your fence. It went straight up the pergola and straight into the house.

**MR PRATT:** It was still aided and abetted by that chest-high grass and a five-metre gap.

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. I am sorry about that. We will have to differ on that one because I do not believe so. You are saying the chest-high grass was outside the five-metre run—10 centimetres, five metres.

**MR PRATT:** I am sorry?

**Mr Hargreaves:** You are saying the chest-high grass was outside the five-metre run.

**MR PRATT:** I am saying that, from the photographs I have and from the feedback from the residents, the service track running along the back fence between the brickworks rubble area and the back fence line was only five metres wide, with grass ranging between waist and chest high, with a five-metre gap.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I have to say I find that a bit hard to cop, but I am not going to argue the toss with you on it. We will see what the coroner has to say about that because neither you nor I are competent to make judgments on that.

**MR PRATT:** No. I would not want to predict what the coroner says.

**Mr Hargreaves:** If, in fact, what you say was so, then there would have been a lot more houses lost, wouldn't there?

**THE CHAIR:** Members, we might draw to a close urban services and move on to ACTION. We have some time left. Minister, I might kick off with ACTION and bring you to page 19 on special needs transport. What improvements has ACTION made to better accommodate members of the community with a disability?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Thanks very much, chair. As you and the committee would know—I think we have talked about this before—as we roll out the buses we are buying, they will all be disability friendly. They will all have the ability to drop to the kerb and they will all have the ability to take at least one, or two, wheelchairs, we hope, in the fullness of time. One of the problems about rolling out the program as quickly as we would like is the delay in getting the rolling stock. There is a problem with that.

We are concerned that the disability community might feel as though they are being marginalised if the bus service is not responsive to them. We have a target on the number of buses we want to have on the road which are all disability friendly. We are

just a little bit behind on that target because of the delivery schedule for the buses. It is not because we do not have the money. It is not because we have not put the money into the buses and ordered them. It is just that they are taking a bit of time getting to us.

**THE CHAIR:** Turning to security on ACTION buses, what has ACTION put in place to enhance security on buses for the travelling public?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We are a bit concerned about security not only for the travelling public but also for the drivers themselves. You would know that we have put cameras in the buses. The Chief Minister announced on 3 August 2005 that all buses would be retrofitted with security cameras. That is a positive measure.

It concerns us that the drivers work in isolation along the bus routes. They are okay in the interchange as long as they have transport supervisors around. Even then there are occasions where bus drivers are assaulted or abused. Then of course we have the access to the police. But it is a bit hard if you are halfway between O'Connor and Spence and someone gets on the bus who is a bit bonged out of their head. They can attack the bus driver. It is hard to prevent, but it is not hard to arrest and stop and bring to book on.

We have currently spent in excess of \$10,000 a month on repairs as a consequence of vandalism inside buses. Security cameras, as I said, will act as a deterrent and will assist in the recovery of costs if the offenders can be identified and pursued. We have to take them to court.

ACTION received funding of \$1.444 million in the 2006-07 budget. It is currently undertaking a tender process for the purchase and maintenance of the cameras to retrofit the bus fleets. A total of 344 buses will be retrofitted with a total of 1,573 cameras. Quite frankly, the big initiative for us is CCT cameras on the buses. That is a big one. That is a big money gobbler.

**THE CHAIR:** Will that camera have direct feed to a monitor—to somebody monitoring the system?

**Mr Hargreaves:** It records in the bus continuously. If over a period of time there is no incident on the bus, the thing is wiped and it will go on. It is basically an incident reporting exercise. If there is an incident on the bus and the police need to be involved in it, then the film is taken out and handed to the police. They then will take action on that.

**THE CHAIR:** Do drivers have ready communication in such an instance? Are they able to contact base immediately?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. The drivers are, of course, in constant touch with the base by radio anyway. That is not a problem. You see, one of the difficulties we have is that, if somebody is going to rumble a bus driver halfway to Spence—they naturally have the radio and the security camera and they can contact the base—it is going to be a while before someone can assist them. The taxi drivers have the problem in the same way.

Once the police are notified that there is an incident on foot, it takes them at least eight minutes—I am sorry, it is a maximum of eight minutes, I think—to go from standing start to scene, and any number of things can happen there. But I think this is a pretty reasonable initiative.

