



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL
TERRITORY**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND
ENVIRONMENT**

(Reference: Annual and financial reports 2006-2007)

Members:

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

TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE

CANBERRA

TUESDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2007

**Secretary to the committee:
Ms N Derigo (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

Department of Territory and Municipal Services77, 101

The committee met at 1.40 pm.

Appearances:

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

Department of Territory and Municipal Services

Zissler, Mr Mike, Chief Executive, Office of the Chief Executive
Tardif, Mr Phillip, Executive Director, Policy Coordination and Communication, Office of the Chief Executive
Watkinson, Mr Russell, Director, Parks, Conservation and Lands, Environment and Recreation
Butt, Mr David, Director, Energy and Water Policy, Environment and Recreation
Neil, Mr Bob, Director, Environment Protection and Heritage, Environment and Recreation
Horsey, Mr Chris, Manager, Sustainability Policy and Programs, Environment and Recreation
Byles, Mr Gary, Executive Director, Enterprise Services
Elliott, Mr Tom, Director, ACTION, Enterprise Services
Kiemann, Ms Susanna, Director Office of the Chief Executive, Strategic Finance

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon and welcome to the Standing Committee on Planning and Environment's inquiry into annual and financial reports. This afternoon we have an inquiry into the annual and financial reports for TAMS, which includes ACTION.

Just before we begin, I will read the privileges statement. 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 the record that all witnesses are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to submissions made to the committee in evidence given before it. Parliamentary privilege means special rights and amenities attach to parliament, its members and others necessary to the discharge of functions of the Assembly without obstruction and without fear of prosecution.

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

We have from now until 3 pm on this topic, then we will have an afternoon break and move on to the other inquiry with the Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change. Welcome, Minister Hargreaves. Would you like to make any opening comments?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, thank you very much. But before I move on to the opening statement I would like to put an erratum before the committee. I wish to draw the committee's attention to a minor error in the annual report. If you go to page 174 of volume 2 the percentage at variance from target against the item "total number of passenger boardings" should be a positive two per cent, not a negative two per cent as currently shown. That was a printing error: a minus sign was inserted instead of a plus sign.

Thank you very much for your warm welcome, chair, and thank you for the opportunity to make some opening comments before the committee begins its examination of the 2006-07 annual report of the Department of Territory and Municipal Services. I begin by commending the department on its professionalism and focus in executing the successful creation of the new departmental structure. This was a significant highlight for the 2006-07 reporting year as staff across TAMS worked very hard to ensure the successful integration of business areas in this new department.

Core activities were performed particularly well, and during this transitional year the department managed well in meeting significant targets while implementing the government's budget decisions. The ongoing drought meant that water shortages continued to be a major challenge. The department looked at, and continues to review, ways to adapt to water shortages from both a supply and a demand perspective.

The department highlighted its commitment to water savings with the operation of new laundry equipment that saw Capital Linen Service decrease water consumption by 20 per cent from the last reporting period while still achieving an operating profit on its operations. Yarralumla Nursery also implemented systems to use water efficiently as it faced its sixth year of drought. The nursery constructed a water recycling system to help manage water usage during the drought period and explored alternative sourcing arrangements. The nursery was also responsible for supplying the flowers at Floriade, which I understand from Minister Barr was again a tremendous success for the territory.

TAMS has made a steady commitment to sustainability by management of its fleet vehicles. The department is shifting towards a sustainable and environmentally conscious vehicle fleet and as a starter operated three hybrid electric vehicles during 2006-07. The department is continuing to review its vehicle fleet to examine possible use of more fuel-efficient vehicles and smaller vehicles to aid its commitment to sustainability.

The department continued to improve the territory's infrastructure through the construction of the Gungahlin Drive Extension. The GDE is progressing well with a number of sections opened to the public throughout the reporting year. These include the sections between the Barton Highway and Ginninderra Drive and Ginninderra Drive and Belconnen Way. The section between Belconnen Way and Glenloch

interchange is scheduled for completion at the end of this month, and of course the Glenloch interchange is set to open in mid-2008.

I want to commend the department for working so hard on this large-scale project and their successful efforts in communicating traffic flows on this project to the community.

TAMS also launched the ACT road safety strategy. This was a significant achievement that focuses on reducing death, injury and trauma on the territory's roads. This program falls into line with the national road safety strategy 2001-10.

The innovative Civic library opened to the public in December 2006. The modern facilities really make this library an example of the way of the future. It is progressively meeting its goals to become a central hub for the community. The library provides users with a much improved library facility. Unfortunately, the library suffered storm damage in February this year but the department reopened the library in July with the added bonus of drivers licence facilities. I draw the committee's attention to the achievements of the library service in the annual report; they are significant achievements.

Canberra Connect has made service improvements by introducing new online smart forms for citizen and business payments to the government. These efforts were embraced by the community and earned Canberra Connect a 2007 Australian Safer Communities award for the role played in supporting the ESA in storm events. Coinciding with the establishment of TAMS, Canberra Connect launched a new TAMS website with the migration of 22 websites into one, displaying a consistent look and feel. In 2006-07 Canberra Connect took 786,137 inquiries through its call centre, and since Canberra Connect's smart forms system became operational in July 2006 customers have used the facility to transact \$21.8 million in revenue.

During this reporting year 22 surplus government properties were transferred to the property group within TAMS. The community is currently being consulted on possible future uses for these sites, with significant interest having already been expressed in utilising the sites for a variety of community uses. It is vital to emphasise that service delivery was not compromised throughout a busy and complex transitional year.

Chair, I commend to you and the committee the Department of Territory and Municipal Services 2006-07 annual report and would like to invite questions from the committee. My colleagues and I are all ready, willing and able to answer any question you might like to have us answer.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister, for that outline on the report. I was just going to suggest to the committee that we begin with ACTION while Mr Elliott is with us. With that, there was an announcement by the Chief Minister just the other week for a second appropriation and quite a deal of funding going to ACTION. Can you outline for the committee some of the aspects or detail of where that funding is going to go?

Mr Hargreaves: I will give a very quick highlight and then I will ask Mr Elliott to

give you some detail. Network 2006, as we all know, did not respond to community needs at all and so we decided to revise the network in consultation with the community. A couple of things were significant about that. The first one was that the 2006 network was essentially a desktop exercise; it was not done particularly in consultation with the community. That lesson was learnt and applied within the development of Network 08. The consultation process was extensive; some people would say that it was a bit long, but it was extensive. It involved online surveys, interchange surveys. It involved not only the travelling public but also the non-travelling public with whom we wanted to have a conversation.

We also spoke to the drivers and I have to commend the Transport Workers Union and its membership for the spirit in which they entered into the development of Network 08. When the new network was developed, it was quite clear that there were additional routes and services required. So the government has allocated the equivalent of \$5½ million recurrent and there will be \$50 million worth of additional rolling stock provided over four years.

The essentiality of the new network not only addresses some of the problems of the previous system—we have routes reinstated—but also provides funds for new routes which were introduced during Network 06; the eye hospital and Harrison are two that come to mind. We also discovered from the data that people wanted to go to, for example, Brindabella Business Park. There are services from Gungahlin and from Tuggeranong and Woden to Brindabella Business Park and of course there is a connection from Civic. So Belconnen people would need to travel through Civic at any rate and pick up a connection which will take them to Brindabella Business Park.

We also, as part of the climate change strategy, wanted to get people out of cars. We found that there were an enormous number of workers in the parliamentary triangle and in Manuka precinct who wanted to go to Civic, for example, during a lunch break. There were no services adequate for them and parking is at a premium, so we have introduced new bus services to that triangle so that people having arrived at work, hopefully on the bus—if they have to by car they will park in that particular precinct—if they want to transact some business in Civic can catch a bus during the lunch period. I am very pleased about that service.

We have also increased the frequency of bus travel through the suburbs and improved the productivity in and out of the interchanges. They are the essentialities of it. I do not know if Mr Elliott wants to add anything to that, but I am happy for him to do that.

Mr Elliott: Thank you, minister. I might just add to the minister's comments about the second appropriation and the benefits that will be realised in the community through those allocations. The minister has already spoken about the new network—\$5.5 million in addition to the current cost of that network. That is \$5.5 million in real terms, and where that will be realised is in a more consistent and a more frequent bus service.

We have attended to, I guess, the growth of the city in terms of providing services to new areas in Gungahlin and also some of what we call the east-west corridor, which is out towards Brindabella Business Park, and tried to satisfy some of the demand for the people who are working in that new precinct. We have certainly increased frequencies

in our off-peak, which was one of the greatest areas of criticism in the last network. We believe that those increased frequencies will have a really positive effect in terms of connectivity, which means where people have to change or are trying to get from one bus route to another bus route how they achieve that.

We believe that through some more attention to the scheduling system we will be able to ensure that we do not what we call “clump” services—that we do not have three services arriving at Manuka in 10 minutes and none for another hour and a half, which certainly has been a feature of discontent with many members of the community who are trying to travel and traverse Canberra on the public transport system.

So we believe that we have got quite a good product. We are in the middle of the consultation process—well, at least at the commencement of it. We began last week. We have had some quite positive community feedback about that to date. We are running information sessions in libraries. We have our website operating and we are taking feedback every minute of the day. Up to last Friday we had received 260 bits of feedback through the online system. I would have to say that some of that was very focused. It focused our attention in some particular areas of the city—for example, Giralang. In terms of that, we are going to meet with the Giralang Residents Action Group this Friday because we think we can see what they are talking about and we would like to just sit down and see if we can plot a bit of a solution for them. We think we understand their problem; we will go and talk to them and make sure that we do and then see if we can organise a solution around their particular area.

So I think we have got a very positive consultation process going on. We believe that we will have a much better product for the community and we think this is the first step in rebuilding confidence in the bus system and the bus network. I would hasten to add that this is not a system that is a taxi service; this is a mass transit system and we will never be able to meet the individual requirements of every person in Canberra who wishes to move from one point to another.

Therefore, another of the initiatives that I would like to speak on very quickly is the community transport initiative that was also funded in the second appropriation; \$650,000 was allocated to this over a number of years. This particular service is a joint venture between ACTION, the Department of TAMS, the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services and the regional community services. This will be an on-demand minibus service, so an individual or a small group. It will be a small fleet of vehicles that is wheelchair accessible, so people who are disabled will be able to utilise them as well. ACTION’s role in this is to supply the fleet, fully fuelled, fully maintained and safe.

The regional community services will administer the service and really administer it at a local level so that it is really a localised and therefore a very community-based transport system. It will be on demand, and the rules and the criteria by which individuals will utilise that service are a matter for the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. So ACTION’s role in this was to help facilitate the outcome, if you like, and really disability and housing will deliver the service at the end of the day.

All parties who have been involved in this are very positive about the likely outcomes

we will obtain from this and, as far as I am concerned, it is an adjunct to our off-peak service and a really useful thing where we felt some of the federally funded programs such as the HACC program still had some space for something a little better, to accommodate a few more people in the community. So we think the beneficiaries of this can be anyone from a person who has a temporary inability to move around the city, to women whose husbands are away and have had to take the car so they are disabled for a period of time, to people who have an ongoing requirement who might get locked into a regular trip to the shops or whatever. So we think it is quite a useful and we think the regional community services are the best people to actually deliver this.

I might just touch on one other item regarding second appropriation, which is about a million dollars for interchanges. The interchanges are one of the significant pieces of infrastructure around the bus network and quite crucial to ensuring our ability to deliver services that people feel they can use safely and comfortably. It is recognised that the interchanges around the city are not the best they could be. The amount of money that has been allocated in the second appropriation is the first step towards an improvement in that area. Where this money will be focused in this instance will be at Belconnen and Woden primarily. There may be some funds left over for Civic and Tuggeranong, but primarily Belconnen and Woden, where we think we have the greatest need to improve safety and customer amenity, is where these funds will be focused.

We have CCTV in those locations, but we will be upgrading the CCTV in Belconnen and Woden. We will be improving the customer amenity by doing some maintenance around cleanliness and painting, some improvement of signage, some lighting. There is a bit of work to do and I do not think a million dollars will in fact cover what really is required—a total renovation and refit—but certainly it is a good step to improvement in the first instance. I think that is about it on second appropriation.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Chairman, I would like to put another couple of numbers on the record. We have also added funds to extend the seniors concession in the bus system. Hitherto, people were able to use their concessions only during off-peak times. We realise that 50 per cent of the journeys of these people, because of attendance at things like doctors appointments et cetera, have had to be during peak time, in either the morning or afternoon. People have not had control over appointments, so we have extended that concession so that it is applicable at any time. Weekdays, weekends, peak, off-peak—it does not make any difference.

It has been said that Network 08 is merely a reinstatement of what it was in 2005. Such is not the case on a number of levels. You may recall that we put a couple of million dollars into the budget last year to reinstate a number of routes. I can recall appearing before the committee and indicating 37 routes at one point; there were actually more than that over time. We have also put in the budget, for the year which we are examining, \$8 million for new rolling stock. That is for 16 buses. It is salient for the committee to understand that every bus we buy costs just short of \$500,000.

We have also put \$8 million into the budget for a new ticketing system. The current system is antiquated. Spares are not available for it. We will be doing some work on

that around not only in order to have a nice ticketing system for people to use but also as a data collection exercise. Hitherto we have been able to determine when people got on the bus but we have never been able to work out when they got off the bus, to work out what their pattern of travel is. The new ticketing system will allow for that to occur. It will also allow us to GPS track the buses so that if, for some reason, a bus is held up—it could be a traffic accident, it could be a breakdown of the bus itself, it could be any number of things—we can respond to that particular emergency.

Further, we have put money in the budget for closed circuit TV in the buses themselves. By the end of this year, all of the buses will be equipped with closed circuit television. Also, we are including the CCTV exercise in our global review of CCTV around the whole city and the town centres as well. Mr Chairman, we are seeing a fair amount of restitution in 2006-07 and a further enhancement in 2007-08.

