



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**SELECT COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES 2013-2014**

(Reference: [Appropriation Bill 2013-2014 and Appropriation \(Office of the Legislative Assembly\) Bill 2013-2014](#))

**Members:**

**MR J HANSON (Chair)**  
**DR C BOURKE (Deputy Chair)**  
**MR M GENTLEMAN**  
**MR B SMYTH**

**TRANSCRIPT OF EVIDENCE**

**CANBERRA**

**TUESDAY, 25 JUNE 2013**

**Secretary to the committee:**  
**Ms N Kosseck (Ph 620 50129)**

**By authority of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory**

Submissions, answers to questions on notice and other documents, including requests for clarification of the transcript of evidence, relevant to this inquiry that have been authorised for publication by the committee may be obtained from the Legislative Assembly website.

## APPEARANCES

<b>Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate.....</b>	<b>878</b>
<b>Community Services Directorate.....</b>	<b>825</b>
<b>Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment.....</b>	<b>865</b>
<b>Territory and Municipal Services Directorate.....</b>	<b>878</b>

## **Privilege statement**

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*Amended 20 May 2013*

## **The committee met at 9.02 am.**

Appearances:

Burch, Ms Joy, Minister for Education and Training, Minister for Disability, Children and Young People, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Women, Minister for Multicultural Affairs and Minister for Racing and Gaming

Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director-General

Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Deputy Director-General

Sullivan, Ms Lorna, Executive Director, Disability ACT

Hambleton Mr Graham, Director, Disability ACT

Starick, Ms Kate, Director, ACT NDIS Taskforce, Disability ACT

Evans, Ms Jacinta, Senior Manager, Therapy ACT

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Senior Director, Finance and Budget,

Collett, Mr David, Senior Director, Asset Management Branch, Housing and Community Services ACT

**THE CHAIR:** Good morning, minister and officials. Welcome to day 8. This morning we are hearing from the Minister for Disability, Children and Young People on output class 1, disability therapy services, and then 1.2, therapy services.

These proceedings are being webcast live. Can I confirm that you have all seen the privilege statement? Do you all understand it? That goes for everybody in the gallery as well who is perhaps going to be appearing, if you get called up. That is great. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Ms Burch:** Yes. I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss the services for people with a disability in the 2013-14 budget. The provision of services for people with a disability, their families and carers, is at the forefront of thinking for governments across Australia. For the ACT, this budget builds on the work of the past 12 months in supporting people with a disability to connect to their community and become aware of the reforms that are coming through DisabilityCare Australia.

The ACT government is making the necessary investment to ensure the objectives of DisabilityCare are realised, and the views of people with a disability and their families are heard, and all people have the support and information they require. The government is committing \$5.5 million to prepare eligible Canberrans for choice and control under DisabilityCare. This funding will be combined with \$10.6 million of commonwealth funding for a total investment of \$16.1 million.

This year, we continued our commitment to support young people to be involved in meaningful work and community engagement as they leave school. The election commitment of a \$5,000 grant for each school leaver with high support needs graduating over the last couple of years has increased choice and control over their futures. We provide opportunities for working families to remain at work by funding after-school programs for young people with a disability and high school and holiday care programs.

In the past year, Disability ACT has committed over \$300,000 to social enterprises to broaden the range of options, to enable people to make meaningful contributions. This includes micro enterprises employing individuals in pursuit of their own unique businesses.

Disability ACT is working with people with a disability, their families and service providers to develop new housing and supported accommodation options in the lead-up to DisabilityCare. The Getting A Life intentional community was opened in May this year, and will initially support three young men to live independently in an intentional and inclusive community. Project Independence is an innovative new social housing model which will assist people with a disability to take the steps to home ownership, and will support up to 10 owners living in three separate houses.

Disability ACT is also working with people with disabilities and their families and carers to plan for future accommodation. The first accommodation futures planning session was held in February this year, and a second in May.

Therapy ACT continues to provide highly valued services to the community, with high levels of referrals for professional services. In response to this demand, Therapy ACT continues to develop new programs that give early access to as many families as possible. With the establishment of the therapy assistants in school program, we have increased the number of children accessing services and improved outcomes for these young kids.

I also take the opportunity to thank the staff of Disability ACT and Therapy ACT for the work that they do and, in relation to DisabilityCare, the advisory group and our community partners that are on the journey with us for this significant reform.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you, minister. In terms of the journey, it seems that the first step is on 1 July, as I understand it, and that is the enhanced service offers. That is \$7.7 million in one-off grants; is that correct?

**Ms Howson:** Yes, Mr Hanson, that is correct.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you update the committee or provide information on who qualifies, what the criteria are? Who is going to get this money? How are people eligible for it?

**Ms Howson:** In a moment I will pass to one of my colleagues who can go into the detail of that program, but I say at the outset that the enhanced service offer is a very exciting beginning for people with a disability in the ACT. It has been designed around the principles of the national disability insurance scheme, with the premise of people having the opportunity to apply for grants that will help them meet their reasonable needs for daily living, care and support.

The thing that really excites us about this is that we are working with the individuals concerned to design their services through the way in which they can access these grants. It is really about readiness for DisabilityCare and assisting families to start to think about the way they want to live their lives and individuals to live their lives in the future, and how they can engage with the DisabilityCare program. I will pass over

to Maureen Sheehan and Kate Starick.

**Ms Sheehan:** Thank you, Mr Hanson, for the question, because we are very excited to tell the committee about the nature of the grants.

**THE CHAIR:** There is a lot of excitement here this morning. Everyone is very excited. That is good.

**Ms Sheehan:** Certainly with the way DisabilityCare is being described, it is the biggest change in the provision of services to people in the community since Medibank, back in the 70s. Having regard to the way in which the whole approach to providing services will move from governments block funding organisations across to control and choice in the hands of people with a disability, it is a complete shift in approach. It means that people with a disability can see different lives for themselves, and now will actually have access to resources to enable them to achieve a different life for themselves.

The first step in the ACT is the grants program. There will be two rounds of grants, the first round on 1 July and the second round in September. The idea of the grants—

**THE CHAIR:** Can I confirm that the 1 July grant amount is \$7.7 million, or is that for the two grants combined?

**Ms Sheehan:** Across the two, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the value of the 1 July grants?

**Ms Burch:** The total value?

**THE CHAIR:** The total value is \$7.7 million between the two, so what is the split? Is it fifty-fifty or—

**Ms Howson:** Kate can answer that question.

**Ms Starick:** \$7.7 million has been split over the two grant rounds. These are nominal figures that have been allocated for each grant round. The first grant round is approximately \$5,800,000. The second grant round is approximately \$1,800,000.

**Ms Burch:** They are nominal. It depends on what comes through and how we support those.

**Ms Sheehan:** That is right. What is important for us in having two grant rounds is that the grants will need to be assessed, because there is a combination of equipment that people can nominate that will improve their lives and give them better access to activities in the community. Some of that equipment would actually reduce their need for additional types of care. An obvious one, I suppose, is that if you had picked a piece of equipment that would assist with your mobility, that piece of equipment reduces the need, perhaps, for your family members to assist with mobility in the same way.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it equipment only, or is it for service as well?

**Ms Sheehan:** No, it is both, Mr Hanson. Again, this comes back to the idea of the control in the hands of the person with a disability. They will be able to choose what it is that they want. I suppose you would say in the good old days—

**Ms Burch:** I was going to suggest that there are grants of up to \$12,000 for services, and then equipment grants of around \$5,000. You might want to go to that detail.

**THE CHAIR:** The maximum amount is \$12,000 for equipment and \$5,000 for services, was it?

**Ms Burch:** No, the other way around. For aids and equipment and minor modifications to home and cars, there are grants of up to \$10,000—sorry, my mistake there—and grants of up to \$12,000 for supports. That is on top of any existing service they currently have.

**THE CHAIR:** Who is eligible?

**Ms Burch:** The eligibility is ACT residents under the age of 65 that have ongoing support needs. All of this is now documented and I think it is on the Disability website as well. I am quite happy to bring, for the committee's interest, documentation that sits underneath these grants.

**THE CHAIR:** Who assesses the eligibility?

**Ms Howson:** That process will be managed within the directorate. A panel has been established for assessing eligibility, and we will be drawing on expertise across a range of fields. Kate can be a bit more specific about that.

**Ms Starick:** Certainly. There is a panel of up to 14 assessors that will each be chaired by a panel chair. The assessors consist of people across government with the suitable skills and knowledge—health professionals for equipment and prescription needs, as well as community representatives. There is a person who has a lived experience of disability from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. There are also other community reps, particularly for the quality of life grant panel. That panel will be sitting after the first round. There is a process that accounts for inter-rater and intra-rater reliability and then they make a recommendation to the delegate.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not understand what that means. Inter-rater and intra-rater, was it?

**Ms Starick:** That means a process that ensures fairness and transparency across the way that people are assessing the applications.

**Ms Howson:** It is to promote consistency—like moderation.

**THE CHAIR:** What do you expect in terms of supply and demand for this? How many people do you expect to apply, and do you expect more people to apply than there are grants available?

**Ms Howson:** We certainly expect more people to apply than are currently engaged with our service system. One of the objectives of the enhanced service offer is to encourage people to come forward that may well want to enter into the DisabilityCare program. That is also part of why we have designed two grant rounds, so that as people start to hear about what is possible through this grant round, they may make a later application to come into the program. We are expecting our client numbers to increase, and that is reflected in our accountability indicators, as a result of this program. It is certainly a significant injection of funding into the system. I am sorry, Mr Hanson; what was the second part of your question?

**THE CHAIR:** Was there a second part?

**Ms Howson:** I thought there was. If you cannot remember it either then—

**THE CHAIR:** Basically it was about supply and demand. It was about whether the grants are going to meet the need, and whether there would be a greater number of people applying.

**Ms Howson:** I think you were asking if there would be an oversubscription for the grants round.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** The answer to that is that we are not sure. This is a new bench for us. As I said, we are intending to ensure that more people than in the past see themselves as being eligible for a program like this.

**THE CHAIR:** And finally on this for me, how are you approaching people? Are you writing everybody a letter or what are you doing?

**Ms Burch:** There has been a comprehensive communique. We have had town hall meetings, promoting those in the *Canberra Times* and through other media, plus the work we are doing within Disability ACT with our own providers, our own client base, and those of our community partners. We are not just working with Disability ACT, because those folk in the community with mental health problems will be able to access this as well. So it is working across all sectors. You may want to go to that.

**THE CHAIR:** But you have written to everybody that you can track or not?

**Ms Sheehan:** We have not written to everyone in the sense that we know the people that we are giving a service to now. One of the things that we are keen to do in this round is to generally publicise it so that people who have not had the opportunity for a service in the past can actually come forward and say, “I could use the service.”

**THE CHAIR:** So there is no advantage necessarily for people that are currently receiving your service? You want to keep it as a level playing field?

**Ms Sheehan:** We would like to, that is right. We would like to increase the range of people who can access services and, as the minister was saying, particularly people with a mental illness who might not have had any type of service in the past. It is a



broad communication strategy right across the community, particularly going into other service systems where we think people with a disability or a mental illness might come but have not been able to access that specialist service that they need, for example, information in our housing and homelessness shopfront, information sitting with GPs, information right across the community so that people who do not have a service now can come forward.

**THE CHAIR:** Although I promised not to ask another one, I am going to. As to the TV advertising for DisabilityCare, I assume there are websites or there is information there. They go to that. That gives them the information that they would need to do an enhanced service offer, or is this just a sort of puff piece by the federal government?

**Ms Sheehan:** The DisabilityCare Australia TV information is to raise awareness about the scheme nationally. Because in the ACT the full scheme does not start until July 2014, what is available now is the enhanced service offer. Certainly if you go to the national website there is a link for the ACT. That will bring people across to our website and then that gives information about how to access the grant round.

**THE CHAIR:** It strikes me that you are trying to promote something specific. While we have got these lovely, fuzzy ads that are just an election grab, I assume they are not really providing—

**Ms Burch:** DisabilityCare has been laterally supported by every jurisdiction, because we understand and know that this will change and improve the lives of people with a disability. And for you to sit here and say it is a puff piece is an insult to every person with a disability.

**THE CHAIR:** No, it is not an insult. What I am saying is that if you are going to spend a lot of money on advertising and you have a product that you are trying to roll out, you are trying to inform the community about something specific in the ACT, then is it perhaps not better to have something that is specifically targeted to what you are actually trying to roll out, rather than something that is perhaps generic and saying that there are merits to the program? It is a puff piece. It is saying that this is a generic advertising piece, rather than saying this is how you apply, this is how you enrol.

**Ms Sheehan:** The ACT government and the commonwealth government have not funded specific ads for the ACT. I am assuming the ads that you are seeing nationally are just part of the commonwealth having bought national time on commercial TV. With respect to what is available in the ACT, there is very targeted and specific information available in the ACT so that the local community knows what is available.

**Ms Howson:** In a sense, in terms of our own local campaign, we are spending time visiting, for example, our schools and our schools for children with a disability. We have been briefing them. I think I might ask Kate to talk about it, because we have basically been out on the ground, using local networks and other organisations to get the word out about the enhanced service offer.

**Ms Starick:** To date, we have run seven community conversations with different groups in the community, including four which focus on people with psychosocial disabilities. We have run two forums for people who work in the ACT sector. That

has included people across Health, justice, housing and homelessness, in the therapy regions as well as in Community Services more broadly. That has had about 150 people attend them to date.

We have also used networks for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. We have had consultations with Multicultural Youth Services, OMATSIA, Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services, Companion House, CIT, the adult migrant English program, Student Services, the National Ethnic Disability Alliance, NEDA, the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Humanitarian Coordination Committee and the Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre's multicultural play group.

With regard to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, we are about to start advertising in the *Koori Mail* and the *Koori Times*. We have also met with Winnunga. We have had contact with child and family centres in west Belconnen. We have had communication with the elected bodies. We have not yet communicated with Boomanulla. We have also made contacts through Relationships Australia.

Coming up there are 17 sessions planned—I will just have to check that number—for people who might wish to apply for the enhanced service offer grant, as well as their families. These will be held with the individual planners. We have recruited seven individual planners because we recognise that this is quite a new experience for families and people with a disability and they will need support, if they would like it, not only to think about what they want but then, along that journey, how do you go about finding in the sector or in the community what it is that will meet your needs and then actually purchase that. Individual planners have made themselves available throughout the application period and will be able to support people to apply online.

There is also a phone-in service. If you do not have a computer or you are at a computer in a public library or in your home and you get stuck through the application process, you can actually ring up an individual planner and they can link into the application and talk you through it.