**THE CHAIR:** Are staff taught how to deal with possible incidents?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. We train our staff in how to deal with these incidents as part of the normal training package that is available to bus drivers. On that other question, I am advised that, in the tender documents for the cameras, we are asking prospective tenderers to advise us whether or not there can be satellite connectivity between the cameras and base. But they will have to let us know in the context of the tender.

There is one other thing. You might remember that we had the “see something, say something” campaign. That is not only about saying to people, “If you see somebody dealing with drugs at an interchange, say something,” it is all about threatening behaviour on and around the buses generally. It is a community security awareness program.

**MR SESELJA:** Page 12 of the ACTION report looks at some of the performance indicators. There has been an increase in total passenger boardings in the last year of around four per cent, with an increase in expenditure of around six per cent. Over the last two years there has, in fact, been a 17 per cent increase in expenditure for only a 3.8 per cent increase in total passenger boardings.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**MR SESELJA:** Do you think it is value for money for the taxpayer that we are spending 17 per cent more, some \$13 million more than we were two years ago, but we have only got an extra 3.8 per cent of people on buses?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Thanks very much for the question. In answer to you, one is that ACTION has been \$3.5 million overspent in its budget globally for some time. There have been compensation initiatives around addressing that since I inherited the portfolio, and they will be addressed. In fact, we hope the money will not be needed.

With respect to the increases, one has to understand, I suppose, the nature of a bus service. We have increases in costs that a lot of people do not have, and we do not always receive supplementation. That has to be found somewhere else. We received some \$1 million I think this year for the diesel fuel increase. That went through the roof, to the tune of 15 per cent, I am told. The maintenance on our stock went up 15 per cent. We generally get supplementation around the 3½ or three per cent mark.

In respect of those increased costs, I think that, when we say to a bus service, “Look, your patronage is going up four per cent but your costs are going up 17 per cent; you are inefficient,” we need to take into account the drivers of those cost increases. We cannot control the price of diesel. We are trying to mitigate that by going into compressed natural gas. That will keep the good Dr Foskey happy.

**MR SESELJA:** Apart from those costs you have identified, where else do you think



is the fat in the organisation? On page 24, the staffing numbers went up.

**Mr Hargreaves:** What page is that?

**MR SESELJA:** Page 24, at the bottom, in the right-hand column. The staffing numbers went up from 700 to 712. Is that where the fat is?

**Mr Hargreaves:** From what?

**MR SESELJA:** From 700 full-time equivalents to 712. Is that where you are going to be looking to cut back as well? Obviously there are some things you cannot control, like the price of diesel.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. Firstly, can I respond to you by saying that the notion of there being fat in ACTION is totally rejected. Whether or not we can do things differently is another story. I reject entirely the notion of there being fat. It is a pretty lean organisation if you have a good look at it. Going up 12 FTEs over 700 is not what I call a massive blow-out.

**MR SESELJA:** Will we see that continue to increase, or will that go down this year, do you think?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. At present, in the restructure program of territory and municipal services globally, there will be no part of the department that do not come under scrutiny and have to bring themselves back. We have already started some cost-cutting exercises in ACTION, and some of them have borne fruit.

For example, we do not have—sorry about this, Tom—the same chief executive that was there before, and the deputy, for the costs that it was costing us. We do not have the costs of an ACTION board to carry. We are looking at the synergies by taking some of the shared services away from ACTION and putting them elsewhere because of the duplication of that. It has been a duplicating exercise, quite frankly.

Where we are restructuring so we can change services from being low patronage into new services like Harrison, the eye hospital, Calvary and those sorts of things, some of those will be accompanied by a lessening in the number of operators we have. They might not be bus drivers. We have looked at the back-end services first up. There has been a reasonable amount of reduction there. We can move to those things through natural attrition and people who want VRs. I need to send this message loud and clear: there will be no forced redundancies in any of the areas of territory and municipal services. There is no fat. What we are talking about is making it even leaner.

**MR SESELJA:** Yes. You identified a couple of areas there with the board. I do not know, I guess it is a matter of terminology.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, but “fat” is insulting to the ACTION officers. I will not have it.

**MR SESELJA:** How much was fares revenue affected by the recent industrial action? How much would ACTION have lost as a result of the lost patronage?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I would have to take that on notice. It is basically four hours work. I do not know. Quite frankly, however, for one reason or another during any year's trading at all, the revenue goes up and down. I do not think the amount of revenue that we lost will actually have much of a blip. Thank you. In fact, I am right. The amount of money estimated to have not been collected was \$32,000.