THE CHAIR: I think I speak for the committee when I say that the committee is pleased to see many of the recommendations that it made in its ACTION report come to fruition here.

Mr Hargreaves: Indeed. I express my appreciation for the work the committee did. We were pleased to pick up a number of those recommendations and add some dollars to it.

MR SESELJA: I did not have my copy of the annual report in front of me when you were making that correction. What page were you referring to?

Mr Hargreaves: Page 174, volume 2.

MR SESELJA: There was a bit going on there with an official trying to get your attention when you were giving us those numbers. I am not sure if that needed to be corrected.

Mr Hargreaves: Which ones were those?

MR SESELJA: It was when you were giving us those corrections.

MR PRATT: This was the plus two per cent.

MR SESELJA: The plus two per cent rather than the minus two.

Mr Hargreaves: We go through the exact numbers on page 174.

Mr Elliott: Do you want me to do it?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. I will get Tom Elliott to just give you the correct numbers.

MR PRATT: It says plus two, doesn't it?

Mr Elliott: It actually says negative two. The bracket means it is negative. In fact, that variance is correct. What we have is a misprint. The target is \$17.1 million. The result is \$16.764 million, which means it is a variance of negative two per cent. That

means our patronage has declined two per cent. So the variance target is accurate. It is a typo and they have mismatched the wrong figures in the wrong columns.

Mr Hargreaves: While we are on that subject, I will give the committee some detail. We will get you the numbers, if the committee indicates that it would like them. We saw adult patronage increase quite significantly, to the extent where people were complaining a bit about having to stand on buses during peak hour. Total patronage did fall, but it fell because of concessions and student boardings. So the net effect was that the total boardings actually dropped. The adult boardings increased and those other two decreased. That is significant for us because it means that the major part of our passenger boardings are during the peak hours. That is where our target is, in order to get people out of their cars and onto buses, and we are pleased to be able to say that that figure went up.

MR SESELJA: You talked about some of the services to the parliamentary triangle. I assume that is the announcement we saw last week, on Wednesday or Thursday, in the paper.

Mr Hargreaves: That is right, yes.

MR SESELJA: When was the decision taken for those specific services to be improved or increased?

Mr Hargreaves: I can't give you an exact date but it was part of the whole package of revision for Network 08. We did not actually take a decision on this—

MR SESELJA: So it was not a separate decision, it was all decided in that one package?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, it was not a separate decision. In fact, I think it was a little bit elaborately described in its headline in the *Canberra Times*, quite frankly. If you read the—

MR SESELJA: I am sure you would not have minded that, a couple of days out from a federal election.

Mr Hargreaves: Well, it had an effect, didn't it? It got rid of a prime minister. I thought that was a magnificent action.

MR SESELJA: I am sure that was the deciding factor!

MR PRATT: A strategic weapon, minister.

Mr Hargreaves: It put the Prime Minister on a bus. I thought that was a great idea, and I thank you very much for pointing it out.

MR SESELJA: It could not quite get the Greens elected.

Mr Hargreaves: I am glad to see the Deputy Leader of the Opposition bringing it to our attention. I appreciate that very much.

MR PRATT: What have you been waiting for, Mr Hargreaves?

Mr Hargreaves: I am just waiting for the next election, Mr Pratt, so that we can clean you up again.

MR PRATT: You'll be waiting!

THE CHAIR: Let us stick to the report, thanks, members. Mr Pratt?

MR PRATT: Good afternoon, minister and ACTION staff.

Mr Hargreaves: Good afternoon, Mr Pratt. It is a delight to see you.

MR PRATT: Thank you very much. Mr Elliott indicated that there were CCTVs already in location in all the bus interchanges. Isn't it true that most of the CCTV cameras in those interchanges are traffic management cameras, essentially there to monitor bus movements and not necessarily focused on passenger areas?

Mr Hargreaves: When we came to government we inherited a series of cameras in interchanges. Mr Elliott is new to this; he has only been general manager in time to rescue the network. We inherited those cameras and it turns out that some of the cameras were not operational at all. Some of the cameras were operational with no film in them. But they were not regarded as workload indicator checks. They were not about working out whether the bus drivers were doing the right thing and going in and out of the bus on time. They were about watching the passenger movements on and off buses.

A lot of the disruptive behaviour we have seen at interchanges actually happens as people are alighting from the buses or are just about to get on. So there was a focus on that. The new CCTV regime is about people movement—as, indeed, are the ones around Civic in general. It is about capturing images of people and disturbances. It is not about whether a bus leaves on time. The CCTV cameras on the buses are directed towards the safety of passengers and bus drivers. So we have actually adopted a completely new regime with regard to the CCTV stuff.

MR PRATT: In relation to the bus interchanges, Mr Elliott said, "They're not the best that they could be."

Mr Elliott: That is right.

MR PRATT: I think that is an understatement, particularly in relation to Belconnen and Woden. What do you think your program now is, minister, to get the CCTV program rolled out completely into all those interchanges?

Mr Hargreaves: I can't answer the question by giving a date. Firstly, with respect to the CCTV cameras on the buses, we have got five cameras. Is that right?

Mr Elliott: Minister, it will vary depending on the size of the bus. So the number would depend on what sort of bus it is—whether it is an articulated bus. It is

anywhere between four and six.

Mr Hargreaves: So with respect to the buses themselves, the CCTV rollout will be by the end of the year.

MR PRATT: I got that.

Mr Hargreaves: The cameras in the interchanges are linked in to the—

MR PRATT: The city-wide program.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. The timetable of the rollout is affected by the availability of equipment, a program for the equipment, the monitoring services, whether it is done by the interchange or whether it is done by the police. It is also governed by the creation of the privacy protocols because we are governed by the commonwealth's Privacy Act around third-party imagery. So all of those have to be stitched together. It is proceeding apace. As soon as we can roll them out, we will get them out. It is a priority for us but I cannot give you a specific date.

MR PRATT: The city-wide program could take some time, couldn't it?

Mr Hargreaves: We have already had an improvement in the placement of the city-wide CCTVs. We have had a number of arrests of people who have attacked people in the Civic area, for example. We have had some arrests of people who have attacked buses and things like that. We have got imagery on that. So it is a progressive rollout. If you are asking me when it is going to be completed, I do not know. There is quite a possibility that it will never get completed as the city expands, and having regard to the way in which people move and changes around the city area.

You might know that there is considerably more movement around the City East part of the city now than there used to be. There is also a lot more around City West, around West Row—the restaurant strip. Of course, it depends on the time of year. At this time of the year, we get an enormous amount of movement in the city area, particularly around the time of the multicultural festival. We get an enormous number of people in the city then. So it depends on which part of the city it is.

DR FOSKEY: I will not ask substantive questions because you will be appearing before us at appropriations on Thursday. When an incident is captured on CCTV, let us say there is some sort of conflict as someone is getting off a bus and someone is getting on. How is that dealt with? If you have someone watching things live the whole time, they will be at a distance. Is the bus driver in a position to do something? All you have got is an image of someone. It does not help you to find them later on unless they are already known to the police.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, you are right. That is an excellent question, Dr Foskey. There is a combination of things which apply. The bus drivers have buttons which can alert the transport supervisor and in turn the police. We have a memorandum of understanding with the police. At some interchanges we have private security guards who pop around from time to time at various times of the year. We also have increased police patrols around the interchanges.

What I do not want people to think is that the bus drivers are pseudo police officers. They are not. They are, in fact, just as vulnerable as the passengers are, and we want to protect them. Interestingly, the cameras around the buses are live. They are not images which are taken and frozen, and we come along in a week and pick them up if the police ask for them. The cameras on the buses are actually live at the time. There is a console in the Belconnen bus depot, and it is viewed by an officer there. We flick from camera to camera, and we can see, and have seen, somebody get off the bus who needs to have some attention given to them.

This is a very interesting thing that the committee might like to know: there was an occasion when the officer in the depot, because he was aware of what was going on, spotted this on the monitor and got onto the bus driver about it. A passenger got off the bus, walked around the front of the bus and was about to walk into the path of a vehicle; they would have been cleaned up. The bus driver was able to catch the attention of the pedestrian, who came back and asked the bus driver what was going on. Just as she turned away, the vehicle went flying past. Had it not been for that CCTV camera, had it not been for the monitoring in the depot and the quick action of the driver, that person would have been killed; there is no doubt about it. So this is a really big thing.

The answer to your question is: both. The cameras in the interchange take images and, if the police want to prosecute someone, they have the images available to them and they are wiped after a certain period of time. But the ones on the buses at the moment are live and they are monitored by the bus depot.

THE CHAIR: You were talking about the drivers. I understand that the enterprise bargaining agreement has now been completed with ACTION. How is the pay increase going? Will it arrive before Christmas for these drivers?

Mr Hargreaves: My understanding is that the relationship between ACTION management and the Transport Workers Union has now satisfactorily delivered for the drivers. However, under the current Work Choices legislation, we are obliged to put that agreement before the Office of Workplace Services, who can take anywhere between a month and six weeks to get back to an enterprise and say there is nothing wrong with it or they are happy with it. As soon as that happens, it then has to be put to a vote of members. Once that vote has been concluded, the pay can start to roll. Had it not been for the need to put it through the Office of Workplace Services, the bus drivers would have had their pay rise before Christmas. At this stage, I think I am correct in saying that unless something dramatic happens to the Work Choices legislation, we are largely in their hands. If they are quick in coming back—for example, in a couple of weeks—it might be possible. But if they do not then we have to wait until after Christmas. Am I right, Mr Elliott?

Mr Elliott: That is correct, minister. The commonwealth Workplace Authority will receive a copy of the document tomorrow. Unfortunately, it would appear that it might get tangled up in the transition arrangements, which I think Julia Gillard was talking about publicly in the last few days. I am not sure how that might affect this particular document but I assume it would still need to be signed off under the current Work Choices legislation. Therefore it would fall into that frame. As soon as we have

it back and it has been authorised, because it is a legal requirement that it is, we will be undertaking a vote through the Electoral Commission, which is what we have to do. Given that a vast proportion of the drivers have leave over Christmas, because we have reduced levels of service and that is when they take their leave, we are unlikely to take that vote until February next year.

Mr Hargreaves: At which time the bus drivers will receive the best part of a year's pay in back pay.

THE CHAIR: I am sure that will please them.

Mr Hargreaves: It is part of the agreement. I think it was 4 April or 10 April that we would back pay their pay to.

Mr Elliott: That is correct. It will be back paid to 4 April, as per the core agreement for all ACT government staff.

THE CHAIR: I have only one more question on staffing, and it relates to page 52 of the report, which talks about the staffing profiles. If you look at the GSO structure in the first grouping, which includes ACTION drivers, there are 88 female staff and 842 male staff, which indicates that we have a low number of female staff as drivers. Is ACTION doing anything to try and address that?

Mr Hargreaves: There are a couple of things we need to appreciate. You are dead right, Mr Chair: we do actively seek women as drivers. It is funny, you know, but driving the bus, particularly on the school bus runs, works really well in terms of family-friendly work practices. The problem for us is that we are locked into a 60 to 40 ratio with the union. That means that we have limited opportunities to split-shift for females who want to use that in conjunction with their family obligations. But we have been talking with the union around how we can approach that. We would love to see a greater number of women drivers. We think that they make every bit as good a driver as anyone else. Also, the way in which we deliver the services is quite conducive to good work-family commitments. It is only this ratio that is standing in their way a bit.

THE CHAIR: That is the ratio of permanents to—

Mr Hargreaves: Permanents to part time.

THE CHAIR: Permanents to part time?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes. If we had the ratio the other way round, for example, we would find considerably more women lining up to be bus drivers who only want to do a school bus run, which is a part-time thing. We would be able to explore how that possibility might be able to happen. Also, of course, if women bus drivers get towards the end of their career and want to reduce the amount of time on the road and increase the amount of time with their families, that possibility would exist too. But we will explore that later on. The relationship we have with the union right now is as good as it has ever been.

THE CHAIR: Just on that ratio, minister: that would be the highest number of permanent to part-time staff in any department in the ACT government?

Mr Hargreaves: It is; it is the highest ratio. The problem is that none of the other areas have a formula locked in the way this one does. We are obliged to respect that formula—that 60-40 formula. It is, if you like, a disincentive to having women apply to be bus drivers. It is just something we address.

DR FOSKEY: Is the 60 to 40 permanent to casual or full time to part time?

Mr Hargreaves: Full time to part time.

MR PRATT: Chair, could I ask a question.

THE CHAIR: Certainly. We will move on after that.

MR PRATT: I want to go back to the question of CCTV cameras, minister. Given the discussion we had in the chamber in May about reported violence, particularly in Belconnen and Woden, and to a lesser extent in Civic, and also given the information from concerned staff that those old CCTV cameras were not covering much at all—they were quite concerned about those cameras—why have you not been able to commit to at least a partly urgent program to get some new CCTV cameras into those interchanges by now?

Mr Hargreaves: We acknowledge that Woden, Belconnen and Tuggeranong interchanges, and Civic at times, are issues for us. They are a priority for us. As Mr Elliott has indicated, the Belconnen and Woden interchanges are our priority areas, so the answer to your question is that we are. We are.

MR PRATT: Will you have some cameras there in the next months? Can you put a timetable on that?

Mr Hargreaves: I will get Mr Elliott to give you some specifics on that. That will be much better than me trying to tell you.