I think that is about where we are up to at the moment, as well as the broader media. When I say “media”, it is on the community noticeboard and through local radio stations 2XX and another radio station that we have got editorials on. It is also on all the gateway services and Canberra Connect, through all the community services. There are frequently asked questions and some pamphlets so that people can choose the information they want available and use that to apply. We will also be putting on the website this week the applicant's guide and the assessor's guide so that people can have all the information about how to apply and how that grant can be used, as well as what criteria the panel will be using to assess the grant application.

**THE CHAIR:** Supplementaries, members.

**MR WALL:** Another form of communication which I understand—

**Ms Burch:** Members? Sorry, Dr Bourke also had a question.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, if you want to run this committee, then let me know. Otherwise, if you could just remain silent, thank you.

**Ms Burch:** It is a bit hard when I am actually the executive and the minister responsible.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Thank you, Mr Hanson.

**MR SMYTH:** Behave like one.

**Ms Burch:** I beg your pardon, Mr Smyth?

**MR SMYTH:** Behave like one.

**Ms Burch:** I am still very distressed that the chair of this committee on disability described DisabilityCare promotion as a puff piece. And I think that is an insult to every one of those families that are actually participating in that ad and that will benefit from DisabilityCare, that across four states will actually start within a matter of days.

**THE CHAIR:** Ms Burch, I thank you for your opinion. What you are trying to do is politicise this as an issue.

**Ms Burch:** No, you did.

**THE CHAIR:** And I would rather you did not.

**Ms Burch:** You did, because you called it warm and fuzzy Labor election material. That is how you described it.

**MR WALL:** I think Mr Hanson was drawing attention to the fact that the ads fail to convey any information about the NDIS itself as opposed to—

**Ms Burch:** No, he called them a warm and fuzzy election puff piece.

**MR WALL:** The spending of the money on advertising could have been better used to convey information about the services, as opposed to promoting the service itself.

**Ms Burch:** I beg your pardon? Can you start again, Mr Wall?

**MR WALL:** I said the advertising funding that has been used by the federal government could have been better used to inform people about the services, as opposed to promoting the service itself. I think that would have been better value for money.

**Ms Burch:** I think on a national reform like this it is that people—

**DR BOURKE:** Chair, is Mr Wall giving evidence or is he asking a question?

**MR WALL:** The question was: the weekly updates which had been posted under the

NDIS section of the Community Services website have not been updated since 3 May. Are they still being continued or why have there been no further updates to those?

**Ms Starick:** The updates, we did cease. We have been providing updates through the e-newsletter because it got to a broader audience. The hits that we got to that weekly update were slightly more, I think, than me checking that they were up there. It did not appear to have been an effective way to get information out, and we have gone to other alternative measures to get the information out.

**MR WALL:** I am after some background numbers around the enhanced service offer. How many people currently aged between 18 and 65 in the ACT are accessing disability services?

**Ms Burch:** The number of clients?

**MR WALL:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** Across Therapy ACT and Disability there is a significant number. I think there are over 4,000 but not all of them would be eligible for support under DisabilityCare, is my understanding—therapy, for example. Those client bases that are accessing speech development delays would not necessarily be eligible for DisabilityCare but will continue after this to be supported through Therapy ACT.

**MR WALL:** So how many people that are currently accessing services are going to be eligible for the enhanced service offer?

**Ms Howson:** People that are currently accessing services are eligible to apply; so 100 per cent are eligible to apply.

**MR WALL:** But how many are going to be eligible to receive the grant? You have just said that there are a number that are receiving disability services that are not going to be eligible for a grant. And I am wondering what the differential is.

**Ms Howson:** There are a couple of different issues here. I think what the minister was conveying was that not all of the people currently in our service system would necessarily qualify for a DisabilityCare grant. That is something that will be tested over time as people test their eligibility and go through the assessment process in the national scheme. Within the ACT, the enhanced service offer is a little difficult to understand but, essentially, it is a readiness process. It is a grant program which is about encouraging families to think about making their own choices about services and individuals making their own choices about the services that they would like to access in order to improve the liveability of their lives.

In terms of eligibility again, all of the families and individuals in our system would be eligible to apply for those grants. It will work its way through, again, the assessment process as to how successful they will be in securing a grant. And that is a little difficult to predict, but we clearly have designed the criteria around these grants to maximise access to individuals with a disability.

**DR BOURKE:** How important will the impact of DisabilityCare be on the lives of

people with a disability and their families in our community?

**Ms Burch:** This is, as I have said, a fundamental change in provision of care. I might go to Lorna Sullivan, who is the Executive Director of Disability ACT, to give an overview for you.

**Ms Sullivan:** It is really important for us to get our heads around what this impact of DisabilityCare means. It is probably the most far-reaching reform around the lives of people with disabilities that has ever occurred in Australia. To a very large extent, it depends on us; and how we understand DisabilityCare and what it is will pretty much determine our capacity to achieve the impact that we would be looking for.

Essentially, this is far greater than a simple reform process. A reform process is something that reforms what is current and takes what is current into a new environment. Essentially, if we look at it as a reform, there is the potential that we simply continue the same nature and level of services that currently exist but make them available to a wider range of people. In essence, what the Productivity Commission was saying to us was that we need a transformation process: it is about how you transform the lives of people with disabilities. If you look at the way the lives of people with disabilities have been understood by the community, you see that we tend to have very low expectations for their capacity to contribute, their capacity to make decisions about their lives. Effectively, their lives have been defined and determined for them by those low expectations, but also by the nature and range of services that we make available.

If we simply look at it as reform, we run the risk of not engaging the level of change that could be possible. Rather, we look at it as almost an appearance of change rather than the deep and thoughtful engagement of what could be better in people's lives, what could be new, what is going to develop and expand the potential, what is going to take us closer to the stated underpinnings of this reform, which are full, meaningful and inclusive lives for people.

We have got to look at continuing to come back to the core principles. The core principles are about how we support people with disabilities to have more authority and control over their lives and how we support people so that their lives are enhanced by the services that they get rather than defined by the services that they get. If you are looking at the impact of DisabilityCare, it is far more broad-reaching than just the impact on the life of a person with a disability or on the specialist disability services. It is how we all, as a civil society, engage in the lives of people with disabilities.

If you are looking at whether this is a successful reform process, you are going to be looking at to what extent people with disabilities begin to make fundamental life decisions. You have got to consider that now, for many people to get a service, they need to give up a lot of things that we would consider to be fundamental in our life, such as whether we can choose who we live with.

If DisabilityCare is successful, we will see people with disabilities making much more informed decisions, their expressed preferences being responded to by the service system and their capacity to engage the service system around their expressed preferences. We will see more people with disabilities forming and sustaining

relationships with the community, with ordinary people in the community. At the moment we have a situation where people with disabilities are almost compelled to form relationships only with other people with disabilities, by the way in which we bring people together for the provision of service. So you will see people grow in relationships. You will see people with disabilities being much more engaged not just in being present in the community but in having socially valued roles in the community—a greater sense of contribution, a greater recognition of the capacity, the skills and the aspirations that people have to make a contribution to society. You will see people as members of organisations. You will see people as participants in employment. You will see people as consumers in local business, as contributors to civic society.

What I would call the little mantra of success is people with disabilities engaging in ordinary places with ordinary people doing ordinary things. You can see that DisabilityCare is far more than just simply how we distribute the money and how we get far more specialist disability support services engaged in people's lives. It is about how we engage the community in the lives of people with disabilities and how we use the resources that we have got available to us to enable people with disabilities to access the goods, the services, the supports and the opportunities or the abundance of our society and reduce their dependency on ongoing funded disability support services.

It is quite a revolutionary change, and it is an evolutionary change. It is not going to happen on 1 July; but it is going to happen over the next five to eight years if we invest in continuing to go back to those clear principles of what it is that we are trying to achieve around the human rights, the human value and the capacity of people with disabilities.

**DR BOURKE:** You have talked a lot there about the value for people with disability, but you have hinted about the value to us as a society and community. Could you talk a bit more about that, please.

**Ms Sullivan:** One of the things that we have inadvertently and unconsciously done around the lives of people with disabilities is essentially see people with disabilities as a homogeneous group of people that require support and assistance to live their lives. As a society in general, we have had very low expectations of what that contribution might be. This provides an opportunity for us to do two very fundamental things that will change the way in which we understand the lives of people with disabilities. One of those things is not to do for people what they are capable of doing for themselves or learning to do for themselves. Let us not assign people to specialist, special, marginal or almost managed lifestyles when in fact they could be part of the shared community and engaging in the productivity of that community.

Let me give an example. When I started working in this field some 40-odd years ago, I worked in an institution where a very large number of people with Down syndrome—children right through to adults—essentially spent their lives. There were some basic assumptions that surrounded that institution, and one of them was that people with Down syndrome were not able to benefit from education. Some 40 years on, we see around the world, including in Australia, people with Down syndrome participating successfully in tertiary institutions. Have people with Down syndrome changed? No, they have not. Our understanding about the capacity of people with

Down syndrome has changed. We have stopped seeing people's capacity umbrella as something very narrow that assigns them to dependency.

With DisabilityCare, if we are going to get a successful reform here, we have to really make a significant investment in supporting people with disabilities and the people who care most for them—predominantly their families—to have a much bigger vision for what is possible and invest very early in the hopes and aspirations that they hold for their young people. That is what will drive reform. Reform comes from people with disabilities and their families themselves saying: “What you see is not good enough. This is not as good as it gets. This might feel comfortable because we are familiar with it, but it is deeply dissatisfying in terms of our lives, our contribution, our participation in society.”

If we look at all other members of society, we understand that we develop a richness when we engage with diversity. We have not quite understood that when it comes to people with disabilities, because, to a very large extent, the way in which we have established our services is quite paternalistic and protective.

That is not saying that people with disabilities do not have additional vulnerabilities. They do. But those additional vulnerabilities can be safeguarded in the ordinary community and we can release the hope and potential of people so that we see people with disabilities participating in these types of forums when decisions are being made about their lives—not seeing professional people making decisions about their lives. We will see them in employment. We will see them in ordinary education. We will see them in community organisations. We will see them in community sports. People with disabilities will simply become another part of the diversity that adds richness. We will be giving them the resource, and the say-so over that resource, so they can begin to design that life for themselves.

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you very much.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, I will just bring you to budget paper 4, page 329, and the accountability indicators there. They suggest a significant reduction in the number of centre-based bed nights for respite care but a large increase in in-home hours. What is the reason for this change?

**Ms Burch:** I will go to Lorna Sullivan for the detail, but what we found, as we move through DisabilityCare, was that the interest and better placed support are about supporting people in their homes rather than removing them from home and putting them in a formal respite centre, particularly for adults. What we are seeing is their wish and desire to be better supported in place and with other opportunities rather than in a respite facility. Perhaps Lorna can add to that.

**Ms Sullivan:** I can add a little to that. That is correct, in effect. As we have been successful in developing alternative, more flexible, community-based, responsive respite options for people in communities, the demand for centre-based respite has reduced, particularly around the lives of adults. With the investment through the enhanced service offer, people can gain access to that \$12,000 in order to create

opportunities that provide a break for carers but also enhance the experiences and opportunities for the person themselves with the disabilities. So it makes greater resources available to families, to start to more effectively use those community-based options.

The other thing, as we move towards DisabilityCare, if you look at international best practice, is that we are also seeing that residential-based congregate services are quite an old model now. People are looking much more to how they live their lives in the ordinary space, in the shared community. With one of the options for respite, families are beginning to understand that, while they need a break—and they need a planned break and they need to be able to say, “I know that on Thursday afternoons I am going to have an opportunity for time for myself”—they are also looking at what the community offers. We are seeing a lot more young people using respite services, for example, to participate in community activities. Families still get a break, but the young people get some value added to their lives.

We would expect to see, particularly in adults, a continued decline in residential respite. There will always be a demand. It is just getting the balance of that demand. There is still a demand for children, particularly to give families whole weekend breaks, but once we move into DisabilityCare, and families have access to the resource, we may well begin to see a decrease in residential respite for children as well.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** While we are on that page, there are some significant changes to the indicators. Can you tell us to what extent those are due to the introduction of DisabilityCare?

**Ms Sullivan:** Particularly the community support indicators?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** On page 329.

**Ms Sullivan:** Yes. The community support and community access indicators will increase due to DisabilityCare but also due to the enhanced service offer this year, because there will be that extra \$12,000 available to people to gain access and also the additional funding through the enhanced service offer for young school leavers so that they have more opportunity to be in meaningful day services and day activities.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you.

**MR SMYTH:** Just following up on that, with the relationship between accountability indicators d and e, you have centre-based respite declining, but you have got in-home respite growing.

**Ms Sullivan:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** How did you come to those numbers?

**Ms Sullivan:** Just by monitoring and looking at what is actually happening in the services currently. We are seeing a decline, particularly amongst adults, in people wanting to access a centre-based respite service, and we are seeing families being



more creative, not just in having supports coming into their homes so that their adult son or daughter with a disability does not have to have their life disrupted so the family can have a break, but also in community-based services so that they gain respite activities that give parents a break but they do it from their home.

**MR SMYTH:** Who do you envisage providing that in-home service?

**Ms Sullivan:** It is being provided predominantly through community service providers. Some of this support also comes through the home and community support service and people who access HACC funding.

**MR SMYTH:** You are talking about almost a 60 per cent increase, though, of that service. Is that capacity out there in the community-based organisations?

**Ms Howson:** I might come in here, Mr Smyth. Those indicators are also around our predictions around the increase in the nature of the change in the nature of services that people with a disability will access. Ms Sullivan was talking about one of the fundamental points around this approach under DisabilityCare—that people with a disability start to essentially demand, as consumers, different services from the community. Our expectation is that, through the enhanced service offer and in our context of readiness for the national disability insurance scheme, we will see other parts of the service community acknowledging a role that they can play in terms of ordinary services that will be available for people with a disability—for example, access to fitness and lifestyle programs, access to different types of recreational activities that are embedded in the community.

Recently I met with the chair of the Canberra Business Council. We started to talk about some of the work that we could do in raising awareness amongst the business community around the possibilities for the service industry to be responsive to people with a disability—not just specialist disability providers.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you for all of that, but is there a 60 per cent capacity in the non-government sector to pick up this?

**Ms Howson:** There is also funding going into sector development and sector readiness. The sector themselves are on the pathway of getting geared up and ready. Again, this incentive around the enhanced service offer is designed to support the non-government sector and the private sector to be responsive to this need as it unfolds. I could ask Ms Sheehan to talk more about what we are doing in terms of sector readiness.