**MR SESELJA:** Was any money returned to regular passengers who missed out on using the service, if they had a weekly or a monthly ticket?

**Mr Hargreaves:** If they have a weekly, they can use it again and keep going.

**MR SESELJA:** But they missed out on using it. I know of at least one person who got something reimbursed. Do you have a figure on that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** No. Perhaps you ought to recommend that they contact ACTION and we can talk to them.

**MR SESELJA:** They did. They had it reimbursed.

**Mr Hargreaves:** They did?

**MR SESELJA:** Yes. I was just wondering what that figure was.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Then thanks for answering my question.

**MR SESELJA:** No. I did not. The question was: what was the figure? You said there were no reimbursements.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I could not tell you, because we get various reimbursements going through the system. We would not split it down to that. And also people may very well contact us a day or a week later. You would not know.

**DR FOSKEY:** On page 20 it talks about the work shifts. It says that drivers who are primary caregivers are given the opportunity to apply for work shifts that best suit their caring responsibilities. Is that going to be able to be continued in the new enterprise bargaining agreement?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Firstly, I am not going to pre-empt what is going to be in a future enterprise bargaining agreement. That would be really silly. But to answer your question more broadly, yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** You spoke about the abolition of the advisory board saving money. I note that on page 17 there is a list of organisations with whom ACTION engaged, which is quite impressive.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It is good, isn't it?

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes. I am not sure what the definition of "engagement" is in that matter, but the list is impressive. I wondering, now that you have had a few months without the board, how engagement has been done and how advice is taken from the

community.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I think quite well. With the ACTION staff, the process with which we make decisions has not fallen away just because the ACTION Authority is not there. “The list of people with whom we have conversations” is probably a better way than calling it “engagement” because that is who they are. With the chairman’s permission, I will get Mr Tom Elliott, who is the newly elevated acting general manager of the ACTION network, to explain to you how he goes about having conversations with the community.

**Mr Elliott:** I can address your question in a general sense of what is done now and what is intended. As you say, it is quite a considerable list. ACTION continues to pride itself on its process around engaging different community groups at different levels on the transport system in the bus service.

In terms of the new network, we are now trying to work through some of these groups. We have had quite productive meetings with Pedal Power, with ACTCOSS and particularly with the school communities. I think we are scheduled to meet the Tuggeranong Community Council on Thursday night. Not only is that process an introduction for me but it is also a matter of taking some feedback about what concerns there might be with the new network and the new service coming forward.

That is, in a sense, a formal process of engagement with different communities around Canberra. I guess, as I have been in the role for 12 days now, there are plenty of invitations to attend innumerable transport forums. I am yet to understand which ones are the more important ones to attend up front, but certainly there is Aerial Taxis. There is a board around there that I am invited to later next week. I am quite interested in going to that to see how we can build some synergies between the taxi service and the bus service.

With regard to how we might get different sorts of feedback from the community, there is a pretty prescriptive process in place in ACTION. People can call or attach through on 13 17 10, they can come through the website on the feedback system or they can just write. There is plenty of correspondence that comes in from ACTION.

All of those go into the same system. They are all part of the quality system of ACTION, which in fact was audited by SAI Global. There is an interim report. We have not seen the formal one yet. They finished their audit last week. They look at community engagement. They look at the feedback process as part of that quality system. They are very satisfied with how those systems work at the moment.

I guess we are seeking to retain those systems and improve them where we can. I would like to see them integrated a little more into the department’s feedback and engagement systems. ACTION has stood outside that to some degree. I am hoping we can leverage the department’s feedback processes and community engagement facilities as we go forward.

**DR FOSKEY:** With the travel smart program, is that where phone calls are made and there is an attempt to get increased patronage on the buses? I think that is what it is called.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Where you can ring up and find out when your bus is going to turn up?

**DR FOSKEY:** No, it is a program. Maybe it is more an ACTPLA question.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I think it might be.

**DR FOSKEY:** It is something Simon Corbell was doing. I was interested in monitoring how patronage increased through that program.