Mr Elliott: We have been working on the program for upgrading CCTV, which is both on bus and in the interchanges, for about six months. We have focused around the depots and buses specifically, and done a fair degree of work in evaluating the adequacy of the current cameras. We determined that the cameras in the interchanges need to be approached from two perspectives. One was, as you mentioned before, the fact that they are primarily on road. The first task was to try and get some of those repositioned. We have done that where we could. Then there is the issue of quality and whether you get adequate platform coverage and the cameras are covering those slightly dark corners of interchanges where they happen to be. So there is certainly coverage and quality of camera. We are putting into place a program that will lift the general standard so that the same quality of image that we can record on a bus and in depot security will be applied in the interchanges. We are upgrading it and making it a consistent quality.

The current program for implementation for Woden and Belconnen should see the

upgrades completed by the end of this financial year. We already have quotations on most of the work. It is a matter of going through procurement processes to ensure that we comply with the territory's laws, to select the right vendors and then to work with them to implement the processes. I am very confident that we will have those in place by June, but my expectation would be that we will have them there much sooner than that. Beyond that, I cannot make a commitment because of supplier arrangements, but I am very confident that they will be completed by the end of the financial year. I would be hopeful that they are done by March, and if we can get them done in January we will do them in January. We have the quotations; it is simply a matter of getting the suppliers to do the implementations for us in the way that we have outlined.

So we have not rested on our laurels. We have been working on this quite hard for quite a long time. I do appreciate that it is an impediment to getting people into the bus system, which is why we have paid so much attention to it.

I should add to the minister's previous comments about accident reporting. We have done quite a lot of work with the AFP, and also our own staff, in providing the best and upgraded information and data management reporting around incidents. They could be anything. There could be an incident that we need to refer to the AFP because it is a police matter—and there is plenty of that. There is quite a lot of general safety and amenity around—so the road safety incident that the minister talked about before. We have started some discussions with some people in community engagement in the department about turning that into a road safety clip. We think it could be used quite usefully around Canberra Connect shopfronts, for example—on some of their plasma televisions. We have also put quite a lot of effort into our procedural matters regarding accident and incident reporting.

So we are doing a lot better in our ability to understand exactly what is happening out there on a day-to-day basis and, more importantly, analyse that and have a look at the trends so that we can put strategies in place to ensure the safety of passengers moving round the public transport system.

I am very confident about the CCTV implementation. We will be doing it as quickly as we can; if we can get it done in January, we will do it in January; but at this point it is a matter of whether the suppliers will work for us over the Christmas period.

Mr Hargreaves: Can I add a note of caution, Mr Chairman? We are, I believe, progressing as quickly as we can within the Financial Management Act and all the rest of it. I just want to ask the committee to be conscious about the public criticisms of the equipment—not because we are not moving quickly enough and all of that sort of thing and not because we are trying to shirk the responsibility and accountability, but, rather, because, if we are a little bit overcritical in the public arena, that encourages people who want to misbehave to go to the interchanges. These people do this as a bit of risk behaviour. They go and do these things and they get a bit of a buzz out of the risk. If they think that the risk for them to be apprehended is lower, we would be, in effect, inadvertently—quite inadvertently—encouraging them to go and perpetrate their bad behaviour at those places.

I am quite happy for us to have the discussion here around this, but I would move that members show some caution and be careful about the way in which they portray their

particular view in the public arena. I know that the police have asked us not to talk too much about this sort of thing. They say to us that, even if there is a camera there and it does not work, it does act as deterrent for some people. We do not want that; we are going as fast as we possibly can to get police enough evidence to charge and convict people for that. But I would ask the committee to be a bit careful about that.

MR PRATT: I quite understand that.

THE CHAIR: Can we have one final question on ACTION and then we will move on to the rest of the report.

MR PRATT: Right. In the interests of safety, I hope you can fast-track this program. In relation to Gungahlin township, do you have any plans to upgrade the transport system there to formalise a bus interchange environment at the town centre? People say that there is no surety of bus changing there because it is not a proper interchange. What are your plans there, minister?

Mr Hargreaves: That is a good question and I appreciate the opportunity to explain. One of the things that we are examining at the moment is whether or not an interchange per se—in the way we know it in, say, Civic or, better, the Tuggeranong area—is the right way to go about delivering bus services at Gungahlin. You could argue that all you need to do is know which stop to get off to get onto another one. That may not need a fully fledged bus-parking interchange.

MR PRATT: A concrete monolith?

Mr Hargreaves: Yes, in the Belconnen interchange perspective. There is a body of opinion which says that you can have what looks a bit like a bus lay over. It is like a pulling off lane; it can take four or five buses. It is part of a road network; it is not an interchange per se. That means that people can travel in there, get off the bus, get on another one and go, but they are not milling around an interchange. We are looking at that with respect to Gungahlin. We are also looking at that with respect to Belconnen, Civic and Woden. It is something to which we are applying our minds at the moment.

Gungahlin is an interesting town centre development because it is not suffering from the stuff that Tuggeranong town centre did, for example. We have learnt the lessons from the way in which the Tuggeranong town centre emerged. Those lessons are being applied. Furthermore, the town of Gungahlin, with its collection of suburbs, is not complete yet, so we have room to be able to respond as the suburbs come on line and we see the sort of traffic that goes through there. For example, it would be better for us to have park-and-ride facilities fairly close rather than having a massive great interchange.

MR PRATT: I think that is a good idea.

Mr Hargreaves: So the answer to your question is that we are applying our minds to it and we are not committed to putting in a fully fledged interchange at this point.

MR PRATT: I am glad to hear that.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I thank ACTION officials. We will move on to the rest of the report. Minister, in previous draft variations to the territory plan the committee has made a couple of recommendations in regard to waste collection and times. That has been a direct response from those that have moved into newer or higher-density developments like Kingston or Phillip and now live near a group set-up or A10 zones where there is now more residential around a group centre. We have made recommendations for the department to have a look at the times for waste collection. I just wanted to see whether anything has happened with those recommendations yet.

Mr Horsey: I am the manager of ACT NOWaste. I believe the EPA have a standing industry agreement, if you like, around the operation of commercial garbage and recycling collection. Under the department's domestic collection contract, we have specific clauses in those contracts that restrict the hours of operation of vehicles. They cannot be out there collecting before a certain reasonable hour in the morning, and must be knocked off and returned to the depot in the afternoon. That is not only to accommodate traffic management issues, but also to do with noise, particularly around urban areas. In terms of ACT NOWaste, the department does not regulate the commercial waste industry or the commercial waste industry fleet. But there is an industry agreement through the EPA. I believe that they have been undertaking some review of those start and finish times. I am not personally aware of where the commercial agreement is up to at this point in time.

MR PRATT: I refer you to volume 1, page 14, the fraud detection statements. Against the background of fraud detection and investigation, do you have any further plans to undertake surveillance of TAMS employees? What is the policy on how you manage these things?

Mr Hargreaves: Where prima facie evidence is produced of inappropriate behaviour, it is incumbent upon us, in order to protect the reputation of every other servant of the community, to investigate those particular allegations. What is not the case—and has been described in the media as being the case—is that the first resort is to sneakily photograph people at their workplaces. What actually happens is that the allegations of behaviour are checked and cross-checked. Then the results of that are examined by our audit committee, which is an independent audit committee. They could then make recommendations as to the next action, whether it be surveillance, referral to the police or both of those—whether it be an internal investigation. It depends on the nature of the allegation.

The allegations that were made in the episode to which you refer were serious allegations around occupational health and safety issues for the employees themselves. Because they were field staff, we ended up with a “He said; she said” exercise, so it was incumbent upon us to investigate, not only for the protection of the reputation of other officers but also for the safety and protection of people against whom an allegation had been made. The results of that investigation fully justify the application of that particular system.

MR PRATT: At what level is authority given to undertake third-party surveillance, as was the case in that particular incident? Does it go right to the top of the department or does a branch head go—

Mr Hargreaves: This is a particularly serious exercise. This is not taken in a case of any old accusation. As I have indicated to you, the senior management team—I did not indicate that bit, but I will in a minute. The matter is referred to our audit committee. It is also examined by our senior management team, which is at the senior executive level. It is a management decision. It is not a decision taken by the minister. That is a quite deliberate policy or process that has been in place for years and years, to make sure that there is no possibility that natural justice will not apply to all of those people involved. It is imperative that natural justice apply.

MR SESELJA: What kind of inappropriate behaviour justifies surveillance?

Mr Hargreaves: Let me give an example, and this is only an example. This is not the incident to which Mr Pratt was referring earlier. It may be, for example, that we have field staff engaged in activities which are unsafe to themselves. There are protocols around, for example, the wearing of safety and personal protection equipment. There is the possibility that people disregard standing orders or standing procedures and in doing so endanger their fellow workers. There is an example where you cannot go out in an ad hoc fashion and just say, “Oh, excuse me; were you wearing that PPE or not?” You need to have something else for that.

What we need to understand around these surveillance issues is what happens with the material that is gathered from that. It is not available to anybody to look at. We have very strict privacy laws in this country around the use of surveillance equipment. You could argue that our CCTV cameras do exactly the same thing on the buses, but they do not: they are all about the safety of the people in them. In the instance to which Mr Pratt refers, this is sometimes the only way that you can sustain or reject an accusation of misbehaviour. Otherwise it is getting into a “He said; she said” sort of arrangement, as I said before. When allegations are given to senior management around dangerous practices in the field, we have an obligation to all of the employees engaged in that particular activity—not only the one or two people who may be engaged in an action which it was alleged was inappropriate.

MR SESELJA: So is it only safety concerns? Is it only in circumstances where there are safety concerns that this would be done or are there other circumstances?

Mr Hargreaves: Where an allegation is tantamount to breaking the law, then a number of investigative processes are considered. Sometimes just the taking of evidence is enough. Sometimes the production of paperwork is enough. Surveillance is a method of last resort. It is where we cannot do anything else to prove or disprove an allegation, and the allegation has to be a particularly serious one. It is not done in every single case. It is very, very, very rare that this is actually ever done—very rare. In this particular case, when I received the briefing—well and truly after the event, let me tell you—I was satisfied that this was the only way in which to protect the safety of those people involved.

THE CHAIR: Minister, I might just ask you a question from a personal perspective. You will remember that I introduced a discussion paper for a feed-in law in the ACT. The Chief Minister has announced that there will be an interdepartmental committee set up to have a look at this. Can you give us an update of where your department is

within that program?

Mr Hargreaves: No, I cannot, Mr Chairman. You would need to take that up with the Chief Minister. He is responsible for that element of TAMS which has carriage of that particular part of the law.

THE CHAIR: We can do that this afternoon.

Mr Hargreaves: I would love to, but I cannot tell you.

DR FOSKEY: Forgive me if you have covered all this in my 10-minute absence. In regard to the consultation on the future of school sites—

Mr Hargreaves: The future of future school sites?

DR FOSKEY: The future of school sites, yes.

Mr Hargreaves: Well, we have surplus government accommodation at the moment.

DR FOSKEY: This question is in relation to surplus accommodation and community organisations. One thing that I was made aware of when I went around to one of the schools where consultations take place is that community organisations apply individually for the use of, I believe, a specific space. I am not sure.

Mr Hargreaves: I am aware of it. I was responsible for that one.

DR FOSKEY: Let me outline my understanding and then you can tell me where I am right or wrong.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: What that means, firstly, is that it may be harder for possibly good synergistic combinations of groups to put in a group submission and, secondly, that it is possibly creating some tension between organisations because they may be competing for the same space and they do not know what spaces other groups have applied for. That is my understanding and I can see problems with that. When organisations apply for the use of ex-school spaces, can they just say “We want a space somewhere in Weston Creek,” or do they have to identify a particular part of a particular school and apply for that?

Mr Hargreaves: In the hypothetical, if you have an organisation and it has a need for a certain amount of space, there are two ways in which they can approach the government to get some space. The first one is to see whether there is surplus space in existing schools. There is a process in the department of education whereby you may have a wing of a school which is empty and community groups use it either on a casual basis or a part-time basis. That arrangement is made through the education department. They have got a section in there that deals with that. I think they still do. I was in charge of it when I was there.

The other way, in fact, is to approach the government for access to its surplus

properties. Surplus properties can be anything from former parks and gardens depots to former childcare facilities. They can be former schools. They can be any number of different properties. They can actually just apply through the property group and say, "This is the sort of size that we would need to operate our particular activity." That is the best way for them to operate. What happens then is that property group will have a look at the properties that it has on its books and have a discussion with that particular group if there is something suitable around the traps.

When you talk about synergies, the government is very keen to promote organisations to go through those synergies. A lot of the time community groups are actually funded by the government anyway and a lot of their cost goes to administrative overhead. So if, in fact, a couple of groups can come together and operate in a central locality, they can share the services of their administrative overheads—photocopying, reception, telephones and all that sort of thing—and keep the cost down, which means that the amount of money government is giving out to them actually goes to the sharp end instead of the blunt end. So they can do that now. When they talk to the property group, the property group will then say to them, "There are other groups doing similar things." They will discuss those with them. So the answer to your question is: yes, that is the best way to do it.

When it comes to the surplus government properties which are about and the subject of consultation at the moment, nobody is being considered at this stage—well, very few people are being considered for specific allocation at the moment because the consultation process has not yet concluded. We wanted the community to tell us what they felt the surplus properties could be applied to in a regional sense, firstly, and then on a site specifically, secondly. The first one has concluded and the second one is still going.

I am expecting to have some kind of a report from the consultants soon, about mid-December, on it. I have deliberately stayed out of the consultation process. I did not want anybody to consider that I was going to interfere in any way, shape or form. I did not want to exert any influence at all. The consultant has had an absolute and completely free hand and will report to government on what conclusions are reached after those consultation processes are done. Then the government's intentions regarding the properties will be known. If the properties are to be made available for community groups, that is when those people who have applied for accommodation will be consulted. That is when the discussions with those groups will ensue.

DR FOSKEY: Will that report that Purdon Associates hands to you be something that you will keep under wraps?