**Ms Sheehan:** Mr Smyth, you were asking is there the capacity? As Ms Howson was explaining, when we increase the counting, which is really counting the outputs or the occasions of service, what we will be counting is, as people get their grants from the enhanced service offer—as they apply for their grant they will say—what they want to use the money for. As Ms Howson was describing, if it is some activity in the community—say, access to a fitness program—we will count that, because the government has paid for it, and then it will be counted as part of the national minimum dataset for disability, which is what we have agreed with the commonwealth.

I think you can see that we will be immediately extending the range of people who can actually provide a service, which is a disability service or a mental health service, and count it, because we have paid for it, and it will go into the national collection. Instead of, I suppose, in the old days where you would block fund a disability or a mental health service to provide a service and then you were worried about whether that organisation had the capacity, in this new environment, where people with a disability or the mental illness will say what it is that they want, we are immediately expanding the range of organisations—as Ms Howson was saying, we are talking to the business community—and organisations can see themselves as being able to provide a service to someone with a disability or a mental illness. Through giving control and choice to the people who will be using this service we immediately expand the number of providers.

With respect to the specialist providers, who we want to keep providing services, provided that they are interested in making that move to a control and choice environment and changing their service models so that people still want to choose their services, we are working with those services to provide, essentially, a suite of business support services at the start so that those organisations can understand what the cost of providing their services is and put a price on it so that, come the start of DisabilityCare, people can say, “I want that service,” and then the service provider will be able to say, “Well, this is how much it will cost.” So then you will know how that fits in with the amount of funding that you have.

We need to assist community organisations to train their boards so that the boards are able to confidently operate in that new environment. The boards and the providers need to do business planning. We need to support those organisations to move into a new environment without losing their vision and their mission as community-based organisations. That is a really important support that we will be providing to those organisations.

**MR SMYTH:** So how much is there for sector development and readiness?

**Ms Sheehan:** The commonwealth will be providing \$12 million specifically in the ACT over the next three years. As the minister has previously announced, there is an additional \$500,000 in this financial year on top of that \$12 million for sector development.

**MR SMYTH:** What is the breakdown of the \$12 million over the three years?

**Ms Sheehan:** We do not have a breakdown of that \$12 million yet. The reason is that we need to work with the sector. The sector includes people with a disability, their families and their carers and providers on the sorts of supports that they would like to see across the three years. The \$12 million available in the ACT comes out of \$122 million which is available nationally. The commonwealth clearly would like to see consistency in the way development occurs right across Australia. We are working with the commonwealth, as are all states and territories, on a national plan for sector development, and then we will tailor it to the ACT needs.

The first \$500,000, as the minister has previously announced, is very much focused

on supporting the individuals with a disability and their families, and particularly people with a mental illness, to become ready to make informed choices around the services that they would want to have in the new environment.

**MR SMYTH:** I go back to the first question: is there capacity within the non-government sector to provide a 56 per cent increase in the next 12 months?

**Ms Sheehan:** Mr Smyth, the answer that Ms Howson and I are giving is that we need to look more broadly for the increase of services by 60 per cent than just the community sector. What all of our experience tells us is that people will choose services that have not previously been available to them because, as a person with a disability or a mental illness, they could only go to a specialist provider.

In the new environment they can say, "I'd like to have a fitness program. I'd like to go to the movies once a week. I'd like to go out for coffee like other young people go out for coffee." They will be able to actually make that choice, which is not available to them at the moment. We are really quite confident that across existing providers and the private sector, and informal arrangements that people will enter into, we will be able to support people to access new and different ways of improving their lives.

**Ms Howson:** This is about stimulating growth in the sector, so we would expect there to be growth over the course of the next 12 months and then into the full scheme in terms of the capacity of the non-government sector in the ACT.

**MR SMYTH:** But you have come up with a quite specific number. It is almost a 60 per cent increase in the services. How did you get to that number? Why not 70; why not 40?

**Ms Howson:** As Ms Sullivan indicated, we have based it on previous trends and expectations around the number of additional clients that we will see come into the system as a result of accessing the enhanced service offer. It is a target, and we will be able to better inform the Legislative Assembly about our performance as we get more familiar with the impact of these new service arrangements on the system. That target has been set on the basis of previous experience and our assumptions around the number of clients that we expect to access the new system.

**Ms Sullivan:** Just to add one more thing: sometimes, the way we have looked at outputs and indicators, they are in effect old service lines. If you think about respite, respite traditionally has been defined as a service. But if you are a person with a disability and their family, you see respite as an opportunity for having a break and having an opportunity for some different life experiences that you are just not getting in your day to day. If you do not have a disability, we do not use the term "respite." We only use that in relation to people with disabilities because we have established services that say, well, these are services that give people a break.

When you start to give that authority back to people with disabilities, our notion of respite has to change to meet their notion of respite. While I can understand the concern around is there capacity in the specialist disability services to respond to this, that is actually no longer the question. It is: is there capacity within the wider Canberra community for people with disabilities to be engaged differently while their

family members have a break from the caring relationship? We will start to see how we have defined services change over time with DisabilityCare as people with disabilities and their families define what those services begin to look like.

**MR SMYTH:** You say you have trended this over time. The 2011-12 outcome was 8,100; the 2012-13 outcome was 8,100. The documents I have got here would say that the trend is flat. Respite in own home hours are 50,000, 50,000, 50,000. I am not sure where you get this trend from, because the documents in front of me say the trend is flat.

**Ms Sullivan:** When I am talking about the trend over time, I am talking about the trend into DisabilityCare. This year, because we are giving funding through the enhanced service offer to people to make their own purchasing decisions, it provides a much wider range of options for them to choose from. In the past, if they wanted respite they had no choice. What was funded was the bulk residential respite service, and they had to choose it. Now they have a much wider range of options available to them to use their funding on. The residential respite services are still there.

**MR SMYTH:** Well, we will see.

**Ms Howson:** As I said, Mr Smyth, it is a target, and it is a desirable target against all of the discussion we have had this morning.

**MR SMYTH:** But part of the discussion about the reforms is that a lot of the people who are the recipients of the services you provide are saying that they are uncertain how they will access it, they are uncertain of the ability to deliver it and they do not believe that they have been heard. I guess we will see.

**Ms Howson:** I am sorry; would you mind repeating that?

**MR SMYTH:** In a number of conversations I have had people are uncertain as to who the reforms are being delivered to. There are people with disabilities out there who have said to me that they are not sure what the reforms will actually deliver for them in real terms. There is a lot of scepticism and there are people saying they are not certain that the model is the right model; they are not certain of a number of things. We have a 60 per cent increase in services, but you cannot tell me where that supply is coming from. I am sure the demand is there; I have got no doubt the demand is there.

**Ms Howson:** I understand all those anxieties and that scepticism. It is very hard to believe in something until it is real. But we are taking these steps forward and it is the commitment to it that we believe we will deliver on these aspirations. We are very committed to the fundamental premise that if we put the power of purchasing into the hands of people with a disability, we are going to see a system that evolves that meets their needs, not one that is designed by governments and their officials.

**Ms Burch:** I think that is why the community forums and the conversations are indeed so critical as we work through this and work hand in hand with our community partners to increase their capacity and to get to those end points where their governance is right, their business structures are right and they are best placed for the

competitiveness of this market. That is what we need to do. Some organisations are taking absolutely forward steps. Tandem, for example, are formally merging with Homehelp because they see that this is a sensible link of two existing services that will provide a more flexible and greater response to these communities.

If you look to the investment that will come through, at the moment I think we are sitting on about \$90 million of a Disability ACT budget. By the time we get through the launch, which will start in 2014, there will be \$360-plus million for our ACT community through ACT funds and commonwealth funds. So it is not an insignificant increase in resources. The logic is that there are certainly more services on offer from a whole range of providers, both traditional—if I can use the word “traditional”—disability support providers and in that general market where people go about their lives and access what they want.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Just to follow on from Mr Smyth: there has been quite a lot of hype and expectation built up around what the NDIS is going to actually deliver. I am certainly a big supporter of the modelling so far as empowering people with a disability to make their own decisions and access the services that they need, but I am struggling to get the numbers to add up. The enhanced service offer that is available in six days time of \$7.7 million—if you break that up into \$17,000 components, which is the maximum grant, we are only getting around about 455 grants, which is around 10 per cent of the population that are currently accessing services in the ACT. So there is a significant deficit in what, essentially, has been promised and the expectation that has been built up against what is actually physically budgeted for and funded. How is that expectation going to be managed? How are the grants going to be prioritised? What is the assessment going to be on who receives a grant, who does not and how much is received?

**Ms Sheehan:** Thanks for that question, Mr Wall. In the task force we have estimated that there will be approximately 1,000 grants. That is based on an estimation. I do not want to say “guesswork”, but we do not know until we see the applications whether someone would actually receive an equipment grant plus a support grant. We are estimating 1,000 for the grants. In terms of—

**MR WALL:** Sorry, just as a clarification, are the service grants and the equipment grants classed as separate grants?

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes, they will be.

**MR WALL:** So if someone receives one service and one equipment, that is two grants?

**Ms Sheehan:** That would be two grants, that is right. Again, until we see the applications—and we are very hopeful that people who do not receive a service at the moment will apply—we still are not quite sure how many people who will receive a grant would already have a service and be an existing service user or who will be a completely new service user. So we are doing the best that we can to estimate 1,000 as the number of grants that would go out. As to the number of people who currently

have a service and who would get a grant, as opposed to the number who do not have a service now and who would get a grant, again we will not know that until we get the applications.

In terms of general expectations in the community about what will be delivered—and the minister has gone to the fantastic figure of over \$360 million by the time we move to the full scheme, and that goes to the issue of how many people do we actually expect to be receiving the service once we have the full NDIS rollout—in the ACT we are expecting 5,000 people will be receiving that full service by the time we get full scheme rollout. And we see this in the agreements with the commonwealth. Earlier, the minister was talking about the number of people that currently get a service. We know that it is around 4,000, because that is how many people access services from Therapy ACT, but we also know that not all of those people would be moving into the full scheme.

When we have drilled down into the more specialist mental health and disability services that people currently get and we have looked at, again, who is getting one service, who is getting two services—and we have tried to match the data—we have got a range of people whom we believe are currently getting a service. We know that that is between 1,700 and 2,400, and what we also know—and we have agreed with the commonwealth—is that we will go from that right up to 5,000.

In terms of meeting community expectation, when we move into the enhanced service offer we think there will be about 1,000 grants. Right now what we are anticipating and what we have agreed with the commonwealth—and you can tell from the big increase in funding right up to that \$360 million—is that 5,000 people will be getting that big service from NDIS by the time we are getting into the full scheme.

I know that is a bit of a long answer but, as Ms Howson was saying, we are embracing the change and we are working with it and we know where we are trying to get to and where we are confident we will be at by the time we get to 2016, which is the end of our implementation and then full scheme in 2019.

**Ms Burch:** Can I just add that I think you are right in the sense of how this is all going to play out and we can see an absolute, firm picture at the end. I do not think we can at the minute, and that is why we will spend the next 12 months in preparation for the launch. But we will also be watching very carefully the other four states that are actually starting their launch within the next two weeks, on 1 July. And there is a need for us all to understand that this is significant reform and it gives people equity and fairness, more so because for the first time people across the country—north, south, east and west—will have the same chance, the same assessment, the same fairness whereas, at the moment, it is all piecemeal.

I have said to Disability that there is not enough information that we can put out there, because the community is information hungry, for all of those reasons we have spoken about: what happens to me and my family, what are those expectations. So we have got to keep up with that demand. Our advisory group has got a fantastic group of people on it. It is chaired by Sue Salhouse. As we go through, we are evolving and we have just got to make sure we take the community and the service providers with us on this. There is no doubt about it: change is afoot, and we have just got to make

sure that we are very clear in the messaging we put out.

**THE CHAIR:** As part of that messaging and the information there was a DisabilityCare launch conference called “My Choice, My Control, My Future”. I believe that people from the ACT went to that, is that correct?

**Ms Burch:** Down in Melbourne just recently?

**THE CHAIR:** Down in Melbourne, yes.

**Ms Burch:** Yes. I think that is where Maureen was. You went, did you not?

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Can you tell me who went?

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes. The commonwealth funded the conference and the commonwealth funded over 20 participants from the ACT. It was a range of people from people with a disability, service providers, and not just traditional disability service providers but other community service providers, representatives of peak organisations such as the Mental Health Coalition—and it was really terrific to see that level of engagement from the mental health providers—and the ACT participants. The ACT participants are meeting this week, in fact, to discuss how it is that we are going to do presentations across the ACT and provide information about what we have learnt at the conference.

The conference was very interesting because the commonwealth government had put \$10 million out into the whole of the Australian community to fund something that was called the practical design fund. And the idea was: what innovative ideas do people have out there about the way in which we can change our services and increase our services to people with a disability and then let us share that information nationally. So the conference was really about presenting the outcome of all of those practical design projects so that the information can be shared nationally and we can look at the best practice and use it everywhere, obviously including the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** So there were a series of outcomes that came out of that conference, then, in terms of information or—

**Ms Sheehan:** And it is all on the conference website. For example, the range of things that were looked at included a project that looked at assessment tools for acquired brain injury and whether they met the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with acquired brain injury. And that project found that the tools were not culturally appropriate and, therefore, there was very often a misdiagnosis, and the wrong treatment and the wrong supports were given. So what we have learnt from that project is to have culturally appropriate tools, and more work will be done. That is one example of a great learning that we will bring back into the ACT.

Another one of the projects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders was looking at what did they identify as the types of services that they would like and what were the difficulties that they were experiencing in accessing existing disability and mental

health services. Again, those learnings we will bring back into the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** And the 20 people that went?

**Ms Sheehan:** Twenty people from the ACT.

**THE CHAIR:** That was funded by the commonwealth?

**Ms Sheehan:** By the commonwealth, yes.

**Ms Burch:** I think the total delegation was over 1,200.

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes.

**Ms Burch:** So it was a large conference.

**THE CHAIR:** Who selected the people from the ACT who were going to attend? Who made that decision? That was done by—

**Ms Sheehan:** The commonwealth did, but Disability ACT and the NDIS task force were able to provide a larger range of names of people with a disability, people from peak organisations, people that were actually involved in the NDIS readiness.

**Ms Burch:** I might ask Graham Hambleton to go to some of the folk that went.

**Mr Hambleton:** We had a range of people, as Maureen just spoke about, who had disabilities and who were service users and people who had families involved with governance groups as well. We had people from various providers that had expressed an interest around certain innovative models. We had some representatives from Disability ACT there as well. There was quite a lot of caucusing of people over the two days where they were looking at making sure that people got to the various, different workshops.