**Mr Hargreaves:** No, that is futuristic. That is looking right into it.

**DR FOSKEY:** Visionary, even.

**THE CHAIR:** I would like to come back to something you mentioned earlier about the price of diesel going up. On page 52, you have some consumption readings with regard to compressed natural gas as a sustainable fuel. Has ACTION looked at all of our other fuel uses, such as ethanol, in the bus fleet? It is now available.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I will have to take that bit on notice. I am pretty sure they have, but I would not want to commit to anything for the sake of *Hansard*. I will come back to you on that. We are committed to compressed natural gas to the extent that we have one fuel outlet at the moment. I have forgotten the number of vehicles that takes. We are looking at trying to get another one going on the north side.

There is a biodiesel trial now, I am being advised. I am advised that, in conjunction with the Perth bus people, who are on the CAT system, a hydrogen fuel based study is being done. At this stage of the game, we are going down the CNG route. That is almost as clean as you are going to get.

I have just had this pointed out and I should have mentioned it before. You would know this from your own experience. We cannot have too many different types of rolling stock in the fleet; it becomes over expensive. It is one of the problems of the expense that Mr Seselja was talking about. We have about five different types of buses, so we have five different maintenance regimes, five different sets of expertise in keeping them on the road, five different sets of spare parts, et cetera. If we can get that down to one or two—probably two would be about right—then I think we will get some economies of scale attached to that. It may very well mean that we have to go with CNG instead of, say, hydrogen if the economies of scale with the fuel reduction are more expensive than having CNG across the fleet.

**DR FOSKEY:** Could you indulge me with one last question on this because I've just seen your outlook for the future on page 52. It's hardly surprising that your aim is to increase patronage, but I'm just interested to know whether there's been any investigation of what level of passenger use would be break-even, or, as with most other public transport systems around the world, would there always be a deficit budget?

**Mr Hargreaves:** There will always be a need for us to supplement the public bus

system, Dr Foskey. There is no way in the world, unless we want to quadruple the cost of fares and disadvantage those very people we're trying to support, that we could ever dream to run at a break-even. The challenge for ACTION and for the government is to come up with a figure that is an acceptable deficit for the community in Canberra, and that means the separation of a business entity—for example, the cost of running charters That can run at break-even, or a profit maybe. But some of the bus routes that we have, by their very nature, will never do that.

Take, for example, our special needs transport fleet. There's no way in the world that will ever run cost break-even, nor the school bus run; we will always need to supplement that. Also, on some of the bus routes you've got a 25 to 45-seat bus running down a road with only one passenger. There's no way that can pay for itself, but that's the price the community is prepared to pay to make sure that the community that this one person came from is not socially isolated.

**DR FOSKEY:** I haven't heard too much community complaint about subsidising ACTION.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Well, you weren't here in the debate when Mr Seselja's colleagues were trying to sell it. People were making a lot of argument that it was costing—

**MR SESELJA:** It's all about by how much you subsidise it.

**Mr Hargreaves:** us \$50 million worth of subsidy at that time and that perhaps the best thing we could do was to just dish the money out amongst all of the people on a once-off basis and let them go and buy themselves a car—

**DR FOSKEY:** Hybrid; I hope.

**Mr Hargreaves:** and that was one of the more daft suggestions that I had the misfortune of hearing in the conversation.

**MR SESELJA:** My question follows on from Dr Foskey's in relation to subsidisation. On page 12 of the report there is a table showing financial data and fares revenue of \$17 million and a total revenue of \$79 million. I can't see it listed anywhere but I assume there's advertising revenue.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Charter and advertising.

**MR SESELJA:** What does that amount to?

**Mr Hargreaves:** We'd have to break it down for you. The advertising one depends on take-up, too, so it's a bit difficult to judge one year against the other. Do you want us to break those numbers down for you?

**MR SESELJA:** That would be helpful—other sources of revenue.

**Mr Elliott:** Advertising is about \$400,000 and charter is about \$600,000.

**Mr Hargreaves:** There you go: \$1 million worth of those two. Advertising's about

\$400,000, charter's about \$600,000 a year.

**MR SESELJA:** Okay, so it's about a million. The rest of that \$79 million total revenue is just made up by the taxpayer, I assume?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, thanks for your answers on ACTION. We've got one subject left, and that's the Chief Minister's sections concerning the environment.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Wonderful.

**MS PORTER:** Page 39 of volume 1 of this report talks about the management plans for Jerrabomberra wetlands and Googong foreshores that were progressed. Could you give us a bit of an update on that?