Mr Hargreaves: That will be the subject of a cabinet submission. The cabinet will be the authority on what will occur with each site. I cannot at this stage pre-empt a decision of cabinet. At this stage I can only really give you an idea of the recommendation I will be taking to cabinet. Once cabinet has made its decisions, I do not personally see any reason why those reports cannot be made available to you. But I cannot pre-empt a cabinet decision on that. That would be totally inappropriate. I can put this to you. I will not be recommending a locking away of the reports.

DR FOSKEY: Thanks. Can I move onto waste management strategies?

THE CHAIR: You certainly can. We did ask a question earlier on.

DR FOSKEY: I am just wondering what the new waste management strategies mentioned in the outlook on page 11 might refer to.

Mr Hargreaves: I will get Mr Horsey to fill you in on the detail, Dr Foskey.

Mr Horsey: I am sorry. I will just find the reference that you are referring to.

DR FOSKEY: Yes. It is on page 11, at the end of the second paragraph in the left hand column.

Mr Horsey: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: It is actually around TAMS buildings, but I have got some supplementaries, too.

Mr Horsey: My understanding of the reference there is that with the department's restructure and the bringing of the sustainability portfolio into TAMS, rather than running separate energy, water and waste programs, those programs are looking at an integrated model. I would probably lead with the example of the schools program. Rather than having just a waste wise schools program, now we are running with a sustainable schools program which is operating under an integrated model. That schools program is going out and not just helping to change those practices within school communities around waste management practices but is now looking at energy, water, waste and a range of other issues that are related to sustainability. So there is a process afoot to redevelop integrated sustainability programs for those areas of energy, water and waste. That certainly has led to a strong sustainability focus and will lead to stronger community engagement opportunities.

DR FOSKEY: One of the things I keep asking about is when there will be recycling in Civic. I would also like to check the role of the government in terms of looking at commercial enterprises in the ACT that say they are recycling. For instance, I have recently written to the Canberra Centre to ask them about their recycling and although they said they would get back to me, they have not. I have heard anecdotally that while people think they are recycling—down in the food basement they actually have got bins named—I was told by someone who worked there that it actually all goes into landfill. You might be able to tell me more about that. What is the role of government in terms of that sort of situation, plus providing recycling in Civic?

Mr Hargreaves: I will answer that last question first, Dr Foskey. The major events that we have in the City have recycling facilities in them. That is because the cost of putting on those events takes into account the provision of those recycling facilities. But we do not have money in the budget at this moment to put bins all around the City area or the town centre areas. You see, it is a question of the collection and it is a question of the cost as well at this point.

We would really like to see that happen ultimately when there are funds available to extend that, but we have to have some behavioural change happen first. The recycling

pilot that happened in Glebe Park was to see what sort of recycling behaviour might be apparent. Getting people to separate paper and bottles and that sort of thing is quite okay because they do that at home. Getting them to recycle foodstuffs by putting those in specific bins is another story altogether. The laziness factor is one of the big challenges that we face at the moment. That is why we have these big educational campaigns. That is why, in fact, we have the NOWaste awards, which goes to addressing the first part of your question.

We do not have the resources to go around the City and check up on every single operator or every single business and say, "What is the extent to which you say you are recycling; are you actually doing it?" Part of the thing is that it is not illegal not to do recycling. It is not illegal. So we have no powers to go in and check people and prosecute. Rather, we are adopting the attitude of trying to convince business that it is a good idea to do it both from a commercial perspective and from an economic one and then we get the environmental bonus out of that.

So the NOWaste awards actually put out in the public arena those businesses which are doing it, and doing it properly. For example, Ricoh, the photocopier and computer people, recycle about 98 per cent of every single thing that happens in that business. They recycle a lot. In giving those people awards, we then put them up and say to other businesses, "You can do it." You have got to show business that either it is not going to cost them any extra to do this or they can make money out of it. If you do not show them one or other of those two, they are not going to do it. So we go down that track and try to use the reward system to do it.

We do know that the domestic sector is leading the way with something like 74 per cent. The construction industry is doing very well in recycling things like metals, concrete and wooden products. The soft industries, legal companies and people like that are doing fairly well but could improve their game. But the big area of worry for us is the retail sector. The retail sector has got a number of facets to it that we are just finding it significantly difficult to change.

Firstly, there is the packaging. You get so much garbage wrapped around the stuff that you buy and it has got to go somewhere. We are signatories to the national packaging covenant, which is trying to get codes of practice applicable into the retail sector and the wholesale sector so that you do not need to have plastic wrap around everything. The industry is very slow to take this up. It is a national approach, but they are very slow to take it up. The other part, of course, is the hospitality industry around foodstuffs. A lot of businesses do the right thing with leftover foodstuffs. They actually give it away to charity or to pig farms and things like that. Some of them do not. We do not have the resources to go around and check every single one of them.

But there is an active program of education and we wrap our activities around things like City Heart, for example. When they do their promotions we get involved with those people. Our education program in the schools is all about cultural and attitudinal change. If the general community out there wants the thing, then maybe we can do something about it.

DR FOSKEY: Just before Mr Pratt asks his supp, on page 78 there is mention of a review of ACT NOWaste strategy and targets that was performed by

Wright Corporate Strategy.

Mr Hargreaves: Yes.

DR FOSKEY: I wonder if you could make that available to this committee.

Mr Hargreaves: I would have to have a look at it, Dr Foskey. My concern would not be about not releasing information. It would only be about whether or not we have the authority to do that. I do not see it being a problem, but I just want to check it.

DR FOSKEY: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I just remind members that we are due to conclude at 3 pm. We have another hearing after that.

MR PRATT: I understand. I have got a whole new area and two very, very quick questions. The first relates to page 34, parks, conservation and lands. I want to refer to what clearly is one of the most important teams in municipal services, the city places and open spaces team. It is responsible to check out, clean and identify problems in the urban landscape, including, of course, graffiti and posters, et cetera.

Minister, we have talked before about the Braddon depot which was covered in graffiti. I just refresh you with the before and after effects of what Braddon depot looked like. Over a six-week period, per those photographs, there was no change at all. Indeed, I am told by local residents that that was the situation for a minimum of three months. I am pleased to see it cleaned off now, but does not that indicate that this team is either severely under resourced or simply not doing its job or just not able to keep the landscape as clean as we should be proudly keeping it?

Mr Hargreaves: No, I do not agree with either of those things, Mr Pratt, through you, Mr Chair. It is a mistake, a very serious mistake, to have a look at the extent to which graffiti is found around the city and then say that there is a problem in cleaning it up. We have got a problem with people putting it on there. That is the first point. The second point about it is that predominantly—and this is not such an example and I am quite happy to fess up to that—graffiti is placed on non-government buildings and it is not the responsibility of government to clean it off. It is our responsibility to make sure that the graffiti, where it is offensive in terms of its language, its violence, its racism and its anti-religious aspect, is cleaned up, and we do.

We have a significant anti-graffiti campaign. We have a very effective team of people. We have very effective educational programs at CIT and elsewhere. But we are not getting the message across to the private sector to get the stuff off their buildings. However, one of the programs that we have got going, which is having its effect lately, is our mural program where the department, in conjunction with a lot of young people and with mural artists, is going about its business replacing graffiti with mural. What is happening is that the graffiti artists are not attacking it. I draw your attention to the example that is in the laneway not far from Blades near the Chairman and Yip restaurant. For a long time one of those walls was covered in graffiti. But there was no violence in the graffiti. It was just dirty. It looked awful. On the opposite wall there was a mural, and it was not attacked by graffiti artists at all. When eventually the

building owner woke up the fact that if he put a mural on that wall he would protect it, and did so, there has been no graffiti on that wall ever since.

Now, there is an anti-graffiti approach in the city heart levy. They are taking on the CBD as one their projects. I will give you another example of how good quality art can actually be used, and is used, as an anti-graffiti exercise. For years and years, a lot of these switching boxes that we have for our traffic lights were covered in posters, bills stuck to the wall, writings, tags and all of that. We had a painting competition where people went around and did the painting. Remember that? We had hundreds of them painted, and only two in all of that time were affected. I think I launched that thing when I was first minister of urban services three years ago, or over two years.

What we are seeing, of course, is a lessening of the opportunity. We will remove graffiti. As I said, if it is offensive or violent, all those sorts of things, we will remove it. We cannot go onto private property and remove something that does not have those connotations on it. We are not permitted to by law because it is not our property. We can be invited to do that, and we are happy to oblige, but we cannot do it. What we need, I believe, is a more responsible attitude by private property owners to clean it off.

In respect of stuff that is on there, we have a collection of tags. Where somebody is pinched for doing a bit of graffiti, the police contact us and we give them that dossier. A person is not done for just one piece of graffiti. They are done for a whole heap. The tags are unique. They are a fingerprint. We have a relationship with the police and we urge anybody who feels offended by a piece of graffiti to give us a yell and we will attend to it. But our priority, as I said, is where there is foul language, violence, racism or anti-religious slogans. That is our first priority.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, minister. We will wind it up there.

MR PRATT: Is it not true, minister—

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt, we will take that question on notice.

MR PRATT: Hang on. Minister, is it not true that when you fail to clean all the public property—

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt!

MR PRATT: you get what you see in Mort Street—

THE CHAIR: Mr Pratt!

MR PRATT: hundreds of metres of graffiti? I table that.

THE CHAIR: Good. We will take the question on notice.

MR PRATT: I table all these photographs, too.

THE CHAIR: We will now go to our break and will return at 3.15 with the

Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change.

Mr Hargreaves: Mr Chairman, before I go, may I take the liberty of expressing my appreciation to the officers from my department who have made themselves available and whose work has resulted in this annual report being provided.

THE CHAIR: Indeed. Thank you.

Meeting adjourned from 3.04 to 3.24 pm.

Appearances:

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

Department of Territory and Municipal Services

Zissler, Mr Mike, Chief Executive, Office of the Chief Executive

Tardif, Mr Phillip, Executive Director, Policy Coordination and Communication, Office of the Chief Executive

Watkinson, Mr Russell, Director, Parks, Conservation and Lands, Environment and Recreation

Butt, Mr David, Director, Energy and Water Policy, Environment and Recreation

Neil, Mr Bob, Director, Environment Protection and Heritage, Environment and Recreation

Horsey, Mr Chris, Manager, Sustainability Policy and Programs, Environment and Recreation

Byles, Mr Gary, Executive Director, Enterprise Services

Elliott, Mr Tom, Director, ACTION, Enterprise Services

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

Traves, Mr Alan, Senior Manager, Energy and Climate Change

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon. Welcome to the planning and environment committee's inquiry into annual and financial reports. This afternoon we have the Minister for the Environment, Water and Climate Change, Mr Jon Stanhope. Just before we begin I will read the privileges statement out to you.

The committee has authorised for 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 the record that all witnesses are protected by parliamentary privilege with respect to submissions made to the committee in evidence given before it. Parliamentary privilege means special rights and immunities attach to parliament, its members and others necessary to the discharge of functions of the Assembly without obstruction and without fear of prosecution.

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

Minister, would you like to make any opening comments?

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, chair. Let me say quickly that, firstly, I regret the slight delay. I made a mistake in the commencement time for this afternoon and I apologise for my lateness. I do not wish to make an opening statement other than that we are pleased to receive an invitation to attend today. The chief executive of the department, Mr Zissler, and officials are present and ready and very happy to be of whatever assistance they are able to be. I, of course, similarly will provide whatever assistance I am able to.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I might just begin with a couple of questions on the climate change strategy that you announced some time ago. Will there be any additional funding for that strategy in the coming years? After you have answered that, I want to ask you a question about the feed-in law.

Mr Stanhope: The weathering the change climate change strategy, a strategy that was released quite recently in July but for which some funding was anticipated in the 2007-08 budget, has received some additional funding in the second appropriation bill, which has been introduced and which the government hopes will be debated in a week's time. That is my expectation, having regard to the way in which the climate change has been very deliberately structured; namely, an overarching strategy that sets out the tasks we face and the actions which we believe we can realistically pursue.

Forty-three actions have been identified and in relation to the majority of those there is, of course, a funding implication. It is the government's intention that each of those 43 actions will be fully implemented. Some of the actions will, of course, be continuing and enduring and my expectation would be that many of them will be funded almost into perpetuity in terms of our need to address seriously the issues around climate change. It is a long-term project. It is a project looking ahead probably for centuries to come for us as a community to accept our responsibility for climate change amelioration and adaptation. It is something that will extend over decades, if not centuries, having regard to the enormity of the issues that we face and the consequences of not responding to climate change.

I do not have detail with me—I can perhaps draw it up—of funding that was provided in the 2007-08 budget. But, just indicatively, in the second appropriation bill specific actions have been specifically funded. Under action 8 there is \$2 million a year for the next four years to improve the energy efficiency of public housing; Action 14 gives free bus travel for bicycle riders using on-bus racks. We have appropriated \$164,000 to fund that or essentially to fund the loss of revenue that we anticipate ACTION will suffer as a result of free travel for bicycle riders. There is also \$70,000 in capital for an additional 50 bike racks. Action 15 was a small but, I think, significant initiative to double the new home owners entitlement to trees and shrubs to 220 and to better identify drought resistant shrubs and plants for first homeowners in the ACT.

Action 25 is a significant recommendation not just for climate change but for the city; namely, the need for us to begin a wholesale renewal of Canberra's urban forest. Issues around carbon sequestration and our forests and our attitude to forests and trees are very important. We have appropriated or will be appropriating \$400,000 to provide a framework for a massive task or undertaking; namely, the renewal of our urban forest. Action 27 is the establishment of a community based or not-for-profit

grants scheme to assist community based organisations to begin the process in relation to their facilities to promote energy efficiency. That is a grants program of \$1 million over two years. Action 43 is a carbon sequestration audit. We have applied \$50,000 to allow that audit to proceed. In this last budget, too, we provided an additional \$7 million for drought proofing-type initiatives which, of course, at their heart are also about adapting to climate change.