How they presented their practical design fund was that they would have a series of workshops with three or four presenters and 10-minute, short breaks, with people then having the resources that were available as well access to the web links et cetera. And that enabled a lot of people to follow up afterwards, the usual conversations at lunch times and breaks, around what was interesting and what was really worth pursuing.

There were a number of stalls that you could go to, to talk to people in more detail, as Ms Sheehan just talked about. For example, one of the issues that came out of the ACT was around our support decision making. There was a website to step people through the whole thing: if you are working with someone who requires some help to make a decision, how you can do that. It was a really useful process and that was presented at the forum as well.

There was a very collaborative feel to the entire conference. Then they had some key notes from some key people around disability care but also some video links to people from overseas talking about their experiences et cetera, as well.



**THE CHAIR:** So the ACT group will now meet, put that into an information package of some sort and then—

**Ms Sheehan:** Yes. I do not want to say just a single package. I think what we would like to do is be able to promote the information and provide the information in lots of different ways. For example, we might do some presentations. We would provide some written information. We would provide information on our website and so on. So we would want to be providing the information in as many different ways as we possibly can.

**THE CHAIR:** If there is any sort of report that came out of that that could be presented in time for this committee before it reports, that would be useful if you could just give it to us. We could incorporate that within our body of work. That would be good.

**Ms Howson:** That is possible.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks very much.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, could you talk us through the community and political support for this revolution on disability care, bearing in mind the comments that we have already had by Mr Wall about heightened expectations, Mr Smyth about scepticism and concern and Mr Hanson's description of political fluff pieces?

**Ms Burch:** I think society as a whole understands that this is a significant reform and, negative descriptions aside about how the messages are being put out, I have not come across anyone who does not see that this is a necessary societal change and the value that it will provide to individuals and their families. We accept that there is uncertainty. There is no doubt about that, because when you go through such reform you do not know what the final product will look like but we all know what we desire it to look like.

I think here in the ACT, we have got the benefit of 12 months of preparation to go into launch in July next year. And certainly I know Disability ACT officials are working very closely with other jurisdictions that are commencing in less than two weeks time, and they will be working with those and just go through some of the practical elements about how do you work the assessment tool, how to ensure that the family planners or the individual planners are resourced and brokered into service capacity. And then, as Ms Sheehan and others have spoken about, there is a significant piece of work here to ensure that we have got a service system that is responsive to it.

The service providers I have spoken to certainly are up for the challenge, are embracing this and are now saying, "How do we now work through the next steps? Where is the help which is part of the \$500,000 and will be part of the \$12 million over three years? How do we change our own internal service systems to best meet it?" Some of the providers may broaden their scope of offerings, and some may narrow their scope of offerings because they can see other providers better placed to provide that mix into the community. And I think that is a right and sensible thing for those providers to do.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, can I follow up on the point about the television advertising campaign, because there are certain information gaps. We have been approached by a number of constituents who have been concerned about lack of information, who is eligible and the criteria to be met. You have experienced this yourselves. I have been at forums with Ms Starick where these concerns were raised. Given the need for information and the paucity of funds, I was surprised that you did not seem to be engaged with the federal government in terms of that provision of information.

You were unaware of what amount was being provided for the federal advertising campaign. There did not seem to be any coordination between the ACT and the federal government in terms of what was in that campaign and how it was going to be targeted. Are you comfortable that that is the best use of \$22 million of taxpayers' money? Is it achieving the aims that you require in the ACT for provision of information about the NDIS or about DisabilityCare? That is the point that we need to know, because there is a lot of money being spent on provision of information when we know there are so many information gaps. Is that actually achieving its task?

**Ms Burch:** If you look at an ad campaign that is to say to the community that it is fair and reasonable that as a society we step up to ensure that people and their families with a disability are supported through DisabilityCare, I will say that is a good investment. For anyone to say that it is not reasonable for us as a society to take the rest of the community along with us—and if you look at those individual pieces within that, there is a father saying for his son, “DisabilityCare will give assurance for my child into the future.” If you think that is any way a negative message then it beggars belief.

**THE CHAIR:** It is not about whether it is a negative message. I think it is a very positive advert. It is a very warm and heartening—

**Ms Burch:** You described it as a political fluff piece.

**THE CHAIR:** It is a heartening ad. The point is that, as you said, this has to bring the community with us. This has bipartisan support federally and in every jurisdiction. I am just wondering why \$22 million is being spent basically on advertising something in that manner, when we know there are so many information gaps across the board.

I am surprised that there has not been a level of coordination between the ACT and the commonwealth. If \$22 million is being spent on provision of information about the NDIS, it seems to be at the political end of the spectrum in terms of selling this to a community that is already sold. The community is already sold on NDIS. Why are we spending \$22 million on selling it to a community that is already sold on it, instead of providing information that is desperately needed by the people who are going to access DisabilityCare?

**Ms Burch:** You have made the assumption that there is no more information other than that ad being provided through the jurisdictions that are about to go live within a number of weeks, or here in the ACT, and that is fundamentally wrong.

**THE CHAIR:** No, I am not saying that is the case. I am just trying to question

whether—

**Ms Burch:** I think you are just trying to backtrack. You tried to call it a fluff piece, which was an insult.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, you talked about other jurisdictions in your description—

**THE CHAIR:** No, hang on, Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** I have a question.

**THE CHAIR:** No. If you are not prepared to provide an answer to these questions in terms of that, the question was whether there was any level of communication between the ACT government and the federal government on the \$22 million spent on that TV advertising campaign.

**Ms Burch:** I would ask the question: was there any conversation with you before Joe Hockey said he was going to slash 12,000 jobs out of the ACT public service?

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, that is your answer. We will move on to Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Coming back to what you were talking about before, about working with other jurisdictions, could you go into that a little bit more for us? Is this talking about cross-border issues with New South Wales?

**Ms Burch:** Certainly we are very clear about our eligibility and our cross-border issues. You need to be an ACT resident for a period of time, and I think that is clearly articulated within our guidelines. But it is more about looking, for example, at New South Wales, Victoria, Tassie and South Australia, that have limited launch areas. They are even limited in geographical patch or age cohorts of all types. I think New South Wales has a geographical—anyway, Ms Sheehan can go to the detail of that.

At an official level, we will certainly be working with those states on how this is being implemented and how it works out, gather all of those learnings and bring it back operationally across Disability ACT and our providers. Our expert advisory group, as I said, is chaired by Sue Salthouse, who is certainly working through these things. We will also be looking to other jurisdictions and their learnings. I am not quite sure who wants to talk to that.

**Ms Sheehan:** Thank you, minister. Thank you, Dr Bourke, for the question. The launch sites have a telephone hook-up on a fortnightly basis, where we are able to talk about the issues that have been arising in each jurisdiction, so that we can share what are potential problems that might come up and what are the solutions that we have been able to find. For example, as the minister was saying, in New South Wales their launch is in the Hunter and it is with 10,000 people in the Hunter. The issues that they will particularly find will be around what regional Australian service issues are, whether they are able to deal with those inside their launch site or whether they need to rely on New South Wales wide organisations and national organisations.

Of course, that is very relevant for us in the ACT because we are sitting in the middle

of New South Wales and it will be very important for us to know whether organisations who operate quite close to us are participating in the New South Wales launch and whether they are able to step up and assist organisations in the ACT. That would be one example of the benefits of being in close contact with New South Wales.

As the minister was saying, there are other jurisdictions that are focusing on particular ages, and that will be very important for us in providing services to those age groups. South Australia is providing services from birth through to school leavers, and Tasmania is providing services for school leavers and on. That will be very helpful for us, because, of course, we do not start for 12 months, so we will have 12 months of their experience in what is the new demand for services from those age groups, how service providers are moving and changing to be able to provide a different range of services and how groups of people who already have a service are transitioning into the new arrangements. What is their preference for the national agency controlling or looking after their package for them? How many of them are interested in controlling the funds themselves and how are those different jurisdictions dealing with the different arrangements? Again, we will be able to learn from all of that.

It is of great benefit to us in the ACT to be a launch site, because that means we have this period of launch going through to 2016 to look at the pitfalls and benefits from other jurisdictions and then to be able to implement improvements which will benefit people in the ACT. If we were not a launch site, it would be way down the track in 2018 or 2019 that our population would first be encountering the big changes. It would be particularly difficult for us to prepare in that environment where we were not actually able to take the benefits quickly and work with the ACT community with those benefits. So that is a great benefit for us of being a launch site.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, we have heard this morning that DisabilityCare is going to be a revolution. It is going to revolutionise the way in which we as a society in this country look at and interact with people with disabilities. Do you think simply sending a letter to people with disabilities is really going to be enough? What sort of work is needed with the whole community, which I think you have already talked about, to prepare them for this change in the way that they will be dealing with people with disabilities and people with disabilities will be seeking to deal with them?

**Ms Burch:** I might go to Ms Sullivan on this, but you are absolutely right; this is a significant change about how we as a society interact with people with a disability. Lorna Sullivan spoke about her experience of an institution 40 years ago. I am a nurse by background, and I can tell you absolutely from my experience over my professional life of the difference regarding how we have in many ways moved from excluding and isolating people with a disability to putting them at the forefront. We celebrate through Paralympics and a whole range of other activities what are the wonderful benefits of people with a disability.

They have all got an ability, whether it is through sport or the arts. A young girl was the star of *Beautiful*, a local movie which was a delightful movie. Anyway, it is quite critical. We need to help people wrangle with the implementation, just the mechanics of this change of service provision, and also move the conversation regarding the acceptance of the broader community to one of saying, "People with a disability will be in our workplace, will be in our sporting teams, will be in our arts groups." That

will be the norm, and that is the shift that we need to get it to. Having very positive stories of people with disability and getting us seeing and hearing those positive stories is a good thing.

**Ms Sullivan:** Just to carry on from that, when we talk about sector development and we have the \$12 million to invest, we are looking at the sector as being the community. So even though we talk about a sector, we are talking about current disability service providers, people with disabilities, their families and the communities in which they live. We are in the process of developing initiatives that will be delivered over the next 12 months to two years to start that very big, substantive cultural change.

As an example of some of those, we have a little group in the ACT called BLITS, the business leaders group. We have brought key influential people in the sector into a relationship with the issues around people with disability. They are engaging in a couple of new initiatives this year. For example, they are developing a community speakers circuit. As business leaders, they will go out into the business community, into the service clubs, into community organisations to talk about the role of community in DisabilityCare and some of the cultural changes. They are also developing a community access program so that they can work with businesses and community agencies around how to welcome people with disabilities, and what accommodations need to be made to have people with disabilities as partners in their business relationships.

The other thing that we have to bear in mind is that while there is a lot of emphasis currently on DisabilityCare—and understandably so; it is a massive change—we still have the national disability strategy. DisabilityCare is the service-driven component or the specialist funding component of the national disability strategy; it is not the whole strategy. Some of what the ACT needs to do now over this period of launch, transition and into full scheme is all of the community development work.

We cannot lose sight of the objectives of the national disability strategy, which are around employment, access, participation, engagement and social connectedness with communities. We have our future directions strategy that targets us towards those cultural changes and development occurring in the wider community.

The other thing we have to think about in this major change process is that, yes, DisabilityCare goes live next week, but we do not get to the full scheme in Australia until 2020. That is because this is a major cultural shift for everybody involved, and we need to make sure that it is stepped out, that we learn from it along the way and that we continue to reshape and draw from those learnings as we steer the reform forward.

**Ms Burch:** One of the great programs that we are implementing—because it is a societal or generational change of inclusion and acceptance—is a program that we are working on through primary schools called “everyone everyday”, to build up a teaching resource for the class to look at disability and inclusion. So it is about making those shifts.

I was sitting here trying to think of some of the delightful messages that have come

literally, as they say, from the mouths of babes. This is about inclusion—one and all are equal, and that is a really strong, positive message that is coming through that program.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks, minister. We will take a short break now. We will suspend for morning tea and we will reconvene at 10.45.

**Sitting suspended from 10.29 to 10.46 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Still with services and policy, minister, budget paper 3, page 213, has a line with some \$80,000 allocated for design work for the renovation of existing Disability ACT properties. Can you advise us what that design work will set up.

**Ms Burch:** While David Collett is making his way here, this is around our respite properties. In particular, I have an interest in upgrading or doing some work through the Kese property—we run a children’s respite house called Kese—and Teen House. And then there are adult properties as well, but, as we have heard this morning, there is not sufficiently significant interest in adult respite to get community support rather than congregate living to go to a respite house. Kese is something that was certainly not purpose built and to me needs some work—and not a lick of paint; it is at that point where you really do need to knock down or rebuild. That is what this feasibility work is. I will ask David Collett to speak.

**Mr Collett:** As the minister says, we need to look at these facilities and determine what needs to be done to keep them fit for purpose. There are significant changes that we have spent the first half of the session rehearsing in the disability space; we want to make sure that our facilities continue to meet the needs.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I did notice that it was only a one-off. So it is only for that period until DisabilityCare comes in.

**Ms Burch:** That is an important piece of work. We need to work out whether we remain on site and whether we knock it down or greenfield it. But it also fits into that broader suite of accommodation support that we are considering for people with a disability and thinking outside the square about what that may be.

Just in the last 12 months we have stood up an innovative accommodation unit within Disability ACT. A number of community groups will come forward with ideas about what works for them. For example, as I mentioned in my opening speech, the intentional community has been an interest for the getting a life program for some time. I remember working with Sally in my very early days in office, and it is fantastic to see that come to fruition. There is also home share, which is a pilot program about home-sharing living arrangements with people with a disability—co-sharing or house sharing, which we have all done at some point in our life with people without a disability. As Ms Sullivan has mentioned, it is about normalising the mix rather than having folk with a disability living in this house and not being able to share and live in many ways a normalised life in others. I am not sure if you want to

add to that, Mr Collett.

**Mr Collett:** As you say, minister, we are exploring quite a number of innovative housing products and working closely with Disability, through their innovative group, to develop a broader suite of accommodation responses.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** What is the feedback from the intentional community so far? It has been operating now for six weeks, I think.

**Ms Burch:** It is a fairly new-minted group, but the families of the three young sons are very happy about those arrangements. They have worked in strong partnership with Housing ACT as we have moved through and have been involved in the process around it. I think there are 25 townhouses there. There are three young fellows and five units that will accommodate disability access accommodation. Of the remaining units, a tad over 50 per cent have been selected purposely where it is about being part of the intentional community, and certainly the families were very involved with that.