**Dr Cooper:** Both those plans are currently still in development stages, so they're not yet finalised but they are certainly still being developed.

**MS PORTER:** Good, thank you. Could you also tell me what's happening with the corroboree frogs, Dr Cooper?

**Mr Hargreaves:** What about the corroboree frogs?

**MS PORTER:** I just thought Dr Cooper might be able to let me know what's happening about the breeding program for the—

**Mr Hargreaves:** They're multiplying at a rate of knots, Ms Porter, the randy little devils. They're going like the clappers. Quite seriously, the breeding program out at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve is going gangbusters. It's being hailed across the world as a magic piece of environmental recovery. The challenge for us, of course, is to put the frogs back into the system, into the bogs whence they came, and to deal with the feral pigs in that area. We have a 1080 eradication program going on in that area because that's one of the sensitive parts of the world that we are addressing. The numbers are exponentially increasing. The name of the chap who's doing that is—

**Dr Cooper:** Mark Lintermans is one of them; also David Shorthouse and Murray Evans.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. Quite seriously, if the committee hasn't seen the hatchery out at Tidbinbilla, I would urge you to go and see it. Have you seen the hatchery, Dr Foskey?

**DR FOSKEY:** No, I haven't but I would love to see it. I would welcome an invitation.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Well, you've got an invitation. Do you want to stitch it up with the department and we'll take you out to the hatchery and show you?

**MR SESELJA:** Invitations all around—very good. Page 38 says that the wood heater subsidy scheme is funded by both the ACT government and ActewAGL. Are you able

to take us through the share of funding for this scheme or the split between the ACT government and ActewAGL? Has the joint funding partnership been secured on a long-term basis and are there plans to increase the share of the funding provided by ActewAGL for the scheme?

**Mr Neil:** The exact split I will have to get the figures on. We are currently talking with ActewAGL about continuing the subsidy. They've yet to commit to it one way or the other and we are hoping that it will continue.

**DR FOSKEY:** I have a corollary question to that one in regard to the program to reduce particulates pollution. On page 38 it says that air quality monitoring equipment has been fully installed. Given the number of rebates, has there been any improvement in air quality?

**Mr Hargreaves:** You'd have to have—

**DR FOSKEY:** I'd hope so. You've got the monitoring equipment; a lot of expense was gone to to monitor that—

**Mr Hargreaves:** Mr Neil advises me that—are you ready for this, Dr Foskey—500 heaters have been taken out. So almost by definition those are 500 sources of carbon particulates not in the atmosphere.

**DR FOSKEY:** But you've got ways of measuring it down to 2.5 micrometres in diameter, so any results?

**Mr Neil:** No. The best results we get are the ones that are continuous, which is the air monitoring station out at Monash. The reason for that is historical; it provides the ACT's air monitoring information for the national environment protection measure. The other stations are semi-portable; they will give us different information but we will not have the historical basis to crosscheck them against.

**DR FOSKEY:** The base data you mean? Yes. I was going to ask before about sustainability. On page 93 there's a definition of sustainability, which I have to say is a different one from the one that I extracted from the Chief Minister a couple of years ago, and I think it's a much improved definition of ecologically sustainable development.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Thank you for the compliment.

**DR FOSKEY:** So my question is: is this a definition only for CMD or is it now the definition adopted by all departments, has the Office of Sustainability had anything to do with this definition, does it use it and is it used across government?

**Mr Hargreaves:** The Office of Sustainability is within my department and we have whole-of-government responsibility for the terminology. If other people are not using this sort of terminology consistent with ours, I'd appreciate it if someone would let me know and we will fix it.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Foskey, just for your information the planning and environment

committee in its report on the new draft reform legislation made a recommendation in regard to how we term sustainability. It might be interesting for you to have a look. It's on the web site too.

**DR FOSKEY:** Ecologically sustainable development?

**THE CHAIR:** Sustainable development.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, they're different.

**Dr Cooper:** The statutory definition is similar across most legislation.

**Mr Hargreaves:** It's also the best bet at the moment in trying to do development of definitions consistent with triple-bottom-line reporting.

**DR FOSKEY:** That's a whole new area, that one, which I wasn't planning to explore today. I'll explore that with the Treasurer.