In addition to that, the government has identified \$2 million a year specifically within the capital upgrades program, which is an annual program of funding essentially to replicate action 8 in relation to our public schools as a separate action to provide or improve energy efficiency in public schooling. We have not appropriated specifically, but we have decided to identify in our annual capital upgrade budget, which in this last budget was in the order of \$40 million for the entire public service. Of that \$40 million, including this year's budget appropriation, \$2 million will be applied to energy efficiency and sustainability initiatives in our public schooling. I intend that to continue for the next 10 years.

So that is some indication of the steps already taken, but acknowledging that each of the actions, as they come on and as we begin the process of their implementation, will involve additional appropriations. We have no option as a government or as a community, nor does any other ACT government at any time, but to continue to significantly fund climate change actions.

THE CHAIR: Thanks, minister. In the strategy you have an action item which is a feed-in law, and you have seen now my discussion draft bill on that law. You have made an announcement about setting up an interdepartmental committee. Can you give us an update on where that committee is at this stage?

Mr Stanhope: Yes. I am very pleased indeed that there is a model, backed by legislation, available to further the weathering the change commitment to the introduction of a feed-in tariff. I have established an IDC which contains within its membership the Chief Minister's Department. The IDC is currently chaired by the Chief Minister's Department and has representation from Treasury and from TAMS. I think the three departments represented in a number of areas and through a number of responsibilities are the Chief Minister's Department, the Department of Territory and Municipal Services and Treasury.

I think the need for us as a community to facilitate community consultation through an understanding of some of the national energy market-type implications of a feed-in tariff and the potential for energy being fed back into the market does have some implications. A participating member of the IDC is the regulator. The ICRC is playing an active role and has contributed essentially to a discussion paper which will be the fruit of the IDC.

The proposal is that the IDC will develop a paper which goes to some of the technical issues around the role of the regulator. Some of these issues are more technical than at first blush one would imagine they might be. The regulator has a role in relation to payments for electricity—a feed-in tariff. To the extent that it actually involves the price of electricity, it attracts the interest of the ICRC.

The ACT government also, as a participating member of the national energy market, is responsible for the regulations or the law applying to the national energy market. There are implications for the national energy market in power being fed into the market through a feed-in tariff and we need to explore and flesh out those particular issues. They are highly technical and complex issues in relation to electricity, the electricity market and the price of electricity and our capacity, in fact, within the constraint or the boundaries of the ICRC and of the national energy market, to implement the strategy, as designed through the legislation, that you have tabled, chair.

In addition to that, there is one other issue that I want to be able to assure the people of Canberra will be addressed in the operation of the feed-in tariff, and that is the need to ensure that there is no unacceptable level of cross-subsidisation from those less able to pay to those easily able to pay or to install. I believe it is a legitimate issue of equity and fairness and we need to ensure at the end of the day that the final model does not impact unfairly on those members of our community that are less able, even acknowledging that the scheme, as proposed, would involve a quite small, flat charge across the board. The notion that we can impose any charge on those less able in our community without fully exploring the implications of that is not acceptable to me or to the government.

So they are the broad issues that I expect a discussion paper to explore. We will, of course, use that as a way of facilitating continuing community consultation before, hopefully, debating the legislation in the first quarter of next year. At this stage the discussion paper will be completed within the next couple of weeks. It will be released. We will be inviting responses to that between now and February and then, I think, subject to that, I anticipate the legislation proceeding.

MR STEFANIAK: I have a couple of questions just on what you have raised, minister, on climate change and the strategy. Thank you for those answers. We have Mr Gentleman's bill, and I have already made comment on that in principle in terms of the general idea, which I think is quite laudable. I note you gave recently \$5 million to the ANU for some further work, which I have absolutely no problem with.

Mr Stanhope: It was \$2.5 million. It was a matching contribution.

MR STEFANIAK: It seems to me that we are blessed in Canberra with more sunlight—and good sunlight—compared with the rest of the country. It is an ideal situation, given that apparently having a cold climate helps in maximising solar energy. Have you done any work, especially utilising our resources at the ANU and the CSIRO, to develop any major solar energy projects over and above what Mr Gentleman has proposed in relation to household solar projects and business solar projects?

Mr Stanhope: Not specifically, Mr Stefaniak, though I might defer to Mr Traves to give us some further information in relation to the details of relationships that the ACT government has developed with, most particularly, the ANU and of some of our expectations in relation to a \$1 million proposal which has not been fleshed out in relation to which the government has yet to make decisions for an alternative technologies showcase.

I agree entirely with what you are saying, Mr Stefaniak, about the need for us to explore the extent to which solar energy is, for our community, an area of alternative energy that we can better explore. Indeed, the feed-in tariff will stand, I have no doubt, as it stands in the context of initiatives being pursued by jurisdictions around Australia as perhaps the most significant boost to solar energy and research in relation to solar power that any government has taken.

Certainly there are significant research funds applied to issues around renewable technologies. It is an initiative which, if we can bed it down, if we can actually work on the details of those technical aspects I mentioned before, if we can satisfy the ICRC, if we can assure the national energy market that there are no issues that need to be of concern in relation to that, if we can overcome issues around equity, if we can develop a funding model that is consistent with our current legislative obligations, it will, as the German experience indicates, potentially provide an impetus for the greatest energising of solar power as an alternative that anybody could imagine. There has been a scheme trialled in South Australia but the nature of the tariff—

MR STEFANIAK: It is pretty low, isn't it?

Mr Stanhope: Yes, and it simply has not achieved the returns that might be expected. I would be interested to understand a little better the South Australian thinking on their particular scheme because it has not achieved the outcomes that I think would have been expected and so one has to imagine that it is as a result, perhaps, of the nature or level of the tariff. But, as you say, we have committed to continue to work with the ANU in relation to the establishment of a climate change adaptation centre. It is very much at an in-principle stage because of issues around the decision the commonwealth took not to support initially an ANU-CSIRO-University of Melbourne-ACT government bid. I have taken the decision to leave open at this stage the offer to the ANU in the expectation that we can perhaps deliver a different model, but I think it is a reasonable investment by the ACT government to join with the ANU and its partners in a major climate change centre here within the national capital.

I might just get Mr Traves to go to some of our hopes or expectations or what it is possible for a government to achieve through a—quite modest, admittedly—\$1 million alternative energy showcase, a significant proportion of which would be directed at showcasing the possibilities of solar energy as something that we are pursuing. I do not know what you can add, Mr Traves.

Mr Traves: The Chief Minister has alluded to the million dollar showcase which is currently in the weathering the change climate change strategy. It is an opportunity to take some world-class research that is currently in the city and to put it in a context that residents can see practical uses for. It is very nice to go out to, say, the ANU and look at their big dish up there, but it does not really have much resonance for a local resident to say, "I could put one of them in my backyard." So this project is an opportunity to take some of the more innovative research that is being done, particularly in solar but also in wind, and to put it into everyday uses around the city.

A number of sites have been identified and preliminary engineering studies have been done on the feasibility of those. Recommendations have been made to the Chief Minister and I believe some decisions will be made shortly on works

commencing there. But I would also mention that with the weathering the change climate change strategy we were very mindful of the excellent research facilities in this city—very much a smart society—and this was an opportunity for us to use that for the benefit of the community. The strategy includes a number of things which deal with our relationship with research and the academic community. We are establishing a business and academic roundtable as part of the climate change strategy, and funding has been provided on an ongoing basis for that out of the 2007-08 budget.

We are currently working with both the academic community and the major business groups to come up with an acceptable model so that they can both feel that they have an equal say in how that roundtable will work. Our expectations are that we will be able to showcase research which is being undertaken in a theoretical basis around the city and expose that to the business community who may then be able to see the opportunities for them to assist in commercialisation of that.

That is an initial expectation, but in the longer run we are looking for some partnerships growing outside of the basis of that working group where groups of academics and groups of business people start to see the opportunities that are available to the city. We have also separately established a bursary at ANU at the Solar Research School, which we have funded through the department. It is \$50,000 and that is currently in place. We believe a decision on the award of the initial bursaries will be made by the ANU, probably around March next year, and there will be announcements around that.

The CSIRO is a very important research organisation here in our city and we are doing some work closely with them. ACTPLA is also involved in that project to make Eastlake a model suburb, if you like, for sustainability around the city. The CSIRO is extremely heavily involved in providing ideas for that working group. I believe ACTPLA will be convening a group to prepare the report. I understand that will probably be available in the first half of next year.

We also have good ongoing informal relationships, if you like, with the academics, particularly at ANU, but increasingly with the University of Canberra. Mr Gentleman has alluded to his feed-in tariff. The ANU has provided some quite interesting analysis that will reflect in the papers which will help the community to actually discuss the merits of that. That is all I have got to say at the moment.

MR STEFANIAK: You mentioned Mr Gentleman's tariff and his plan. I understand that scientists at the ANU actually pioneered sliver technology, which is the next quantum leap in terms of solar energy technology. What effect would that have on what Mr Gentleman is proposing in terms of the photovoltaic cells on roofs et cetera? What effect indeed, if there is any further advance even on sliver technology, would that have in terms of basically enabling just normal households to get energy and feed it back into the grid?

Mr Traves: Sliver technology is in its second stage of development. The first stage was just to prove the concept, that it could be done. The first stage, like all experimental stages, was a very high cost per unit experimental arrangement. The second stage is that the ANU is working, I believe, with Origin Energy over in South Australia to come up with commercial versions of their technology and how

that may then be able to enter the market.

The implication for the ACT is that sliver cells are a more effective version of the technology that already exists. Mr Gentleman's bill addresses all forms of technologies, renewable technologies, I understand, and so could be accommodated quite easily. I do not know, unfortunately, how long it may take for sliver cell technology to become commercial.

MR STEFANIAK: Basically, what he is proposing can adapt to sliver technology?

Mr Traves: It is a more efficient version. It is progressive, rather than a leap forward at this stage.

MR STEFANIAK: In terms of general climate change, and this it probably goes into water a bit, but in terms of environmentally friendly new houses, I note—and correct me if I am wrong, Chief Minister—that for any new house built in the ACT now you certainly want the house to have devices that will save about 40 per cent of what is just normal water usage for a conventional house.

I understand there are some developments. In fact, one company, I think, reckons they can do more than that. Certainly for the Googong development there is a proposal which would save about 70 per cent of normal water usage in terms of any new development through such things as localised sewage conversion plants where the water will be pumped back at least to be used for outdoor use, with the possibility of it being used even for washing machine use. I do not think that it is quite at that stage yet, but certainly for outdoor use

What proposals do you people have in terms of ensuring environmental sustainability for any new developments in terms perhaps of just ensuring simple things, like most houses facing north so that we get benefits from that, together with those percentages I have mentioned in terms of saving on water? I am interested especially as there seem to be developments suggested by people, certainly in the Googong estate, which would save 70 per cent of water as opposed to 40 per cent mandatory, I think, for all new developments here?

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, Mr Stefaniak. Environment has been pursuing quite a rigorous review of demand management or government water saving programs. We have adjusted them, we have reviewed them and we have a number of programs that we pursue. Issues around housing design in the context of a detailed discussion would be better addressed to the Minister for Planning. The Minister for Planning and ACTPLA are responsible for planning around water saving, sustainability in design and, of course, water-sensitive urban design. Issues around water-sensitive urban design, in particular, are legislated requirements or planning requirements and they are issues that would probably be more fruitfully pursued with ACTPLA and the Minister for Planning.

There are a number of rebate programs, though. There are two sides to the equation. There are those rebate programs and incentive programs which are part of “think water, act water” and our commitment to reducing the use of potable water and increasing the amount of grey water that we use within the community. They are

issues that go to things such as water smart homes, the dual-flush toilet rebate, garden smart, the rainwater tank rebate et cetera. I would be happy for Mr Traves to just race through the range of programs and perhaps even some of the adjustments which we are seeking to introduce as circumstances change, indeed, our education programs. I think it is important—

MR STEFANIAK: I am more interested in just the concept of the percentages. If you think it is more relevant for planning, fine.

Mr Stanhope: It is more relevant to planning.

MR STEFANIAK: I think you are aiming at 40 per cent, yet it seems that there are other proposals which would ensure that we could save 70 per cent. I am just wondering what you are doing in relation to that now.

Mr Stanhope: Those issues around design and design requirements are issues for ACTPLA, essentially, Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: Let me just ask one question, then. You mentioned the use of grey water and non-potable water. I keep getting a lot of people contacting me in relation to tankers filling up at fire hydrants and using potable water on building sites. A lot of parks are still very much using potable water. I know Actew has got a program whereby even tankers can go and fill up down at Lower Molonglo. What is the government doing in relation to ensuring that we use as much non-potable water as possible on things like construction sites and rolling out a program for our parks? Someone mentioned to me the other day that Northbourne Avenue is just an enormous sprinkler system using potable water. What are you doing to ensure that we actually utilise our non-potable water sources as much as possible?

Mr Stanhope: At the outset, Mr Stefaniak, let me say in relation to a recent case of some notoriety that the use or continuing use of potable water on a building site, indeed a government commissioned building within Belconnen, is a matter of some angst for me and the government. I have to say that I have an expectation in relation to all ACT government funded infrastructure work and construction work, whether it be roads or other construction, that non-potable water will be used.

There are cost implications and there are issues around the convenience, but in the context of the situation that we are currently facing with 42 per cent capacity, I personally find it unacceptable that contractors engaged on behalf of the ACT government are not maintaining a commitment to the use of non-potable water when they have that option available to them. Indeed, I have instructed last week that the ACT government will not actually sign any contract for an ACT government construction that does not contain at least a best endeavours clause unless there is some overarching reason to exclude the use of non-potable water.