I remember that just before the launch I went down there and did a walk-through with the families. One of the young fellows took great pride in saying: “This is my lounge room. This is where I am going to put the TV.” For the first time, he started to see his life very clearly—his independent life, setting up his own digs and how he was going to cook dinner and invite his friends around. It was quite extraordinary to see the pleasure and satisfaction on those families’ faces.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Wonderful; thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** On page 336 of budget paper 4, about two-thirds of the way down, you have got “DisabilityCare—additional support for post-school options”. There is only funding for one year. Why is that?

**Ms Burch:** There is an expectation that that will be picked up through DisabilityCare. We made that commitment in the interim to provide that additional support. That is an extra \$5,000 to young folk, those high-need kids that are leaving school. As I understand it, it is part of the enhanced service offer as well. We are talking with how many families now?

**Ms Starick:** Overall there are about 95 young people who are leaving school who we are in discussion with at the moment or who we will be in discussion with.

**MR SMYTH:** All right. The line above it, on MACES, also has only one year’s funding.

**Ms Burch:** Similarly, that is a new program. In many ways the enhanced service offer will put a test to that service. Ms Sullivan has made mention that not everyone needs 24/7 care. However, to provide relief and broader opportunities to have a mobile attendant come in for part of the night or do a particular activity with the person to settle them down is what we see will come out through this service.

**MR SMYTH:** With the introduction of DisabilityCare, what evaluation is the department going to do of the effectiveness of the new arrangements, and what evaluation is the commonwealth doing, if you are aware of it?

**Ms Sheehan:** In conjunction with the states and territories, the commonwealth has developed an evaluation framework and has recently gone to tender for the evaluation. There will be evaluation of a number of different aspects. Like what we do in the ACT, part of the evaluation is client satisfaction surveys with a baseline of satisfaction prior to the NDIS and then satisfaction after receiving NDIS-type services. There will also be evaluation of the effectiveness of the information and technology systems. There will be a range of evaluations, and we have built an evaluation process into the enhanced service offer.

As we were describing before, it will be very important for us to look at the way in which people are choosing to work with the enhanced service offer. Are they looking for Disability ACT or Therapy ACT to suggest services to them? Will they be choosing services for themselves? Is it their preference to control the funding or is it their preference for us to be the fund holders? All of those things will provide information for us which will help us to help clients to transition into NDIS.

The final thing is that the minister has just announced that, as part of the innovation grants that she announced, there will be an evaluation of the NDIS, or parts of the NDIS, looking at before and after satisfaction of 30 current clients of the disability and mental health systems.

**MR SMYTH:** If the commonwealth have got a framework, and they have worked with the states and territories to develop this, why would you have an innovation grant to do that? The innovation grants are available for people individually or representing organisations for one-off strategic projects and initiatives that aim to create or improve opportunities for vulnerable people. How does doing an analysis of DisabilityCare fit into that?

**Ms Sheehan:** What was particularly appealing to us about this specific proposal was that the Summer Foundation is doing a before and after evaluation of 30 mental health clients in the Barwon launch area in Geelong, which is one of our co-launch sites, and we could see a particular strength in taking the same approach. It is not an evaluation of the whole system. It is a very qualitative approach, but of course quality of life is absolutely essential and is one of the big focuses of NDIS. It was an opportunity to be on the front foot and take the same approach as was being taken in another launch site. As I say, it gives us a qualitative look at the experiences of 30 clients in two launch sites. The broader thing that the commonwealth is doing is an evaluation of the entire system, and that is a very different approach to a qualitative analysis for 30 clients.

**MR SMYTH:** How will that create or improve opportunities for vulnerable people?

**Ms Howson:** You are talking about this particular evaluation, Mr Smyth?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** The fact that it is targeting people with psychosocial disabilities is



important, because this is an area we do not know enough about in terms of how episodic illnesses interact with service systems and the impact of that on quality of life. It adds another dimension of information to the design process, which is important.

**MR SMYTH:** But shouldn't it just be funded as part of the department's general evaluation? Weren't the innovation grants really about—when you say “creating opportunities”, weren't they more or less about business opportunities or employment opportunities?

**Ms Howson:** It is true, but I think it would be fair to say that an evaluation like this will foster innovation and actually inform the service sector in terms of what is required for people, particularly those with psychosocial disabilities. It is also important that evaluation occurs, in a sense, independently of government.

**MR SMYTH:** Absolutely, but it is where you draw the funds from.

**Ms Howson:** The Summer Foundation bring some capacity with them as a result of the work they are doing in Barwon that just adds extra value.

**MR SMYTH:** How many other applicants were there for the innovation grant?

**Ms Howson:** We will have to take that on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** Can we have a list of them, if that is possible?

**Ms Howson:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** Minister, could I get a bit of information and clarification on individual support packages which are currently offered to residents in the ACT and how they differentiate from what we are transitioning to under the NDIS?

**Ms Burch:** At the moment, the individual support packages are one of the mechanisms for providing financial resources to individuals for them to purchase or to work through a provider for a range of services. There is an expectation that DisabilityCare in many ways will then be the new funding mechanism, but I might go to Ms Sullivan to explain how we work through that.

**Ms Sullivan:** You are right. The individual support packages are almost a precursor to how the arrangements occur under DisabilityCare. They were instigated some years ago now to enable people to begin a process of thinking about how they wanted their life to be and to purchase the services that they wanted for themselves. The opportunities that we have had around individual support packages really have meant that people have gone back to the service system to purchase the supports or they have used their individual support packages to do that. Just in recent times, we have begun a small project around self-directed support so that people with individual support packages now have the opportunity to use those packages to access the funding as they would under the DisabilityCare system and begin to look at how they might

diversify the way in which they purchase services. That program is just beginning to develop as a little initiative supported between Community Options and Anglicare.

**MR WALL:** Is there a mechanism by which people that are receiving an ISP can self-manage their funding?

**Ms Sullivan:** That is the little option that is just getting underway now—what we call the self-directed funding of services.

**Ms Burch:** We have worked with a couple of clients over self-directed funding, but it is certainly something that we need to ramp up and move to as we move into DisabilityCare, because that notion is around choice and control, which equate to a better mechanism for how they direct their own funds.

**MR WALL:** Have there been any issues or teething problems in transitioning to that under the ISP package that would be relevant to the wider rollout? If so, what are they?

**Ms Burch:** All of the learnings will go into it. I think that is why we have been very modest in how we have engaged with individuals to date. Ms Starick is leaning forward with a detail there for you, Mr Wall.

**Ms Starick:** One example of some of the learning is what we have done with recruiting individual planners with the enhanced service offer. People prefer to talk through a range of options and they need somebody to talk through and work with them about how they use their package. They need somebody to walk with them through the system to find the supports that they need and want to purchase. That is a learning that we have applied going forward. In our current region we work with local area coordinators. Those local area coordinators are a role that will also carry through to DisabilityCare Australia.

**MR WALL:** What is going to be the impact on service providers with people that are managing their support packages individually? I understand that previously if the individual was getting an individual service package they would get, say, block funding, and then the administrative costs of running it were taken out of part of their funding as well as the fee for accessing the service. If an individual takes over the ownership of it, is there a shortfall in the administrative costs?

**Ms Burch:** I think you are referring—and correct me if I am wrong—to someone who has had an ISP and they are almost block funded into a provider, and then the provider has taken out an administrative cost plus a cost for service. It could be that as we move into a more commercial cost base those costs will actually have an administrative fee factored into it. That is the way I am seeing it, but perhaps I have misunderstood.

**Mr Hambleton:** The project that Ms Sullivan referred to is called my choice ACT, which is a project around self-directed funding. We are still at the early stages of that particular project. While we have got three people that have been on the self-directed funding pilot and we are increasing it, we have worked with 39 people in the last couple of months, eight of which are now in the final phase of deciding how they are

going to actually craft it, and then another nine are contemplating it. It is a phased project. It does take quite a bit of time to work with individuals. Once they are given the licence to start making those sorts of decisions, the interesting thing is that the first thing they do is stop and think about it and make sure they get it really right because they realise the importance around their life.

As to the impact on the ISPs, as the minister just said, there is a brokerage fee that usually goes to the provider that is holding the ISP. That will not be something that will be required. The individuals, just the eight we know that are in that final launch phase, are all looking at a mix of purchasing off a provider in some situations and becoming an employer in other situations, and they are assisted to do that. There are a range of options. As to the impact, we do not know exactly the detail. As I say, that project is in its infancy at this stage and is still rolling out. We have now got quite a significant degree of resources available for people to be talked through that process.

**MR WALL:** You just mentioned that ISP recipients are considering becoming employers. I am guessing that they are looking at employing people to provide care for themselves?

**Mr Hambleton:** That is correct.

**MR WALL:** Is any assistance being given—obviously there is going to be an administrative cost of employing someone, such as workers compensation insurance, superannuation and the like—to them in setting up those mechanisms?

**Mr Hambleton:** We would be able to provide them with a range of options where they can do that, such as organisations that will manage their payroll for them. For example, with one group I know who are doing it, both the mother and the sister are lawyers and accountants. So they are fairly confident that they are going to be able to pull it together. But in some situations individuals do not have that skill set within their wider group, so we give them the opportunities to support them to access a range of other options. They can, for example, get that payroll assistance and they may even get some assistance around somebody coming to be a coordinator of the rosters and things like that.

**MR WALL:** So your assistance is referring them on to another provider that can do that?

**Mr Hambleton:** That is correct. My choice ACT is really: we will help you look at it and where you can buy it from.

**MR WALL:** Just on the administrative costs of service packages, and going back to the enhanced service offer that is coming out and the rollout to the full disability insurance scheme: just for next year, for example, the \$7.7 million that has been budgeted for grants—is that wholly and solely going in grants or is there a part of that that is going to be made up of an administrative component for the department to administer the grants program?

**Ms Burch:** That is out. Going back to what Mr Hambleton was saying, those supports—any costs associated with that are covered within the resource allocation. It

is not that there is an amount of money provided plus additional. It is all within the one cost.

**THE CHAIR:** Minister, the ACT public service employment strategy for people with a disability was released by the commissioner and, I think, Jon Stanhope in 2011. What role do you have not just within the directorate but more broadly? As the minister for disabilities, what role have you got in terms of monitoring that and making sure that targets are being met and so on? I am just trying, firstly, to understand the coordination between you and CMTD and so on.

**Ms Burch:** The responsibility for that sits with CMTD, because it is a public service plan. My personal interest is about how we roll that out and, in many ways, be a champion of that within our Community Services Directorate as well. My strong interest in it is about how CSD can lead the way in meeting those targets.

**THE CHAIR:** Given that strong interest, how many people with a disability are currently employed by the ACT public service across the board, and how does that relate to your directorate?

**Ms Howson:** I think I have these numbers in my package, Mr Hanson, but I will just need a little bit of time to locate them. We certainly have had an increasing trend in the number of people with a disability employed in the directorate.

**THE CHAIR:** The strategy was released a couple of years ago. I am just trying to see what progress has been made across the public service.

**Ms Burch:** It is about, I think, accepting what we need to do to make some simple changes within our physical environment but also our organisation around what are the expectations, what is the workload, what is the function and how do we match that function with the capacity?

**THE CHAIR:** Sure. The strategy outlines, I guess, what the plan is.

**Ms Burch:** We have got the numbers here now, I think.

**THE CHAIR:** Great.

**Ms Howson:** Our current performance in terms of the proportion or percentage of people with a disability employed in our directorate is 2.5 per cent.

**THE CHAIR:** 2.5 per cent in the directorate. Do you know how that compares to the broader ACT public service?

**Ms Howson:** I am afraid I do not, but I could take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, if you could. We might follow it up with the Chief Minister as well. 2.5 per cent, I think, is above the—it was 1.6 per cent.

**Ms Howson:** In terms of the whole of ACT, I believe that our performance is exceeding the rest of the public service, but I cannot tell you that figure. I will have to

take that on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** If you could. We will follow it up with the Chief Minister as well. Thank you. Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** Minister, talking about therapy services: the accountability indicators for therapy services note a significant increase in the hours of therapy services to be provided in comparison with the 2013 target. What is the reason for this increase?

**Ms Howson:** This is in relation to our accountability indicators for—

**DR BOURKE:** 1.2.

**Ms Howson:** 1.2, and the hours of therapy services that are provided. That is an increase from 66,500 to 68,500. Is that the one you are referring to, Dr Bourke?

**DR BOURKE:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** The increase in that is largely attributed to the continuation of the therapy assistants program in schools, which is allowing us to provide access to therapy services to a much broader population than we have in the past. That is the specific reason for that increase.

**Ms Burch:** That has been a very successful program. I might ask Jacinta Evans, who is executive director of Therapy ACT, to comment.

**Ms Evans:** Thank you, minister. Yes, it is related to the therapy assistants in schools program but, more broadly, in the last 12 months we have actually increased the number of clients that we are seeing. That has been done through a number of different programs. The therapy assistants in schools program—in the pilot year, we saw 270 children and about 40 per cent of those were not even known to Therapy ACT. That was an increase of clients that we had not seen before. What the therapy assistants in schools program has done in terms of client numbers is free up those health professionals who are able to refer on their caseload if the children are in a particular school that are part of the program. That means they have got some capacity then to see some more children.

**DR BOURKE:** Can you just tell me a little bit more about the therapy assistants? What is their area of qualification and skill?

**Ms Burch:** The therapy assistants program has probably been in place about 18 months or two years now. What it does is take therapy and therapy assistants into the classroom—so it is OTs, physios and speech in the main. Each child has a case plan, which is oversighted by a case manager. The therapy assistants actually do the program within the school. It has been very successful. What Ms Evans has just highlighted is that the reach has certainly been extended. Many of these young kids that have not been seen by Therapy ACT for a whole range of reasons are now getting access to fabulous support. We did an evaluation, I think, at a 12-month period. That showed significant improvements around developmental progress. Speech delays certainly improved. A whole range of their indicators, depending on what the

intervention was, have certainly proved successful. Ms Evans, do you want to add to that?

**Ms Evans:** Only to say I think your initial question was around qualifications.

**DR BOURKE:** Yes.

**Ms Evans:** The team is a very small team considering the amount of hours that they are contributing and the number of clients they are seeing. Only 1.5 FTE are actually allied health professionals, which is half-time speech pathology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy. The rest of the team comprise four allied health assistants. One allied health assistant that we have employed already had her certificate, which is a one to two-year certificate through CIT in allied health assistance. The other two are completing that. Some of their qualification will be recognition of their prior learning because they were already working in that area. Another person was someone who had been working as a teacher support in schools and brought that skill level with her. Having the four of them together in that program has given them a lot of skills and a much greater capacity to work right alongside an allied health professional and deliver the program.