**Mr Hargreaves:** A good call.

**DR FOSKEY:** I'm also interested in fire trails. On page 100 there's a whole section on fire trails. I don't know why Mr Pratt isn't here; he's probably running down the stairs now. Apparently, assessments have been done for fire trails. Were they the same six fire trails having a number of different assessments or are there 10 proposed fire trails, and where are they?

**Mr Hargreaves:** They're the same. They're listed there on the page.

**DR FOSKEY:** Where are the six fire trails?

**Mr Hargreaves:** They're on it. There's five of them here on the—

**DR FOSKEY:** Well I'm happy to hear from you—Percival Hill, Tuggeranong Hill—

**Mr Hargreaves:** And, of course, Dr Foskey when we talk about the assessments and that sort of stuff I'm advised that we've got to be a bit careful about trying to match fire trails with assessments because sometimes you get an east-west assessment and a west-east assessment and it's the same fire trail; it doesn't have to meet in the middle.

**DR FOSKEY:** Has any fire ecology research been used to assess the need for and location of these trails; what's the basis for them? And, while we're on fire ecology, what fire ecology research has informed the hazard reduction burning plans?

**Mr Hargreaves:** This is the tricky question I've been waiting for all day. Firstly, yes, it's a multidisciplinary team approach. I'll take the second part of your question on notice and we'll get you that sort of information at a later date.

**DR FOSKEY:** I'd really appreciate that; thanks. On the same page there's a heading "Fire Training" and it notes that as being 360 person days et cetera; it's quite an impressive list. How many fire patrols are ready now and is this more or fewer than



last year?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I'm sorry about this, Dr Foskey, but at the moment we should be dealing with this report.

**DR FOSKEY:** This is on page 100 of this report.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, I know, but you've got to understand this report is from 30 June 2006 backwards—to 10 BC if you like. The time to investigate that is twofold, Dr Foskey. Firstly, the department hasn't finished its restructure yet and, as I said earlier on, every element is under scrutiny. The time to talk to us about that is in estimates time.

**DR FOSKEY:** It will be over then; it's a fire season issue.

**Mr Hargreaves:** You need to know, as do your constituents and everybody else, that we are fully compliant with the bushfire operational plan under the strategic bushfire management plan. Everything that has been approved by the commissioner of the ESA has been complied with.

**MR SESELJA:** On that same issue but back on page 42 of the report, under "Implement actions from the 2004-06 bushfire operation plans", it says that major upgrades were undertaken to a number of fire trails within Namadgi and Uriarra. How many upgrades were undertaken to fire trails in Namadgi and Uriarra and how does this number compare with the bushfire operations plan?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I think a comparative chart would be a better idea, Mr Seselja, with your indulgence.

**MR SESELJA:** Sure. Could we get it?

**Mr Hargreaves:** When I was talking to the Environment ACT people, the rangers and people at the new forestry depot at Weston, we talked about that. It's a relatively complicated exercise. They showed me maps and where some fire trails will be discontinued—they'll be allowed to go back to nature—and some will be closed to stop people using them. Others, on the other hand, will be built. I don't know whether it's necessarily a valid comparison just to say number X against number Y equals number Z. I might like to take the opportunity of getting the numbers and giving you some explanation to explain it a bit more.

**MR SESELJA:** Within that explanation could you also look at and include the other stuff that's listed in that same part of the report—fuel management activities over 13,000 hectares—and once again the comparison and the access management activities.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes. Could you perhaps clarify that with the secretary, make sure the department and the secretary understand each other and then we're happy to oblige, just for the sake of clarification.

**THE CHAIR:** In the design of these fire trails, whether it's renewing them or

building new ones, what sort of other consultation groups do you work with? Do you work with recreational groups?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, we do. Some people like it and some people don't, as you can imagine, but we talk to people like the national parks association, not necessarily Friends of Grasslands but a whole range of people involved in that sort of activity. The Interim Namadgi Advisory Board is another group that we talk with because we have to be sensitive to indigenous heritage issues as well as environment and ecologically sensitive issues. We take advice from a whole range of people on the fire trails, the implications, when we can do them and when we can't. We don't just sort of barrel up there with a D10 and whack a fire trail through smack in the middle of a fire season, because the D10 is likely to start the fire in the first place.

**MS PORTER:** I have a couple of questions. I'm not quite sure whether they're permissible or not, but you can tell me, chair. Page 40 mentions the implementation of the findings of the review of the Environment Protection Act 1997. It's under "Future directions", so I'm wondering whether I've got permission to ask it.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Yes, that's okay.