I do not want contracted staff coming to me and saying that they cannot be bothered using non-potable water because it is a pain in the neck to drive down to Lower Molonglo or to some other grey water plant to pick up a tanker load, which is what happened and which was the response which we received to the case cited. That is not acceptable to me, and I have instructed that for all ACT government contracts

involving major construction, unless there is an identified reason for the non-use of non-potable water, the contract simply will not be signed and that contractor will not get the job.

It is just not acceptable to me that, in the extremity we face in relation to our water security, major construction companies are simply flouting what I believe to be a moral obligation to restrain the use of potable water. I regret that we have not to date demanded of our contractors—those that are actually benefiting from major ACT government contracts but cannot be bothered maintaining the ACT government’s rigorous demands in respect of water—that we reduce at every level potable water use.

That is the position that we will now pursue in relation to all of our contracts. I hope that that is the position that other major contractors in the ACT will pursue in relation to their contracts. We have a range of water restrictions which we seek to enforce. The implication, of course, for our water or water security is the potential for level 4 water restrictions. That would, once again, have a significant effect on how water is used on construction sites around the territory. It would have a most severe impact or effect.

Over and above that, though, Mr Stefaniak, we have targets that we intend to achieve in relation to an incremental move towards a reduction in the amount of potable water used per se. We have targets in relation to the amount of grey water which we propose to use over time. We are serious about those targets and we will meet them. We have already met the target relating to reduction of potable water use and we are well on the way to meeting our first target in relation to an increase in the use of non-potable water or grey water.

More recent initiatives which are contained within the second appropriation go to how we might further and better use non-potable water, reduce the use of potable water where we have no option but to use potable water for outdoor use, investigate more rigorously the areas in which we can use lake water to irrigate the public domain, investigate the use of grey water in more places and, indeed, continue to investigate the possibility of black water or sewer water. They are part and parcel of the \$7 million additional funding for drought proofing. They go very much to increased use of lake water, increased use of grey water and even potentially the use of sewer mining or black water, mainly for irrigation.

MR STEFANIAK: Just one question and I will have finished for the time being on that. You mentioned a best endeavour clause. Are you able to define what you actually mean by that so that—

Mr Stanhope: I only asked last week.

MR STEFANIAK: it is not too broad so that people get out of it too easily?

Mr Stanhope: Precisely. Mr Stefaniak, I must say that this is an issue that only came to my attention last week. I was most concerned that a major ACT government contract does not provide a capacity within the contract for us to demand that non-potable water, where appropriate, will be used in the construction of that particular facility. We have gone to the contractor and said, “We think you should be

using non-potable water.” We did not receive, I think it is fair to say, the immediate response that we anticipated or expected of the contractor whereby we could perhaps expect of the contractor that our policy or our desire in relation to water would be immediately accepted as reasonable and appropriate.

I will put the matter beyond doubt in future. I will provide a clause in any major ACT government contract that says that the water for this project will be sourced from non-potable sources. We will put it beyond doubt. But there may be some circumstances. When I talk about best endeavours, there may be some circumstances—

MR STEFANIAK: Yes. I think you need to have some sort of categorisation of it.

Mr Stanhope: That is our intention. I am having the matter explored before we become explicit.

THE CHAIR: I am pleased that Mr Stefaniak moved onto the water question. My question was going to be on the integrated urban waterways project. I wonder if you can give us an update there and also any comments on the CSIRO report.

Mr Stanhope: Thank you, Mr Chair. I must say, I probably cannot be of as much use as an official. Mr Traves, are you in that matter?

Mr Traves: Yes, I can do that.

Mr Stanhope: In relation to some of the detail and the technical aspects of that particular proposal, it is a \$16 million joint ACT-commonwealth project. I am very hopeful that the first stage, which will be Flemington Road waterway, will be able to commence construction in the very near future, hopefully in December. I do not have final detail on that.

In the context of the work which the CSIRO was doing in order to ensure that we can meet the commonwealth’s expectations and, indeed, our own hopes in relation to the amount of water that we can save and the other aspects of the overall project, I will ask Mr Traves to give detail of the technical aspects of the project and perhaps the broad parameters and the nature of the investigation which the CSIRO is undertaking on our behalf.

Mr Traves: The Chief Minister has given a very good summary of the project, actually. It is a joint project with commonwealth money and our own, with the commonwealth contributing about \$10 million and us around about the \$7 million mark. Its long-term goal is to save about 1.5 gigalitres of potable water that we could otherwise use in our homes. It will principally be turned towards irrigation. The CSIRO is conducting a detailed study at present which will be concluded in February next year. They have so far examined 70 possible sites around the city and identified six sites which are practical for the type of project they think a city of our size could reasonably bring to fruition. They are fast-tracking, and certainly the department is also heavily involved in fast-tracking, the Flemington Park project. Sod turning for that project, I believe, will be in December.

In terms of what is actually proposed, we are looking at stormwater harvesting principally. In an urban environment that is the most viable short-term source of water that we can get. But there is also sewer mining, which has been closely examined, and aquifer storage. That is a little bit more technical and I do not believe that there are that many locations in the city which have so far been identified for that aspect of the project, but the CSIRO report will address that in detail in February.

THE CHAIR: Mr Seselja?

MR SESELJA: Thank you, chair. Minister, page 32 of volume 1 refers to the energy and water policy branch overseeing ActewAGL's proposal for a gas-fired power station in Hume. Are you able to tell us what analysis has been done in terms of the potential noise impacts on the surrounding residents of such a proposal?

Mr Stanhope: Of the gas-fired power station?

MR SESELJA: Yes.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Seselja, thank you. At this stage I have not yet received any formal reports on any of the preliminary investigations that were to be undertaken in relation to this project. I cannot be of assistance. I simply have not received those reports yet in the context of the stage of the project. I would defer to the department in relation to the existence or otherwise of any such reports at this time.

Mr Butt: At this particular point in time the project is still in that stage of planning with ActewAGL linked to the major underpinning user of the energy if it goes ahead. They will be looking at the noise impact but the location of the project itself should minimise any impact on residential users. As the project moves ahead, I think in the next 12 months, the precise details noise-wise and energy-wise will come out. Noise itself will depend on the number of turbines that are installed, which then depends on the amount of demand that will be created by the energy use—electricity use.

MR SESELJA: Thank you.

MR STEFANIAK: Just on that, what percentage of electricity supplied to the ACT is that gas-fired power station anticipated to provide?

Mr Butt: At this stage—

MR STEFANIAK: Or would there be such a surplus that we could sell some back into the grid?

Mr Butt: At this stage, no, it is not anticipated that there would be such a surplus. To my understanding, the project is a self-contained project. Where there is a small surplus, it would be sold back under the national electricity market rules as a basic input into the grid according to the NEMMCO demand for energy. It is certainly not being generated as an alternate supply point in its own right.

MR STEFANIAK: Page 32 of the report refers to the development of a second line of input for ACT electricity suppliers. Is that referring to the power station? Is it

referring to Mr Gentleman's proposal? What is that actually referring to?

Mr Butt: No, that is referring to the ongoing planning and development of a second electricity line into the ACT to mirror a line that currently comes in through Belconnen west. It is part of securing energy supply to the territory in all circumstances—as well as an integrated development for the south-east of New South Wales, going right down through Cooma and down to the South Coast.

Mr Stanhope: The line is coming in through Williamsdale, Mr Stefaniak.

MR STEFANIAK: Right.

Mr Stanhope: It is a second line.

MR STEFANIAK: What is the status of that? Where is it at?

Mr Butt: At the moment, it is subject to planning by TransGrid and ActewAGL. They have identified where they want to put powerlines and substations, and they are in the process of commercially securing the appropriate rights in the land to do that.

Mr Stanhope: Indeed, I coincidentally met with Actew today—the chief executive of Actew and the Chief Executive of ActewAGL—for an update on some projects, this being one of them. There has been some small level of frustration by TransGrid and ActewAGL about the time that it has taken to negotiate the things that Mr Butt just mentioned—rights of easement or easements. It is actually a new line through freehold in New South Wales and leasehold in the ACT. There have been some very complex and testing negotiations. Land has had to be purchased for substations. Easements have had to be granted for powerlines. They are having to negotiate with every farmer and land holder along the entire route. It has been quite a testing project, I am told.

Mr Mackay advised me today that they are now at a stage where they believe they are just about ready for the breakthrough and for all the dominos to fall into line. The issues around easement and the purchasing of land for substations et cetera have been satisfactorily resolved. There are some costs associated in all of this. Some compulsory acquisitions are being pursued with issues around fair compensation, et cetera. It has been a quite complex project, but Mr Mackay informed me today that they are now far more relaxed about the level of progress that is being achieved.

THE CHAIR: Questions, members? Dr Foskey?

DR FOSKEY: I have quite a few questions on water, but I want to ask you this. I have just heard from Mr Barr's office that there is a plan to develop a whole suite of legislation next year around climate change—putting a climate change strategy into legislation, embedding it, whatever.

Mr Stanhope: Where required, yes. We see that immediately in relation to various things. For instance, as one begins this process, there is the decision to have a sliding car registration scale. One makes these decisions; their implementation involves, at times, quite complex legislative arrangements. We have identified a number of actions.

I do not have a list of those that require legislation; Mr Traves might have a better idea of that. But yes, across administering departments we are already beginning the process of amending legislation. Differential stamp duty for cars is one of those areas, of course.

DR FOSKEY: Will the feed-in legislation be part of that?

Mr Stanhope: It is; it is part of the suite of legislation.

DR FOSKEY: So it is not going to be one of those omnibus bills that amend a whole stack of legislation?

Mr Stanhope: I would not imagine so; I would probably have to take some advice on the context of this comment. But, for instance, Mr Hargreaves has prepared legislation to allow for differential stamp duty on fuel-efficient cars.

DR FOSKEY: Okay, so that is coming along. Good.

Mr Stanhope: He is introducing that. Mr Gentleman, on behalf of the government, has sponsored the feed-in tariff et cetera.

DR FOSKEY: I want to ask you about the water task force. Now that the government has made some major decisions around water—probably not all the major decisions that it will need to make—is that task force going to continue?

Mr Stanhope: I might ask Mr Zissler. I think the nature of the arrangements which we have in place is that they are headed by a chief executive water group. Perhaps Mr Zissler could go through the administrative arrangements that we have in place.

Mr Zissler: The task force has completed its work; that report has been handed to government. The key components of that have now transferred under the ownership of the chief executive water group; that is where key chief executives from Territory and Municipal Services, Chief Minister's, Treasury and ActewAGL meet on a regular basis. They have ownership of the delivery of those outcomes on behalf of the government. Then each department may have a relevant component. Most of that fits within Territory and Municipal Services, either in the water and energy group or elsewhere.

DR FOSKEY: Does that mean that the expert panel on health has finished its work?

Mr Zissler: That is my understanding. Clearly that panel is in place. If we wished to go back to it at some point in the future, we certainly could, but there is no current work before them.

DR FOSKEY: Right. Sorry if you have said this, but who will head up the group that you are talking about? Will someone have ownership?

Mr Zissler: The ownership? Yes, the chief executive water group is chaired by the chief executive of—

Mr Stanhope: That is an oversighting role; in the context of administrative responsibility, it is Mr Barr.

Mr Zissler: Yes, inside Territory and Municipal Services.

Mr Stanhope: In relation to water policy.

Mr Zissler: Indeed.

Mr Stanhope: Within Territory and Municipal Services. Mr Barr has responsibility for water and energy policy.

DR FOSKEY: I want to turn to Actew bills. Our electricity bills are quite sophisticated now. I was wondering if water bills could be presented in such a way that households, for instance, can look at the average and see if they are using more than the average. As a renter, I do not get the bills, but do they show what you used last month over what you used this time, et cetera?

Mr Stanhope: Mr Butt might be able to respond to that.

Mr Butt: The issue that you are describing is quite a serious one. At the moment, with the way bills are structured in water, there is quite a time gap between when you use water and when you get charged for it. There are no real messages coming through about what is happening. That is one of the reasons why we have to move down the track of water restrictions—so that you get more immediate demand control according to what you have got in terms of supply.

ActewAGL and Actew are working to address that issue by working on what are called smart meters, which they are planning to use in electricity, water and gas. The objective is to be able to give the consumer an immediate readout of what is happening and the cost of what they are doing for those three utility services. That work will or may also link in with work in the energy field, where there is a national drive to look at the same sort of smart meter for electricity to address the same sort of issue.

DR FOSKEY: Would this meter put everything on the same bill? Is that what you are indicating?

Mr Butt: No. Instead of having to wait to get your bill to understand what you are doing, you will be able to see what you are doing in real time. Associated with that, I imagine, would be some revamping of how they present bills to the consumer, for when they arrive.

Mr Zissler: Actew already provides information brochures on how to read your current meter, because it is a bit hard to interpret. Of course, most people's meters are underground; some are outside the building. Already I know people who run around and check their meters on a weekly basis—because you can interpret it, actually measure it. Sadly, my wife does that already.

Mr Stanhope: Mine was specially designed to breed red-back spiders.

Mr Zissler: That is why I send my children.

MR STEFANIAK: Some of them are like that, yes.

Mr Stanhope: I would not touch it with a barge pole.

MR STEFANIAK: Chief Minister, you mentioned that the dams are 42 per cent full. Were you expecting a bit of a top up in the recent rain?