**DR BOURKE:** Have those allied health assistants done a cert III or a cert IV-type level of training?

**Ms Evans:** That is right.

**DR BOURKE:** Are they specifically targeted to provide assistance to all therapists or are they structured to a particular group?

**Ms Evans:** Yes, a variety, Dr Bourke. The CIT course equips them; they can choose to do occupational therapy and speech pathology skilling or physiotherapy and occupational therapy. So they bring a different set of skills depending on what areas they have focused on.

In general, at Therapy ACT we have a focus on having broad skill sets for all of our allied health assistants. Our allied health professionals work in a multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary model. So it is not just about a speech pathologist seeing a child and just giving speech and language therapy; it is about that speech pathologist thinking, "What else could that child benefit from?" In doing some activities they might notice their handwriting or their fine motor skills are not so good. They might bring that back to the team and get some other services in place for the child.

**DR BOURKE:** Has your use of allied health assistants increased over the years?

**Ms Evans:** It has. We are engaged with ACT Health as well in looking at the scope of practice for allied health assistants. This is a national project but in the ACT in particular there are a couple of areas where the scope of work of an allied health assistant has really broadened, and Therapy ACT is one of those areas. Initially, maybe 10 years ago, there was a lot of hesitance around using assistants, and allied health professionals were a bit more protective around their boundaries and what they could deliver. That is broadening out now as we recognise nationally that there is such

a shortage of allied health professionals, and we are getting a lot better at looking at what someone can do in terms of assisting us to provide a broader service. If they have the right core skills, the child has been assessed by the appropriate professional and then a program is set up. It is about looking at what they can actually contribute. We have broadened that out through the allied health assistants project.

**DR BOURKE:** So that will enable you to get more bang for your buck?

**Ms Evans:** Definitely getting more value for our buck.

**DR BOURKE:** I go to the indicator in 1.2 b., the average costs per hour of therapy service to an individual. You have actually had a lower cost in your outcome than what your target was.

**Ms Evans:** Yes.

**DR BOURKE:** Is part of that attributable to allied health assistants or are there other things going on there?

**Ms Evans:** Definitely it is to do with the therapy assistants in schools program. It is also to do with the fact that, over time, like all services, we are evolving. We are looking at how we use group interventions, how we use parent education, which we have done over the years. We have always been trying to evolve and find new ways, but really we have got better. What the model used to look like years ago was that, if you were assigned a speech pathologist you saw that person for one hour once a fortnight. There were not really other models. Over the years, increasingly, using the evidence that is out there, we have looked for the best practice models and we keep trying to improve what we can provide for our clients and how timely we can be in that.

**MR WALL:** I have a supplementary on that one. The 2013-14 target figure on the average cost per hour has a note there that says that the reduction reflects a lower overhead cost allocation. How has that lower cost allocation been achieved? What is the background for that?

**Ms Burch:** A lot of it goes to what Ms Evans just spoke about, but we might hear from Mr Hubbard.

**Mr Hubbard:** Thanks for the question. As the note says, it relates to the overhead allocation. Part of our business approach is that every couple of years we reallocate the total overhead of the directorate based on, essentially, where the services and costs lie. We do that based on accommodation of GPO and FTEs into the area. We try to mirror the use of the overhead component. You would appreciate that over the last couple of years significant funds have gone into both disability services and at-home care, especially relative to the quite small service that therapy is. In that allocation we have reduced the cost being allocated to therapy services, and with that cost allocation, the vast majority dropped from last year to this year.

**MR WALL:** So the loss of the 38 full-time equivalent staff in the directorate would mean some of those staff coming out of disability services?

**Ms Howson:** That is a different issue again.

**Ms Burch:** That is a different question altogether, Mr Wall.

**MR WALL:** We have just been told that we have a reduction of the overhead funding—that the overhead funding is attributed to staff in the sector.

**Mr Hubbard:** No, I did not say that at all. What I said was that there is an overhead component and, in fact, that overhead component is growing. Over time, as the total value of the directorate goes up, what I said was that there has been a reappportioning of where that overhead is allocated. The overhead is being allocated more towards disability and out-of-home care to reflect the greater volume of resources and FTEs going into those areas. Over the last few years, if you look at the last few budgets, there has been significant funding going into those two areas. We have to do a reallocation every now and then to reflect where the overheads should lie. In that process, Therapy ACT has had a reduced overhead relative to other areas.

**MR SMYTH:** Could you take it on notice and give us the allocation by output class for the current year and the coming year?

**Ms Howson:** This is the allocation of the overhead component?

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**Ms Howson:** Yes, we can do that.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, a new question.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I have a question.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, we have heard about the therapy assistants program. Can you tell us what is provided for in this budget for that program?

**Ms Burch:** What we have provided in this budget—in fact, you will see that there is not, because there is ongoing funding for another 12 months. What we plan to do, and will be doing over the next short while, is revisit the evaluation to see the outcomes and to engage in a conversation across Health and across the Education and Training Directorate. This all happens within a school class, within the school environment. We need to look at the next iteration and the next shape of the therapy assistants program. I have a very strong personal attachment to this program, given that I instigated it a couple of years ago. All that we hoped for it to achieve has been achieved. So it is about what the next version looks like.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** When you say all that you hoped for has been achieved, can you advise the committee what has been achieved?

**Ms Burch:** It was to work in the classroom with these young kids that may have



speech delays or coordination—fine motor or fine muscle or even gross motor skills that needed to be worked on, so that they can better engage and function within the classroom. From memory—you may have the figures, Ms Evans—there is a very high success rate. Do you have the evaluation there?

**Ms Evans:** Yes I do, minister. With the pilot program evaluation, we found that 80 per cent of the children engaged in the program—and there were about 270 of them—met the goals that had been set for them following standardised testing. In the case of children who were significantly disabled, it might not have been based on standardised testing but on a particular goal that the family had set with us. That was very good feedback for us.

We also met success against the six goals we had, which, as the minister referred to, was about the functional outcomes for the children and also increasing the number of children accessing services. As I said earlier, we have managed to succeed in that, as well as increasing the number of opportunities for students to practise their new skills. Putting this into a classroom context, the children were able to achieve that. It is also about increasing teacher skills, so that we were not always having to go back and tell a school the same thing about how to assist these children. We are working really closely with the Education and Training Directorate to make sure that the skill level is being shared.

The other goal we had was to demonstrate that the model was sustainable. I think that, as we head into the second year of the project, we are showing that. We have seen 147 children, roughly, in the first semester of this year. We expect to have seen about 290 across the year through the therapy assistants program. We are getting the same kind of positive feedback. We are certainly looking at the sustainability aspect and where we focus our attention into the future.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I understand this covers both public and private schools. Has there been any difference in providing that support in either of those constituencies?

**Ms Evans:** To a degree I would say yes. I do not know whether it is so much to do with public versus private, but sometimes it is to do with the area in which that school is located. What we are very much doing for next year's service delivery is looking at the data around where there are children with particular need—families of a lower socioeconomic demographic, and particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, where there may be clusters, where we can get the best impact with those schools. We will continue our partnership with the Catholic schools. We have one Catholic school this year for mainstream and two specialist schools that we are engaged with.

**MR WALL:** Minister, I want to get some statistics on the number of full-time equivalent employees that are within the ACT public service that identify as having a disability and what services are offered by government to—

**Ms Burch:** To support them?

**MR WALL:** support them and their needs.

**Ms Burch:** I will see whether Ms Howson can find that and, if we cannot find the figure, we are more than happy to take it on notice. The supports could range from equipment—desks, chairs, lighting, a whole range of electronic supports. There would be a range of things, Mr Wall.

**Ms Howson:** The latest statistic that we have from the state of the service report, Mr Wall, is from the 2012 state of the service report. The figure was 375 actual staff at 30 June.

**THE CHAIR:** Didn't I ask that question before and you said you could not give me the answer?

**Ms Burch:** Yes, and we—

**Ms Howson:** I said I thought I had it in my package. I am sorry about that, Mr Hanson. We just located it.

**Ms Burch:** I think there was also some question about where we sit this year compared to last year.

**THE CHAIR:** I have the figures for previously. They are in the strategy.

**Ms Burch:** But your question about what kinds of supports have been offered—

**MR WALL:** The follow-on to that question would be: is there a target as to what percentage and make-up of the public service you would like to see as people identifying with a disability? I know there is a target for Indigenous people within the public service. Is there a similar one for people with a disability?

**Ms Burch:** My understanding is that there is.

**Ms Howson:** There is, Mr Wall. Again, the figure, as I understand it from the latest advice in March 2013, was that we are aiming to see 655 people with a disability working in the ACT public service by 2015. That is not proportional, but I am sure we could get that information for you on notice, as an actual number.

**Ms Burch:** Another piece of this work, with respect to education about people with a disability identifying, is about how we capture that data regarding folk with a disability so that we can account for and attribute those figures as well.

**MR WALL:** Thank you, Mr Chair.

**THE CHAIR:** The number of people with a disability in the employment strategy was about 350. The plan, according to a statement put out by Mr Stanhope in 2011, was to double that number from the 1.6 per cent, as it was then, about 350, and that is where that 655 figure comes from. In two years, you have increased by about 25 people. You have got 300 to go. In a four-year program where you are meant to increase by 300-odd, you have gone 25 along the way. That is a dismal failure, isn't it?

**Ms Burch:** I would not say that. What has been articulated is a target across directorates. I am only responsible for the directorates that I have, not for the ACT public service. But there is certainly work across our directorates to make sure that we step up and provide as much opportunity as possible in our recruitment and retention processes for staff.

**THE CHAIR:** But you have got to look at it in terms of meeting that target. If you are 25 or whatever it is along the way to a target of 300, and you are halfway along the time period, what assurances are you going to make? Something is not going right. What is going wrong? If you are going to meet that target, you have to basically improve exponentially, haven't you? I appreciate that there is a difference between your directorate and the ACT public service across the board.

**Ms Burch:** I would like to take the opportunity to ask Ms Howson to talk about what we do in our recruitment, retention and support for staff with a disability.

**THE CHAIR:** Unfortunately, we might have to take that on notice, because I note that we have reached the allotted time. I would like to thank you, minister and officials, for appearing today. We will see you in a different guise on Friday for other matters. I remind you that there are various time lines for questions on notice and providing those. No doubt you are aware of those by now.

I see that 327 was the number when the strategy was released, and it is now 375, so it is a bit more than 25.

**Ms Howson:** That is correct—375. That is about 12 months ago, though. Chief Minister's may have some more current figures about what has been achieved over the last 12 months.

**THE CHAIR:** It is not on track, though.

**DR BOURKE:** It depends what you are tracking.

**THE CHAIR:** If it were to be a linear line, I suppose.

**Ms Howson:** One of our experiences was certainly the point the minister made about whether people with a disability are prepared to declare. They are concerned about discrimination in the workplace, so unless it is really evident—

**DR BOURKE:** Maybe they are planning a surge.

**THE CHAIR:** That is not a good thing either. Either way you look at it—

**Ms Howson:** No. It is an area we need to put more focus on; there is no doubt about that.

Appearances:

Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment  
Neil, Mr Robert, Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment  
Burrows, Ms Sarah, Senior Manager

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome, Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment and officials. These proceedings are being webstreamed live. Are you aware of the privilege statement? You are across its contents? Fantastic. Commissioner, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Mr Neil:** Yes, thank you. As is the case following the completion of our state of the environment report, which occurs every four years, we spend a fair bit of time reviewing our work, determining areas for improvement and, clearly, planning for the future. These reports are quite substantial, so we need to do quite a bit of work to get the framework right before we start.

Looking at our 2012-13 budget, we have a total of about \$1.29 million, \$1.288 million, and a rollover of around \$150,000 from the preceding year. From that base budget of \$1.28 million, about 65 per cent is allocated to staff costs and roughly 15 per cent to office costs.

From my point of view, the highlights for the financial year about to conclude are first the review of the 2011 state of the environment report. It was quite important. We got quite a lot of feedback around how the themes could be more explicitly connected with people and with the ecosystems—in other words, it was more of a complete picture rather than individual themes. That was part of developing the framework for the next state of the environment report. Also, in 2014 we are required to complete an implementation status report for climate change action plan 2. We have done quite a bit of work on developing the framework for that. We are trying to establish a decent sort of framework so that we can use it in 2014, 2017 and 2020 and have some consistency across each report so that we can track more appropriately what is happening.

For 2013-14, I believe our base budget is \$1.306 million. As I said, in previous years our staff costs have been around 60 per cent of that and our office costs around 15 per cent. At the end of this year we expect to roll over any savings we make. If we include what has been rolled over into this financial year, I think it will be around \$200,000, and that will go to completing the state of the environment report. As I said, it is a small amount of savings—hopefully we might get around \$50,000—and that will make the rollover up to about 200,000 for the SOE. As I said, we have done the review of the state of the environment report and begun to scope and plan the next one. That is well and truly in train.

The change for me is that we are now trying to do the state of the environment report across three years rather than one year, where you put all your energy into the last six months. If we can do a lot of the base work before we get to that point and then just update the data at the end of it, that would be much easier on the office, and I think it would provide a better product at the end of it.

As I said, we have begun scoping the planning for the implementation status reports for climate change action plan 2, and we have been in discussions with ESDD and the climate change councils about how that can take shape.

One other thing that we have started to do, or that we are in the process of doing, is developing an understanding of what is needed to actually understand, and address and satisfy, core components of ecologically sustainable development and, hopefully, feed that into part of government decision making. We are going to continue that this financial year. Since the change to the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment Act, there is a very explicit requirement to actually have a look at ESD. Into this financial year, we will be doing quite a bit of work on that.

As in previous years, advocacy and tracking recommendations from previous state of the environment reports and previous commissioners' reports are just part of what we do. It comes through in our annual report. On average, over probably the last six years, there appears to have been an investigation generally directed by the minister. We are expecting that that may occur in the next couple of years, in which case we will be ready to undertake the work as needed.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you very much. With regard to the kangaroo cull, can you highlight to the committee what your involvement has been with the kangaroo cull, if any?

**Mr Neil:** I certainly can. We have had no involvement in the kangaroo cull. My predecessor, Dr Cooper, did a report on the grasslands. One of the recommendations—one of many—was that they needed to manage kangaroos. From that perspective, there is some advice that has come from the commissioner's office which I support, and that is about a need to ensure that we do not overgraze and that we allow the other grasslands, particularly threatened species, to exist.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you had any complaints to your office about the cull?