**MS PORTER:** At dot point 2 it says "implementing the findings of the Review of the Environment Protection Act 1997". Are you able to give me any information in relation to that?

**Mr Hargreaves:** Bob Neil will fill you in on that detail.

**Mr Neil:** That document had about 51 proposals that we needed to address. We've gone progressively through the whole document. Some we are not acting on at the moment; others we have completed. More generally, 28 are ongoing and they're fairly simple things like developing environment protection policies. That we can develop and issue and we'll have to do it again; they're ongoing things. Some of the bits that are on hold as opposed to stopped are regulatory review items and we're looking at the current climate as to whether they're necessary, in terms of fairly simple ones like looking at extending a clean-up area to more than 10 metres from a street rather than a regulation that confines it to 10 metres. It's quite workable at the moment, so it's not a hugely high priority, but, as you'd understand, 51 items are quite a significant lot. Some others probably won't be delivered to the level that we expected.

**DR FOSKEY:** Is that review available?

**Mr Neil:** Yes.

**DR FOSKEY:** Excuse me if it's already in the public domain.

**Mr Neil:** Yes, it's on the website.

**Mr Hargreaves:** We'll get you the address of the website, Dr Foskey, through the secretary, and then you can look it up yourself.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, thanks. I just want to ask about the heading "Deliver ACT

Environmental Program grants program”. There’s no list of the successful grants in here and I was wondering if that could be made available—unless it’s here and I haven’t found it.

**Mr Ottesen:** The most recent announcement: those lists we would have to get to you; but for the previous financial year—

**Mr Hargreaves:** We’re only talking about 2005-06.

**Mr Ottesen:** We can get the list.

**DR FOSKEY:** I would like access to the list, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** From memory, I think I delivered them.

**DR FOSKEY:** Yes, you did; even I remember that and I wasn’t even there. Is it appropriate to ask about our involvement in the Murray-Darling—

**Mr Hargreaves:** You can ask it if you like. It’s the Chief Minister’s responsibility, Dr Foskey; he’s on the first ministers thingummybob—

**DR FOSKEY:** I just want to explore that, so I’ll leave that till he’s here. Thank you.

**Mr Hargreaves:** The Chief Minister is taking the lead on this issue. It’s a joint approach between the Chief Minister and me but the Chief Minister has been discussing the issue at first minister level, so, if you want, I’ll give you out-of-date information, or you can get up-to-date information out of the Chief Minister. If you want to try and track us, do your best because I’m not going to wear it. Quite seriously, to satisfy your burning desire for knowledge, Dr Foskey, your best approach would be the Chief Minister.

**DR FOSKEY:** Okay. If not, it will come as a question on notice.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Not a problem; I look forward to it.

**DR FOSKEY:** I note that there was almost no harvesting of the Kowen plantation in 2005-06. I’m just wondering how much revenue is lost due to this and where the timber is usually sold and where it is usually processed. I’m also interested in management plans for those wildlings, those pine trees that have become an environmental weed I guess you might say.

**Mr Hargreaves:** I wouldn’t “might” say; they are.

**DR FOSKEY:** What plans are there for dealing with those, and of those areas still being managed for pines what degree of management level are they getting?

**Mr Hargreaves:** I’m going to have to take it on notice, and I’m not trying to duck it. The reason for that is that we have a different approach to the wildlings, for example along the Tuggeranong Parkway, where they have sprung up all over the place, from the lower Cotter catchment, for example. We are taking them out of the lower Cotter

catchment and letting native species grow back, and they're coming back at a rate of knots. So there's a different management plan there. It would be much more informative if I get the department to give you a rundown on that. We'll check your question and do it.

**DR FOSKEY:** You can check that on the transcript.

**Mr Hargreaves:** If you want to put it on notice so that we get a really clear idea, that would suit me even better.

**DR FOSKEY:** Okay, I'll put it on notice.

**Mr Hargreaves:** That would be suitable because I'm quite happy to answer those questions.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks, minister and officials, for your time this afternoon. It's been a lengthy hearing. We'll get those questions on notice and a copy of the transcript to you as soon as we can.

**Mr Hargreaves:** Before we conclude, can I just express my appreciation to the officers of my department for the work they've done in preparing the answers for the committee and for the work they're going to do on the questions on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you.

**The committee adjourned at 5.12 pm.**