Mr Stanhope: I discussed that with Mr Costello this morning. The rain for November has been extremely good, in excess of 90 millimetres, but because of a couple of very dry months, with 16 to 17 millimetres, the ground was unfortunately drier than it might normally have been for such good spring rain. There has been some inflow, and I think dams have lifted by half a percent in the last five days. Having regard to the amount of November rain, one would normally expect a greater inflow than we have actually achieved. But now that the ground is wet again as the result of last week, I think that if it did rain now—cross your fingers that it rains in the next three days—we would probably get quite good inflows. The inflows of the last week have added about half a per cent. We have gone from 41½ to 42.

MR STEFANIAK: Are you pumping from the Murrumbidgee at present?

Mr Stanhope: Not for the last two weeks.

MR STEFANIAK: Why is that?

Mr Stanhope: The UV plant that has been installed at Mount Stromlo is being trialled. Water from the Murrumbidgee is not currently being introduced into Canberra's water whilst the UV treatment facility that has just been constructed is tested and worked up. Subject to a satisfactory outcome from those tests, we expect to be again taking water from the Murrumbidgee within the next couple of weeks. It is worth a visit. It is the most significant UV treatment facility in Australia. It is worth having a look at.

DR FOSKEY: Even though lately it has rained what most gardeners would consider to be an adequate amount of rain to water their gardens, I observed that the water usage still went up and remained at a high level. That is quite concerning; it indicates that either people have got fixed water systems that go on regardless or they just do not understand that rain actually waters gardens.

Mr Stanhope: Undoubtedly as a result of the very hot and humid temperatures over the last few weeks, water usage has been unacceptably high. Except for the last few days, we have been well above our targets over most of the last two to three weeks—and significantly over: some days, 30 megalitres over our November target.

In response to that, in discussion with Actew, I have agreed that Actew should commence a more vigorous summer program and a more direct education program. Through Actew, we are trialling on-street mobile electronic boards giving a daily readout of water consumption against the target. We propose to chip away at the collective conscience and continue to educate about our behaviours and our water

usage on every one of the major ingress or egress roads around the city. Commencing next week, I think, there will be an electronic billboard displaying our daily water target and the extent to which we have met or exceeded our daily water target.

It is a matter of concern. We are seeking to respond through some more vigorous advertising and an additional arrow—essentially an information campaign around what we are doing on a daily basis that will greet people every morning and every evening as they drive into and out of the city. We should not be complacent. We are continuing to develop the arrangements that will apply in the event that it is felt necessary to enter level 4 restrictions. At this stage, subject to summer rain, there is still a real possibility that level 4 restrictions will become a reality. We as an administration are continuing to finalise the arrangements that will apply in the event that we need to go to the next level of restrictions. We are hoping to avoid it.

DR FOSKEY: If we do go to stage 4 water restrictions, is there going to be any room for people to seek exemptions because, for instance, they set up a fruit and vegetable garden?

MR STEFANIAK: The car washes especially.

DR FOSKEY: I am thinking of fruit and vegetables.

Mr Stanhope: Yes, and the construction industry. That is work that is currently being continued and will be finalised in the next few weeks in order that the entire community will have some certainty around the arrangements that will apply for people that rely on water for their livelihood—car washes, construction workers and those involved with the construction industry. There are some very significant employers. Of course, a range of people—each of us; every household—would be affected by a ban on outdoor watering. There would be a horrendous economic impact on some businesses and some individuals. We are seeking to put in place concrete arrangements that will cover off the arrangements in as equitable and as fair a way as we can imagine or manage—in other words, the exemptions regime that would apply to level 4 restrictions.

DR FOSKEY: In that response, you mentioned people who make their living out of using water. I am talking about backyard growers. They are not earning an income, though they might be saving themselves a bit of expenditure. But also there is an understanding that the existence of trees and bushes and so on play a role in carbon dioxide sequestration, reducing heat and all those things that scientists show us that vegetation does. There is vegetation and vegetation—I realise that I am talking about something fairly tricky here—but amongst some groups in Canberra it is almost cultural to have backyard gardens, grow fruit and vegetables, keep chooks and all that.

Mr Stanhope: It is tricky, Dr Foskey. This is when being in government, being a decision maker, gets really tough. Under level 4 water restrictions, the implications are certainly extreme. If level 4 restrictions continue for any length of time, there will be very significant implications for individual households in relation to their private gardens. But one must weigh it up. I understand and take the point you make—issues around culture and the way in which we value different pursuits or activities—but I think it is appropriate that in the first instance we look to seek and protect those

people whose very livelihood, wage or capacity to live will be severely affected: those who will potentially be thrown out of work.

We have consulted across the board. We have consulted very specifically with car washes and the Motor Trades Association. We have consulted directly and specifically with childcare centres, the cleaning industry, the construction industry, the irrigation industry, the landscape industry, the nursery industry, the swimming pool industry and the turf industry. We have sought to engage the entire community, but we have pursued specific meetings, discussions and consultations with each of those industries and industry groups.

I should hasten to add that the final arrangements and decisions in relation to how level 4 restrictions will be managed have not been finalised—or provided to me or concluded. That will happen in the next few weeks. Our intention is that it is finalised before Christmas so that, over the next six weeks at least, there can be an opportunity to communicate those decisions and those implications to the entire community and to everybody who would be very particularly personally affected.

I am a very keen gardener, Dr Foskey. I know the pain that I would suffer—my garden. Under level 4 restrictions, I can keep my trees and stuff alive, because I am happy to use grey water. I use grey water now, every day of the week. I am a keen gardener, so it is no effort for me and has no implication for me. But there is for others—the elderly, the frail, those who are not robust enough to carry buckets of water around, those who just have a garden with an expanse and extent. I would have to let most of my garden die, as an awful lot of people would. It is wrenching, but at the end of the day, I—and I am sure other people of my ilk: keen and very active home gardeners—accept implicitly that my desire or need to keep my garden alive, including my vegetable garden, cannot be compared to the situation of a person facing the loss of their job and their wage. That will be our priority.

DR FOSKEY: What if the people actually grow their vegetables because that is the only way they are going to get to eat them?

Mr Stanhope: Those are the sorts of issues that sometimes make being in government, being a decision maker, a horror job. At the end of the day, these are value judgements. There are priorities—there are scores of priorities—but I think you would accept that situation about the person who will not have a single cent in salary or wage to purchase food, let alone supplement that capacity through a home garden.

There is an endless range of possibilities that could be pursued at the end of the day. One might argue that something is unfair or unreasonable or that something is an unnecessary price to ask a particular individual to pay, but when one is seeking to establish an across-the-board regime that will apply equally or fairly to 340,000 people—indeed, to the extent that Queanbeyan is included, 380,000 people—then those exceptions of that personal order would be simply impossible to manage, to police or to enforce. We would risk not being able to meet our level 4 targets.

MR STEFANIAK: You mentioned publicising on billboards—and I think that is a good idea—daily usage. I still get people saying we are letting too much water out. I note that over the 2000-06 period, and 2004-05 particularly, about 107 gigalitres

over and above what was legally meant to be let out was let out. I understand it has improved since. What current level of environmental flows is there? Are you taking any steps to publish—and might I suggest you could do it on a weekly basis in something like the *Chronicle* like you publish rainfall figures daily in the *Canberra Times*—the environmental flows? That might be a good vehicle too for daily consumptions as well.

Mr Stanhope: I will ask Mr Neil to respond more fully, but let me say that if there is one particular issue that has created more community confusion and in relation to which there has been more misinformation than any other in relation to water in its entirety it is environmental flows. The extent to which an ill-informed debate or discussion on environment flows has infected the debate on water purification has at times stunned me. I am convinced that we definitely need more education on—

MR STEFANIAK: We certainly do.

Mr Stanhope: The point is well made, and I am not being facetious. It is probably a point well made. This is an area, I must say, of government where I, for my sins, rely entirely on scientific advice. I am not a scientist. I take advice on these issues, as I am sure you would in government too. I take advice on what an appropriate environmental flow is and, at the end of the day, the environmental flow is nothing more than the amount of water that our experts believe we need to keep the river alive.

The implications of letting a river die are too horrendous to contemplate and it is a balancing act between our needs, as consumers—we human beings—and the needs of every other consumer of water. I believe that any thinking Canberran would not want a circumstance in which we put our need for water above the very existence of an entire system. That is the equation.

I have no reason not to believe our officials and those on whom they rely for guidance in relation to environmental flows. I do fear, in regard to the severity of the situation we human beings face, that we potentially will overreact and reduce the environmental flows too much. I hope that we maintain our strength and our courage and continue to ensure that the environment receives the flows it needs. Mr Neil is the person I rely on, as the last stop with whom the buck stops in relation to this, but he gathers information from a range of other sources.

Mr Neil: I think the Chief Minister has fairly much summarised the need for maintaining a riverine environment. To answer your question specifically, Mr Stefaniak: the current environmental flows are 20 megalitres a day or the inflow, whichever is the less. When we talk about environmental flows we talk about 20 megalitres a day from Corin to Bendora that is recaptured for urban water supply uses. Similar flow is required between Bendora and Cotter. Again, that release is captured and diverted to urban water supply usage. The average flow out of the Cotter is 4 megalitres a day, and that is run on 2 megalitres a day for 14 days and then upped 20-odd megalitres a day for about three days. That is to prevent silting.

I am advised by an environment technical advisory group who has Actew, University of Canberra, eWater CRC and my own staff on it. They monitor the river quality on a constant basis. These flows are reviewed almost every two months to see whether

we can reduce it further without detracting from the riverine environment.

MR STEFANIAK: Can I ask why it is not published. There is a lot of misinformation about this. It strikes me that, if you published it on a weekly basis in, say, something like the *Chronicle*, which everyone at least gets, or by some other way of publicising it, a lot of community angst would probably be allayed because you are not talking big flows with that, especially if you are actually managing the pump from the Murrumbidgee, if we are not having rain, of a minimum of about 50 megs a day.

Mr Neil: Yes, the Murrumbidgee has a 20-megalitre a day environmental flow. I see no reason why we cannot. It is just a matter of putting it in the right context, because these flows do not change. Normally it is calculated on the 80th percentile but, in a drought, that is ignored and we keep reducing until we get to a point where the riverine environment is actually starting to be impacted on. At that point, that would be the lowest.

MR STEFANIAK: I think it would help immensely, even if you are repeating yourself, because the situation is not changing, to have that there so that the level of misinformation and community angst would at least be reduced and people would understand what exactly is occurring.

Mr Neil: It is certainly not something we would be uncomfortable with.

MR STEFANIAK: Going back to the report, page 32, you were talking about the main outcomes during 2006-07 for our involvement in the national water initiative, the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, which, of course, we have now formally joined, and the lower Cotter catchment working group. What major outcomes were there, if any, for the ACT during the reporting period?

Mr Stanhope: Mr Butt could respond to the progress of negotiations, particularly with the Murray-Darling Basin. It has been a very significant year for the ACT. Just last week we debated the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement Bill which allowed for the entry of the ACT as a full member. But some of the more important issues over and above that were issues in relation to the cap and the new arrangements. Mr Butt can go to where we are up to with issues around the cap and the new Murray-Darling Basin arrangements.

Mr Butt: In relation to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission, the legislation for membership, as you know, was passed last week. That brought to fruition some 4½ or five years of work to get that through with all of the other participating states in the basin. Part of the conditions of being a full member—and, indeed, a condition that the ACT and the Chief Minister accepted from the outset—is that it would have a cap on our water use. We have met with the independent audit group who annually report on water extractions from the basin and we have informed the IAG of the ACT proposal for a water cap. We have discussed that proposal with the commonwealth and with the other jurisdictions that are members of the basin.

The cap is a proposal that we have had indications of support for from all of the other jurisdictions. However, the IAG has pointed out that it does not strictly meet all of the conditions. It individually advises the council on the issue to be worked through the

normal commission process and council process, and I believe it goes to the council in April of next year for final decision. The ACT objective on the cap is one that is consistent with two things. One is the continued responsible use of water and ACT extractions from the system here, particularly where the ACT is somewhat unique and is returning, in round figures, some 50 per cent of the water that we normally extract, and that has been taken account of.

MR STEFANIAK: That is being taken account of?

Mr Butt: Yes, it is. And we need to ensure the potential for the growth of Canberra, as a significant regional centre but also as the national capital, in a way that we can draw upon the resources which we are using in a far more well-managed position than some of the other jurisdictions who found themselves, through historical decisions, in a situation where effectively they could have the excess extractions over what is available.

MR STEFANIAK: In terms of water rights, one of the options governments are obviously looking at pursuing, I understand, is purchasing water rights. How is that going? It would pretty well secure our water supply if that comes to fruition, for a while.

Mr Butt: The issue you have raised there is one that really goes to a central core of the former federal government's water plan. I think I am right in saying that the new government also shares that view.

MR STEFANIAK: I thought it was a "me too" on that.

Mr Butt: They will facilitate the establishment, tracking and ability to account for water rights so that they effectively will create a system by which the purchase of water in the basin and movement around the basin will be possible. That will see water moved to higher value uses. Governments will also be involved in that in acquiring water for environmental flows to ensure the environmental health of the system. Logically the ACT, if we go down that route, would see the purchase of water rights probably in the southern part of the basin—probably out of the Murrumbidgee but it could be the Murray or other fills from there—and would see that water effectively transferred to Tantangara Dam and released to come down the Murrumbidgee or, should it occur, be perhaps piped directly into the headwaters of the Cotter system to pick up the existing infrastructure.

MR STEFANIAK: And that costs \$30 million or so?

Mr Butt: I cannot answer that, I am sorry. I do not have that piece of information to hand and I do not think the studies have been fully done on that.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Costello has quoted that figure, but it was a back-of-the-envelope, out-of-the-air extrapolation of one gegalitre of water perhaps costing \$3 million.

MR STEFANIAK: And it was a while back too.

Mr Stanhope: I think what he said in response to a question was that the value of

water—

MR STEFANIAK: I think that was a pipeline.

Mr Stanhope: No, I think it was the price of 10 gigalitres of water.