**Mr Neil:** Not this year. Sorry; Ms Burrows has just reminded me that, as part of the audit function, one of the recommendations was that kangaroo cull licensing permits—I am very confused here.

**Ms Burrows:** We had a complaint in 2009 regarding kangaroo cull licensing and complaints; this was closed for them. As part of this year's annual report, we have written to the departments as part of our auditing. It is one of the recommendations that we are actually auditing this financial year. The recommendation was around the allocation of licences and the management of the formulas to accommodate circumstances. We have written to the departments about that already, and we will report the outcomes of that in this year's annual report. We have had no complaints this year regarding kangaroo culls.

**THE CHAIR:** You said that you had had no involvement with the kangaroo cull, but now what I am hearing is that you have written to the minister regarding—

**Mr Neil:** Not to the minister, to the individual directorates.

**THE CHAIR:** So you wrote to them?

**Ms Burrows:** Yes, but this is regarding the recommendations of a complaint that we addressed in 2009. The letter is not regarding the current kangaroo cull; it is regarding recommendations from a 2009 complaint.

**THE CHAIR:** You would be aware that there has been some concern from various community groups about the kangaroo cull. It would seem—these culls have been ongoing—that there is concern, whether it is legitimate or not, within the community. There are ongoing concerns. But you have not really done anything since 2009 with regard to this? That is not a criticism; it is a question.

**Ms Burrows:** No; we have had—

**Mr Neil:** When did the grasslands report come out?

**Ms Burrows:** 2009.

**Mr Neil:** As I was saying earlier, I did get one. It was not a complaint; it was almost a request by someone from, I think, an Australian research group dealing with kangaroos. His comment or his request was: could he get access to the information that the government directorates collect on the kangaroo culls and, if he could not, would I intervene on his behalf? I said yes, I would. But that was not necessary. He obviously got the information he was after, because he did not contact me again. His concern was just not being able to get hold of the available information.

**THE CHAIR:** You have outlined some of your priorities for the coming year. Given that we now have environmental groups talking about basically putting themselves in the way of kangaroos in terms of the cull, have you got any intention in terms of looking at this issue in any substantive way?

**Mr Neil:** I did not intend to look at this issue in any substantive way. The current kangaroo policy, I think, is a 10-year policy. No-one likes to see sentient beings destroyed. But I think there is a genuine need to continue to monitor what that kangaroo culling has achieved. And it is very difficult to make an assessment if you cannot reach the target per hectare that you have set. It is a real dilemma. Do we need further information before we can make a more definitive assessment of the kangaroo policy and the kangaroo culling? Or do we accept that it is very problematic now and we do not continue? I lean towards trying to get the science that is needed.

**THE CHAIR:** You said that it is very important that we monitor what the cull is achieving. What are you doing to monitor what the cull is achieving?

**Mr Neil:** I have asked the directorate previously whether they are actually measuring the herbage mass, because part of the reason we cull kangaroos is to prevent overgrazing. The response was that, amongst other things, they do take a record of the vegetation.

**THE CHAIR:** That is the previous correspondence you had regarding—was it the

herbage mass?

**Mr Neil:** I said herbage, but it is grass cover, effectively.

**THE CHAIR:** When did you write that?

**Mr Neil:** That was probably 2011—late 2011.

**THE CHAIR:** Are you satisfied that you are doing enough as the commissioner to monitor what the cull is achieving?

**Mr Neil:** I think we are. Like I said, it is a very vexed issue and there are arguments about the science on both sides. Destroying native animals or any animals is an unpleasant thing to do. But from what I have seen, the kangaroo management plan is reasonably robust and is only a short way into its 10-year plan. I guess it is like all research, until you get the data—

**THE CHAIR:** When did that plan start?

**Mr Neil:** It was 2010. That is the kangaroo management plan.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any supplementaries on roo culling? No. We will go to Dr Bourke for a new question.

**Dr Bourke:** On page 260, 1.6 e. is an indicator about the stop the clock methodology. Can you tell me about the work involved in administering the water resources trading entitlements and what this new stop the clock methodology is about?

**Mr Neil:** That question is probably one that needs to go to ESDD. As the commissioner, we do not have any dealings with that. That is probably the Environment Protection Authority. That is kind of their world. Sorry about that.

**DR BOURKE:** I will have another go, if I might. You have talked about changing your report from 12 months to three years. This is something you are going to do. Can you go to all of the rationale of what that is for, please?

**Mr Neil:** I certainly can. When we reviewed the 2011 state of the environment report, there was quite a bit of commentary about the way it was structured, that it was not quite clear where the driving pressures or the driving forces impacted on the environment. The information was all there, it just was not quite clear enough and we invited quite a few people to come and critique it for us.

There was also a general consensus that they would like to look at a broader perspective. Sometimes it is called ecosystem services, but really it is the interconnection and interrelationship between all the traditional themes of water, air, soil, heritage, basically transport, all the things that we measure and have quite a bit of data on, and how they impact not just on the environment but also on the way we, as humans, treat them as part of the environment and what we are kind of willing to manage, what sorts of responses we, and in particular the government, have to those particular issues.

It is probably the full driving force on impacts, pressures, state responses, the DIPSR model and is really just another way of saying, “Here are the really big things that affect our environment and the way we interact with it. Here are the impacts that can have. Here is the current state of our environment and here are the impacts that those driving forces are having on the current state. Here are the responses.” By and large, they are government responses. And then some of those responses are mitigating the driving forces, some are mitigating the pressures on the environment, and others go straight to the driving force. That is kind of it in a nutshell.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** You mentioned earlier that after the change to the legislation you need to have a more concentrated look at environmentally sustainable development. That would take a bit of extra work, I would imagine. Can you tell us whether that work is funded or whether you can cover it in your current budget? And then also if you can tell us what articles you would look at in that environmentally sustainable development such as biodiversity offsets?

**Mr Neil:** We certainly intend to fund it from within the existing budget. It is just one of the pieces of work we need to do, and I think it is probably overdue. If you look at ecologically sustainable development—I think it has been around since 1992—it is very difficult to see how it is implemented comprehensively. I think there is always the trade-off between the environmental, the social and the economic. How we do that, I think, is the answer to the actual question in terms of ESD, ecologically sustainable development.

We have spoken to some of the decision makers within the directorates, and they are all very passionate about their particular field. I do not think they are given the opportunity or the tools to actually look at some of the other constraints, such as if you are looking at the environmental world, you do not necessarily look at the social and the economic. You would have to do the economic because of the budget process, but by and large I do not think there is enough attention paid to all three.

I know cabinet submissions now have a triple bottom line analysis and I think that is probably a good start. It is not necessarily the be-all and end-all, but I think it is a really good start. And I think the challenge for us is to try to find out how to balance the competing interests of the economic, the social and the environmental. And part of looking at that is to actually look around interstate, nationally and internationally and see whether we can find some examples where this is occurring and occurring well.

I do not think we in Canberra should be too scared to do that because I think we are pretty good. We could do better, in my view. I think we lean very heavily on the economic and probably do not quite pay enough attention to the other two. But I guess the proof will be in the pudding once we actually have a look at ESD and find out what that may mean.

So we are hoping to get some experts to do some of that research for us and to run a couple of workshops, probably with some of the independent commissioners who have things like intergenerational equity as part of their function or role, and then more broadly with some of the decision makers within government. We are hoping to do that between now and the end of next financial year.



**MR GENTLEMAN:** And do you have any other opportunities to do that sort of study? Are there workshops in the ACT that you might have attended, or other forums?

**Mr Neil:** Not to the extent that we are looking at here, and that is really about focusing on the ACT. Sarah, have you been to any or know of any that are running?

**Ms Burrows:** Not specifically focused on the ACT situation. Both universities often do public lectures on issues that contribute to ESD but there is not any real focus on the ACT decision-making process in ESD.

**Mr Neil:** I find that quite interesting. I am sure if we were to go around the room and ask what we thought ecologically sustainable development meant, we would probably get almost a different response from each of us. It is interesting, and it would be nice to get, as best as possible, a collective agreement on what that might mean.

**MR COE:** Commissioner, have you been consulted on the government's proposed light rail project?

**Mr Neil:** No. I am obviously aware of it, as are most people, but no, I have not been consulted on the light rail project.

**MR COE:** Has the office done any research on the benefits of light rail, that you know of?

**Mr Neil:** Not that I am aware of, no.

**MR COE:** Has the office done any research about public transport more generally?

**Mr Neil:** As part of the state of the environment report previously, yes. We commissioned the late Professor Paul Mees to do quite a bit of work. His approach was quite refreshing, I found. It was pretty direct.

**MR COE:** It certainly was. The first line of his transit for Canberra submission, I think, was quite telling. On the broader issue of public transport, has the office undertaken research about the environmental impact of the existing public transport system and what would be required to make it more efficient or to enable it to reach a threshold point whereby it is better for the environment?

**Mr Neil:** I might start on that. And I could well be corrected by Ms Burrows. I am not sure that we have actually done that kind of research to that extent. What we have done is, I think, some research as part of the state of the environment report that indicates we need to have public transport and better public transport. Because we did not have that kind of information, and I suspect we would not get it, we would rather suggest to the government that they get it: what sort of public transport they would need, how can we minimise our private car use, because clearly one of the drivers of our emissions is our transport, and our private car use is obviously a big contributor.

As far as I am aware, we have not done any specific research on public transport other

than for the state of the environment report, which was done by Professor Mees. And we accept that we need to have a better and a higher usage public transport system. What shape that takes, I am not sure.

**MR COE:** Have you been consulted by ESDD, EDD or anybody else that has got their finger in the light rail pie about how to undertake research about the environmental impact of light rail?

**Mr Neil:** No. All that light rail work is being done—I think you would have asked yesterday—by the Light Rail group. All the work is being done through that particular area. And certainly they have not come to us, and I do not think that we could add a lot of value, other than to point them in the direction of the people that may be of assistance.

**MR SMYTH:** I have a question for Ms Burrows. How often do you correct the commissioner?

**Ms Burrows:** Very rarely.

**Mr Neil:** I am always very grateful to have good people working for me, and I trust their valued judgement.

**THE CHAIR:** We talked to you a little before about whether you had had any complaints about the kangaroo culling, and you said there had not been. Have you received complaints about any other matters?

**Mr Neil:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** What was the nature of those?

**Mr Neil:** Apart from the general complaints where people ring up and ask about what they do with a tree or whom they contact because there is a barking dog, just the general ones—and that is pretty much a simple response, which is to either send them to Canberra Connect or just connect them to the right person if we know the right person—there was one. It was about a tree in Kambah where the people concerned were not quite happy with the response they were getting from TAMS. But once we looked into it and spoke to the tree unit from TAMS, they had followed all the right processes and the tree was actually dangerous and was being taken out. In that case, the decision was okay.

We are almost to the point of finalising a complaint around mountain bikes in Bruce Ridge, the reserve there. And that was really about the competing uses of nature conservation and public access, amenity and recreation. We have not finished it but we are well on the way.

We also had a complaint about building heights in Belconnen, which I think has some merit. We have not progressed it. I am still thinking about how we might do that. But I definitely think there is some merit in at least having a look at building heights and expectations around master plans and the finished result. Quite often master plans have a height in them, and I think there is an expectation from the community that that

is the final height. But that is not necessarily so, and I think that does leave a bit of confusion and is probably something we could look at.

**THE CHAIR:** So you are not getting a great many complaints then, by the sounds of it?

**Mr Neil:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Do you initiate your own investigations?

**Mr Neil:** We can do.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you?

**Mr Neil:** No. Normally those investigations would be as a result of a complaint, where you get a complaint and you find out that there is actually a systemic problem. I think we had a look at one of those where there were some concerns about the way a rural lease abutting a nature reserve was being managed and was compromising some of the nature reserve conservation values. It struck me as more than just a one-off incident. I think more broadly the land management agreements could be looked at. That was just a suggestion we made to TAMS and ESDD, to actually look more broadly at the problem.

**THE CHAIR:** You looked at a tree in Kambah, mountain bikes in Bruce Ridge and you are thinking about building heights. So complaints or investigations are not much—

**Mr Neil:** There was also a complaint that we finalised this financial year, and that was around the Molonglo River corridor and the planning that had been done down there and, I guess, a common theme, and that was a lack of available data. What was on the websites was old, or version 1, and what the directorates were working on was sort of version 6. The community were a little upset because they could not keep up with the actual development, the process for setting aside the nature reserves and different bits and pieces and protecting the threatened species down there because they were looking at one document and the government had moved on. Part of the dilemma with that particular issue was that there was a strategic environmental assessment with the commonwealth, and the process was being established, I guess, at that time. So there was some confusion around which particular plan was in place at which time.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Mr Neil, how are you going with the complaint about the biodiversity grassland management at Glenloch? It was not complete; it was still pending at the annual report—

**Mr Neil:** That is the one where we had the land management agreement issue. The lessee at the time was not managing his part of the lease near the reserve in a manner that was agreed.

**THE CHAIR:** Your next state of the environment report is due in 2015; you have climate change action plan 2 in 2014; you are getting very few complaints, it would seem; and you are not instigating any of your own reviews. What are you doing?

What is the focus of your work? Or am I mistaken and the fact is that there is a lot of work being done now on the climate change report or the state of the environment report, although it is three years away?

**DR BOURKE:** What about ministerial-initiated investigations?

**Mr Neil:** If we get an investigation directed by the minister, we are in a position to deal with it. Part of the challenge is that you are never quite sure when you will get one. It is like complaints: you are never quite sure—

**THE CHAIR:** Have you received any?

**Mr Neil:** Complaints?

**THE CHAIR:** Through ministers?

**Mr Neil:** No, the ministers—

**THE CHAIR:** Ministerial action?

**Mr Neil:** The last investigation was the water courses and the state of Lake Burley Griffin. That is the last one that was directed by the minister.

**DR BOURKE:** Perhaps you could tell us more about that report around the investigation into the state of the rivers and Lake Burley Griffin. What was your process in conducting that investigation and how did you report back to the community and the minister about it?

**Mr Neil:** Once the minister had directed it, at that stage it was Dr Cooper but I was quite familiar with what she was doing, as, being in the EPA, I was one of the people that she brought together as a task force. There were some water quality experts, some of the lake users—the social side of it—there were a couple of young people and there were also people from the directorates. The EPA was there because they look after water quality. There was ACTEW, Palerang Council and Queanbeyan council. So there was a broad representative group—all who had an interest in the lake.

The terms of reference were set by the minister. They were given to these groups. There was, in particular, a doctor, Professor Ian Lawrence, who did most of the data analysis. He went back and looked at 10 years worth of data, pre-drought and post-drought, and compared one with another. After quite a bit of analysis, which was peer reviewed, it was found that the major contributors to our current water quality problems in Lake Burley Griffin are actually from our urban run-off.