MR STEFANIAK: About \$1 million per gigalitre or something if you bought water. It was about that.

Mr Stanhope: I have some memory of the \$30 million figure.

MR STEFANIAK: That was a pipeline from Tantangara to—

Mr Stanhope: No, I do not think so. I think it was the price of 10 gigalitres of water, but anyway.

MR STEFANIAK: It does not matter.

Mr Stanhope: I will have to take advice.

Mr Butt: I have heard figures along that, and I apologise there. When I said that I could not answer on the figure, I do not think the studies have been done in sufficient detail to allow an estimate of any piping or tunnelling or whatever from the headwaters of the Murrumbidgee across to the Cotter. In terms of the cost of the water itself, it will depend on the market value of the water at the time, and that fluctuates quite wildly.

MR STEFANIAK: One question on this: it has been put to me—I think it was by Reg Goldfinch, who was actively involved in the Googong Dam and who worked in various aqueducts for some suppliers in Victoria—that, from World War II onwards, we could have utilised Naas and Gudgenby, not necessarily with the Tennant Dam but just by some aqueducts and some dams about three metres high, which would release water probably at about Angle Crossing. That would be a cheap option, but it would utilise flows from those rivers which we do not utilise at present. Has any work been done in relation to that, which would seem to be an additional resource for the ACT?

Mr Stanhope: I will defer to Mr Butt. But certainly, from what you say, it is a virtual dam.

MR STEFANIAK: But much cheaper.

Mr Stanhope: Absolutely, but it goes to the heart of the rationale for a separate pumping station and a pipeline too. You are quite right; you have aptly described it almost as a virtual dam where the waters from Gudgenby/Naas are stored in Googong through a pipeline and a pumping station. In fact, in relation to the Tantangara option, as it is called, and Angle Crossing or Point Hut Crossing, it has now been suggested that Angle Crossing was chosen initially as the site of perhaps a weir and a pumping station because it did have that double capacity of taking water from the Murrumbidgee as well as capturing water from Gudgenby/Naas. But the same can be achieved at any place downriver, or downstream, from the intersection.

It is part of the thinking in relation to the Murrumbidgee/Googong pipeline that submersible pumps at any section of the river downstream from the Gudgenby confluence with the Murrumbidgee allow the Gudgenby waters to be transferred to Googong and stored at Googong. So it is consistent with the scenario you paint. I discussed this morning with Mr Service and Mr Costello what is currently being investigated. I have got an update on a number of projects. Actew is still giving consideration to where a pipeline would run, and the decision on that of course affects some of the environmental issues that would have to be dealt with prior to a final recommendation coming to government about an approval for a public station pipeline.

The preferred position at this stage, subject to some environmental assessments, is that, rather than perhaps a weir pump and pipeline from Angle Crossing, the pumping station would be better located at Point Hut or adjacent to Point Hut because of existing easements that allow construction of that. Easements currently exist almost all the way from Point Hut to Googong, and very, very little additional work would need to be done in establishing or acquiring easements for a pipeline that would run from Point Hut to Googong, whereas Angle Crossing would require the development of a new route and additional easements.

MR STEFANIAK: And the Gudgenby/Naas virtual dam concept of weirs and storage water—

Mr Stanhope: It would not be necessary. I do not know whether perhaps a small weir would need to be constructed in order to allow the submersible pumps to operate. This is the situation we have at the Cotter: gigantic submersible pumps in the bed of the Murrumbidgee River at the Cotter pumping station achieve that same purpose but there is a small weir there to ensure that there is always a sufficient sump or well from which to take waters of a sufficient depth to allow the pumps to continue to operate whilst ever there is an appropriate flow. So it is consistent with the position you put. The thinking is consistent.

THE CHAIR: I move on to another part of our environment. I understand that the Commissioner for the Environment is investigating lowland native grasslands management in the ACT. Due to the critical position of these areas, what measures will the government be using prior to any outcome from the commissioner's report that will ensure minimal damage in those areas?

Mr Stanhope: It is a very broad area. We have lowland woodland, nature reserves or even grasslands. The commissioner's inquiry will certainly expand into, I am sure, all of those areas around the ACT of high ecological value. It might be better if I deferred to Mr Watkinson who is responsible, in terms of the terms of reference, for the anticipated scope of work that the commissioner will do but, perhaps more broadly, for the measures that are in place and the suite of arrangements that are in place in relation to our commitment to all the ecological communities within the ACT.

Mr Watkinson: As the Chief Minister has noted, the commissioner has got quite comprehensive terms of reference to look at the issue of management of grasslands and the pressures upon them at this current time. Concurrently with that exercise, we

are undertaking an assessment of the kangaroo numbers within the lowland grassland areas of the ACT, because we have some concerns about the population pressures on some areas like Goorooyaroo and Mulligans Flat. We are expecting to have that information by the end of this financial year, or before then. That will also be fed into the commissioner's report. But, otherwise, it is really just an exercise in monitoring the numbers of kangaroos and their potential impact on our reserve system.

The other point to make, as people will be aware, is that there are ongoing discussions with the Department of Defence about their management of two sites where we have identified a particular problem of high density of kangaroos impacting on these endangered grasslands.

DR FOSKEY: Can I just follow that up? I also asked the commissioner to conduct an inquiry into the grasslands, and she is still, I believe, finalising the terms of reference after a round table discussion a few days ago. It did strike me—I guess this is a question for Mr Stanhope—that Mr Stanhope's terms of reference were an immediate response to this kangaroo issue, which has obviously has been dealt with too tardily federally—probably for political reasons. So there is this immediate problem of the kangaroos and the sustainability and the survival of the grasslands and the species that depend on it, and then there is the longer term issue of management of them over time to ensure that we still have grasslands while we have development, which is planned at least near some of these areas. What is the sort of potential for a two-pronged inquiry here? I know the commissioner is an independent person, but there will be a lot of demands upon her time. I would be quite concerned that this inquiry will focus on the immediate recommendations but also that longer term view as well.

Mr Stanhope: I will actually ask Mr Watkinson to give some of the detail to the issues you raise Dr Foskey, but my view is that the terms of reference do not inhibit the capacity of the commissioner to undertake a broad investigation into issues potentially affecting grassland as it exists in a range of ecosystems. I do not imagine that she will feel constrained. I have yet, in fact, to ever see a statutory officer that ever felt constrained by terms of reference of what they did or did not say; with great respect to all statutory officials.

As Mr Watkinson said, the immediate spark for the reference suggested by both you and by others was, of course, a growing concern at issues that we face most particularly at Lawson and in the Majura Valley. But, as Mr Watkinson has just said, in its response to the investigation or the inquiries undertaking initial research into issues around kangaroo numbers in Goorooyaroo and Mulligans Flat—in relation to which there is no defence presence—the department has said that, until now, there has not been a concern that kangaroo numbers were impacting at least anywhere near the level that they have impacted in Majura and Lawson. We did have a growing concern, however, that perhaps there was the potential, with the continuation of the drought, for kangaroo numbers to increase at Goorooyaroo. These are enormous areas of nature—there are a couple thousand hectares there. I think the response that Mr Watkinson gave is an illustration of the government's preparedness to see this inquiry or investigation by the commissioner as essentially unconstrained.

The terms of reference go to issues around management planning. I am not particularly keen or fond of overly prescriptive terms of reference—consider this and

consider that. You end up with an investigation that essentially loses its way as it focuses on specificities. I am quite comfortable with the terms of reference, and I say here and now that I do not imagine that the commissioner is going to feel constrained in her remit. But I am not dealing with it on a daily basis, and Mr Watkinson may have something to add to that.

DR FOSKEY: Has there been any action on the kangaroos on the Defence Force land? We have stopped hearing about that.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Watkinson is across the latest on that as well.

Mr Watkinson: Just to finish off the first question, my recollection is that the commissioner's terms of reference do specifically ask her to address short and long-term issues associated with the grasslands. So that is quite implicit, I believe. I should have mentioned that the survey work that we are doing on the grasslands is intended to lead to a kangaroo management plan for the ACT. That will give us a long-term strategy, which will, hopefully, ultimately depend on fertility control as the proper means of managing the population.

In terms of what is currently happening on defence land, the latest advice I have is that defence are about to commence, if they have not already done so, fencing of some of the most important grassland areas at the defence training site. We are expecting to receive an application shortly for the Belconnen site for darting of kangaroos.

DR FOSKEY: Darting?

Mr Watkinson: Darting. There is still a debate about whether that then leads to killing the kangaroos or transportation.

DR FOSKEY: It is to knock them out?

Mr Watkinson: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: In relation to the environmental protection unit, you are responsible for that, Mr Neil?

Mr Neil: Yes.

MR STEFANIAK: How many complaints did you take during the reporting period and what was the nature of those complaints? Do you have a basic percentage break-up of the major areas? I also have a question just in relation to a specific noise matter.

Mr Neil: If you go to page 196, it sets out the complaints—air, noise, water, pesticides, solid fuel heaters—for the 2006-07 period. You will see there are 1350 complaints, and the majority of those are noise.

MR STEFANIAK: I have had some representations from people in the Tuggeranong Valley and Lanyon Valley, especially in Gordon, in relation to this. They say there is a lot of noise emanating from the youth centre there fairly late at night. Are you

investigating that at present? I was advised that complaints were made and that the EPA did not actually do anything about them and did not investigate the matter, which I found a bit surprising given that I have found your agency to be fairly responsive to actually going out and measuring noise.

Mr Neil: I am happy to check, but just to give you the framework in which the officers work, if we get a complaint, we will send a letter to the person allegedly making the noise seeking their view as to whether they thought it was too loud or not and pointing out what the law actually does or does not allow. If there is no response or no further action and if we get continued complaints, we will measure the noise. If it is excessive, depending on the circumstances, we will issue a warning letter that says it has been measured. If we measure it the second time, then we will issue a fine. I am not familiar with that one, but I would be very surprised if someone did not attend or at least follow that process. I would be happy, Mr Stefaniak, if you pass the details on to me later.

MR STEFANIAK: I will.

THE CHAIR: We have got a few minutes left. Are there any further questions for the officials?

DR FOSKEY: Page 37 mentions some community training. What outcomes were achieved from the environment protection and heritage community training sessions on water quality and ecology identification, what was the idea that people would get from that and go out and do, and will there be any further training taking place?

Mr Neil: I am quite happy to discuss that Dr Foskey. The training sessions were related to community groups doing river assessment. The camp fire program, which was post the bushfire, was about measuring water quality. It has provided a fairly comprehensive network of competent people who can now feed into the water quality reports that we then utilise as part of the ACT water quality report. They are substantially through Waterwatch.

DR FOSKEY: What sort of support is given to the Waterwatch group? A couple of weeks ago I spent some time with the Ginninderra catchment group and saw some of the work that they are doing. How does the department support groups like that?

Mr Neil: We have a full-time Waterwatch coordinator who facilitates a lot of the inspection of quality check programs and who deals individually with the area coordinators. There is also the Upper Murrumbidgee Catchment Coordinating Committee. They are a focus for the community groups that provide technical support. I think they will often go to members of the water unit who have expertise in a lot of different facets of water management and water quality management. As a whole package, the sort of support they get is in those terms.

MR STEFANIAK: Just one final one from me, as I note the time. Chief Minister, some months ago I asked that you and the department do an audit of at least government buildings just to find out what wastage there was of water. There are complaints about flushing toilets at night in schools, and many government buildings still having the old-style toilets. Have you actually done an audit?

Mr Stanhope: I think I will have to take advice.

MR STEFANIAK: I note you are doing something in terms of government buildings, but have you done an audit and, also, are you ensuring that all your old-style toilets are replaced with dual flush and that other measures are being taken?

Mr Stanhope: I have been assured—people have been prepared to put their jobs on it, Mr Stefaniak—that we have lifted our game.

MR STEFANIAK: Glad to hear it.

Mr Stanhope: Mr Traves will confirm or otherwise.

Mr Traves: I can confirm this. Certainly 75 water audits have been conducted of government leased and owned buildings. The two most notable ones that you would be familiar with would be Eclipse House and the Nara Centre itself. The outcomes of those were advised to the property branch—another part of the department—and to the relative landlords who were involved, and some refurbishment work has commenced in those buildings. I do not have the details of the timeframes for each of the works that are currently being undertaken, but these could be obtained.

MR STEFANIAK: Have you audited all government buildings in the ACT yet?

Mr Traves: Not all yet, 75 so far.

MR STEFANIAK: How many more have you got to do?

Mr Traves: I would consider there would probably be about another 100. We have taken buildings in a very broad sense, so depots are also considered to be buildings, even though they are mostly functional storage.

MR STEFANIAK: What timeframe are you looking at before it is complete?

Mr Traves: I do not have that detail here, but I can get that for you.

MR STEFANIAK: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: With that, I thank the minister and officials for their time this afternoon. The committee will meet next on 11 December at a public hearing for the water inquiry.

Mr Stanhope: I will just add to a question, if I may, Mr Chairman. Just to complete a question that Dr Foskey asked in relation to any consideration that is given to the elderly or those that depend on vegetables in a significant way, I have been advised, Dr Foskey, that these issues are under consideration and that consideration is actually being given to whether or not it is possible to incorporate exemptions for that class of people. It would be difficult, but it has not been ruled out and, indeed, is receiving active consideration.

DR FOSKEY: Good, because I do get a lot of constituent concerns about that.

Mr Stanhope: It is being taken seriously that there may be classes of elderly or less mobile people and those that do depend on vegetables to an extreme degree, particularly people, for instance, with specific medical needs in relation to chemical-free vegetables, et cetera, and there is an attempt at creating an exemptions regime that would assist them.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. We will get any questions on notice to your department as soon as we can. Thank you.

The committee adjourned at 5.01 pm.