If you consider that that is the biggest current problem, then Lake Tuggeranong and Lake Ginninderra are likely to suffer a similar occurrence of blue-green algae. In fact Lake Tuggeranong is particularly prone to blue-green algae outbreaks, as Mr Smyth would know. Lake Ginninderra at the moment is quite good, but if we do not look after it and do not look after the catchment going into it, there is a risk that it could also suffer from blue-green algae. It does have occasional blue-green algae but it is a different type to the one that occurs in Lake Burley Griffin.

The collective group of experts and community members gave of their time pretty freely to talk about the impacts it had on them. As part of the investigation we looked at some of the economic impacts and some of the social impacts. The social impacts were a little hard to measure because they are around commentary from lake users. With respect to the economic impacts, whilst not exhaustive, I think it was about \$25 million or \$22 million—I would have to check that; I can give you that—a year if we closed the lake to all recreation. That included some assessment of the impacts on some of the businesses around the lake.

So whilst it was not comprehensive, it was fairly solid, and it gave a very good indication that the lake has quite a big economic value. We all know it has a social value for the lake users, but it is bigger than that. It is part of our national capital. It is the iconic waterway in Canberra. So there are a whole lot of social values that you could attach to it.

As I said, the main problem was the urban run-off. That brings in nutrients and sediment and starts what they call in-lake processes. So it is not just about what comes in; there is also a problem with mixing in the lake. If you get stratification you do not have mixing, so your oxygen levels are depleted, which provides further opportunities for blue-green algae. In some cases the issue is not the fact that you have got algae but that you create conditions that allow blue-green algae to bloom, because they have little air sacs—life jackets. They float up and they have the capacity to go down into the water column. So they can recirculate, whereas the more benign algae, the green algae, do not have that capacity. So they have a competitive advantage in our lakes.

**DR BOURKE:** Can you be more specific about urban run-off?

**Mr Neil:** Urban run-off contains a whole lot of things. When you look at Canberra, no-one is suggesting that we do not continue to have our beautiful street trees, but our deciduous trees create a massive nutrient load, which, whenever it rains, ends up indirectly in the lake, and it breaks down more quickly than our native vegetation. So you have, straight up, the load from deciduous trees and from grass clippings.

With most of the mowing that is done now around creek lines, waterways and kerbs and gutters, if you ever stop to look, the mower normally runs the first cut and throws the grass further into the reserve and not into the waterway. That is a practice that TAMS have had for quite a while. As well as the grass clippings, there is animal faeces, whether it is cat, dog or native—it does not matter; it all gets in there. We do like to have our green lawns, although since the drought we are a little less inclined to irrigate and fertilise. All of that adds to the nutrient load that gets carried down to the river, or down the creek to the lake.

The other issue is that it is not spread over the landscape. So the denser the housing, the higher the run-off. You end up with a large volume of water in a very short time that just picks up all of that nutrient and deposits it in the lake. It has not got enough energy to push it right through the lake, so it dumps it at the entry zones, and that is where you end up with blue-green algae, particularly in the inlet zones of some of the creeks.

**DR BOURKE:** Wasn't the purpose of the lakes when they were put in to provide a filtration system for our run-off water before it goes back into the Murrumbidgee?

**Mr Neil:** That is correct. Certainly, Tuggeranong was designed as a sediment trap to improve the water quality going into the Murrumbidgee. I think you would argue that Lake Burley Griffin was designed as an ornamental feature, although they knew that they were going to have problems with sediment, because they did quite a bit of work in the catchment to minimise the sediment.

With Ginninderra, likewise, it is a wonderful source of filtering our urban run-off. I suggested in the recommendations to government that the community expectations are that those lakes are more than a silt trap. They expect that they would be available for recreational use, and I do not think that is unreasonable. So I think the work needs to be done as to how much work and how much value we as a community put on those lakes and whether we are willing to actually pay the ultimate cost to keep them for both sedimentation filters and recreation facilities. I think that is a huge challenge, and one that will take some time.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Mr Neil, you put a post up on Twitter just the other day about transport—being alert, acting sustainably—which gives some key facts on transport for the ACT and emissions. You mentioned there that emissions from motor vehicles include 91 per cent of the nitrogen oxide that goes into the air in the ACT and 75 per cent of the carbon monoxide that goes into the air. You have some figures there on car ownership and driving, but I hesitate to tell you that we now have more than 320,000 registered motor vehicles. That was last year, so it has probably gone up since then. You talk about the need to move away from that sort of mode of transport. Why do you think it is so important for us to move away from motor vehicles to more public transport?

**Mr Neil:** If we are going to seriously reduce our greenhouse gas emissions then the transport sector is one of the big contributors. I think that any move to reduce our emissions needs to consider that that is the case. If we can get people, as best we can, onto public transport and reduce the amount of private car trips then, hopefully, we will either halt or reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Those figures would have come out of the 2011 state of the environment report, I would imagine. I was surprised the other day to hear that we are approaching 380,000 in population. The numbers generally quoted are 350,000 to 360,000, so we are clearly growing.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** What incentives do you think we need to provide to people to get on to public transport? More reliable services?

**Mr Neil:** Unfortunately, we would like to be picked up at our door by public transport and dropped off at our office by public transport, and that is not going to happen. I think there is a level of community education that we need to implement, because trying to change behaviours is very hard. Public transport is not necessarily always where you want it when you want it. The ACTION bus people are desperately trying to cater for all the bits and pieces, but, in the end, it costs money. I think there has to be that environmental, social and economic balance in the decisions.

I do not know what the answer is. If anyone knew it, it would be in place now and

probably working. But it is like all things—it just takes a little time. As our city becomes more densely populated, there is clearly a lot better opportunity to capitalise on public transport. I would encourage, and continue to encourage, a higher density, particularly in our town centres, because I think that is a good outcome in terms of being able to walk to work, being able to have access to regular public transport. So there are a whole lot of benefits that would go with that.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Do you think the density is—

**Mr Neil:** I think the density is one part of the answer, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** If the government has, for instance, a taxation policy that mitigates greater density, that would be a bad policy?

**Mr Neil:** It depends on what the income from that policy went to, I would imagine.

**MR SMYTH:** If the lease variation tax, which currently charges you per unit that you put in a redevelopment, causes redevelopment to slow down and smaller redevelopments to occur, which is what it appears to be doing, to accommodate the population, therefore, you have to have greater sprawl. We have now got, as the government were proudly telling us the other day, development on three fronts—north Gungahlin, west Belconnen and Molonglo. At the same time they are not getting the payments that they expected they would get from the lease variation tax, which would suggest it is not achieving its purpose. Aren't we decreasing our sustainability directly proportionate to the growth in the size of the city?

**Mr Neil:** That is one version of it, and I do not pretend to understand the economics of the lease variation charge. But anything that assists with densification in the right places in our city, I think, is a good outcome.

**MR SMYTH:** Paragraph (c) of the objects of your act are “to encourage decision making that facilitates ecologically sustainable development”. Do you have input? Are you consulted by the government, for instance, on their taxation policy or new taxes before they implement them?

**Mr Neil:** No.

**MR SMYTH:** Should you be?

**Mr Neil:** No, I do not think so.

**DR BOURKE:** How does that desire to increase densification marry up with the narrative you were developing before around building heights?

**Mr Neil:** If you can densify what is already reasonably dense as opposed to densifying, say, a greenfield development, there is probably a better sustainability outcome in environmental terms. That is not to say that in social terms that is okay. I have five children. I would love for them to get a house. If that meant it was a greenfield development, as a father, I would say that that is not a bad outcome. I think you have to think more broadly about it, put the father's hat to one side, look at it and

think, “Are we building our city sustainably so that my children’s children have the same sort of opportunities and the same opportunity to make the same decisions that we are making now?” I am not quite sure that we have got that right, and that is part of the ecologically sustainable development argument.

As I said earlier, we could go around the table and I think we would all probably have a slightly different view. So that is a personal view rather than a professional view. If you wanted my view as the commissioner, I firmly believe that increasing the density, particularly in already developed areas, is preferable to greenfield development, but that is not to say that greenfield development should not occur.

**MR SMYTH:** So logically, anything that stood in the way of greater density in developed areas would be bad for ecological sustainability?

**Mr Neil:** No, I do not think you can argue that, Mr Smyth. I think the issue there is that if you have, say, a change of use charge, and that goes to something that improves a social or environmental outcome, in terms of sustainability that could be a good outcome.

**MR SMYTH:** But if it leads to greater sprawl and lots of remediation then surely that is a bad outcome?

**THE CHAIR:** We might leave that question as a rhetorical question, Mr Smyth. Commissioner and officials, thank you very much for attending today. Officials should respond to questions on notice in accordance with the prescribed time, which is five days from receiving them. I would like to thank you for attending, and good luck with your ongoing work for the rest of the year.

**Mr Neil:** Thank you, Mr Hanson.

**Sitting suspended from 12.28 to 2 pm.**



Appearances:

Gallagher, Ms Katy, Chief Minister, Minister for Regional Development, Minister for Health and Minister for Higher Education

Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate

Kefford, Mr Andrew, Deputy Director-General, Workforce Capability and Governance Division, and Commissioner for Public Administration

Davoren, Ms Pam, Acting Director-General and Head of Service

Peffer, Mr Dave, Acting Deputy Director-General, Policy and Cabinet Division

Chisnall, Mr Michael, Executive Director, Government Information Office, Policy and Cabinet Division

Ogden, Mr Paul, Chief Finance Officer, Strategic Finance

Lasek, Mr Jeremy, Executive Director, Culture and Communications Division

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate

Byles, Mr Gary, Director-General

Steward, Ms Fay, Executive Director, Parks and City Services Division

Brown, Mr Jason, General Manager, National Arboretum Canberra

**THE CHAIR:** Good afternoon, Chief Minister and officials, and welcome to the afternoon of day 8 of the hearings. This afternoon we are on the Chief Minister's department. We have got outputs 1.1, government policy and strategy, 1.2, public sector management, and 1.4, coordinated communications and community engagement. Then we will move on to the ACT executive and the arboretum. Before we start, have you all seen the privilege statement? You are across what it says? You can indicate that you are? That is fantastic. Chief Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

**Ms Gallagher:** Thank you, chair. I will make a very brief opening statement. This is an important directorate, being the central agency, and the output classes that we are discussing today cover a range of different areas. It is a small directorate, but it has wide responsibilities across the whole of government, including on policy and strategy and in relation to public sector management. Of course, an area we will probably spend time going over is the centenary program.

The Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate has also played a major role in negotiations on the DisabilityCare agreement with the commonwealth, and the national education reforms as well. It is also playing an important role in whole-of-government enterprise bargaining and advice to the government in areas such as workers compensation. It is very varied, this directorate. Whilst it does not have service delivery responsibility really outside of the centenary program, it is a very important part of the public service that provides support to me to do my job as Chief Minister. We are very happy and prepared to take questions from you today.

**THE CHAIR:** Thanks very much. I would just like to start by following up on an issue that came up in the hearings before lunch when we were talking about disabilities. One of those issues is the number of people with a disability working in the ACT public service. There was a strategy put out by Jon Stanhope in 2011. At that

stage there were 327 people identifying with a disability, which was 1.6 per cent of the workforce. The strategy said that that was going to be doubled by 2015, the target essentially being 3.2 per cent, and 655, I think, was the revised target.

Some of the information that we got from the Community Services Directorate indicated that the latest figure they had was, I think, 375. You may have an update. Could you just give me an idea of where we are at in terms of progressing towards that target, what the latest figures are and what is being done to actually implement that across the ACT public service?

**Ms Gallagher:** We have been seeing a small and continued improvement in the numbers. They are published as part of the commissioner's work in the state of the service report. I understand that in the latest public figures it was 1.8 per cent for people identifying as an employee with a disability. There is a small increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well.

**Mr Kefford:** Mr Hanson, the strategy to which you refer is part of the third limb of the RED strategy that was launched by the previous Chief Minister and my predecessor as commissioner. While there has been a proper focus around the behaviour elements of that, the employment of Indigenous people and people with a disability were the two other important limbs of that strategy.

The Chief Minister is correct. The numbers have increased from 375—this is people identifying with a disability—or 1.8 per cent in 2010 to 402 in the current year to date. Obviously when I shortly publish my state of the service for this year it will have the most up-to-date figures. The largest increases in those numbers relate to administrative service officers, which have increased from 95 to 126 as at March 2013, and to the general service officers in their equivalent classifications, which have increased from 27 in 2010 to 39 as at March 2003. The separation rates for people with a disability remain relatively stable and are not necessarily different from those in the rest of the service.

This strategy is one that we continue to pursue vigorously. There is a whole-of-government effort attached to that, as well as individual efforts by directorates. I had a brief conversation with Ms Howson after she had appeared before you this morning. It is clearly an area where we need to continue to promote the opportunities that exist within our service for people with a disability, in part so that as a service we reflect the community that we serve.

We are looking to continue to explore good ideas and good opportunities that present themselves, to present the service as a good place for people with a disability to come and work where there are genuine opportunities and genuine career paths. That will need to be, and remains, an area that will take effort from all of us to make what are the necessary and proper accommodations to, as I say, permit us to reach what was an ambitious target when it was set, but also ensure that our service properly reflects the community that we serve.

**THE CHAIR:** In terms of meeting the target, you are halfway along the journey?

**Mr Kefford:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** You were meant to increase it by 1.8 per cent and you increased it by 0.2.

**Mr Kefford:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** What is that, a ninth of the increase? We are over halfway along the journey. Clearly, the current plan is not working in terms of meeting that target. Unless there is going to be an exponential increase over the next two years, if it was just linear then we would expect it to increase by maybe 0.4 over that 1.8 per cent increase.

**Mr Kefford:** As I say, the targets that were set were deliberately ambitious. The service and the directorates continue to make efforts. For example, we had the pilot traineeship a few years ago, which Graeme Innes, when he came and presented the graduation certificates, spoke very highly of. We have learnt some lessons from that. We have made changes to the act to make it easier to employ people with a disability.

I think one of the significant areas where perhaps we might expect there to be a step change in that progression that you have identified is when we conduct the whole-of-government survey that we have talked about at this committee before. If our experience is the same as has been experienced by our commonwealth colleagues—they found, as I would expect, that in an anonymous survey people are perhaps more willing to identify as Indigenous or indeed as having a disability than they are otherwise—we might expect to see a larger increase in that area.

We undertook a process last year of inviting staff, in the context of providing them with support to engage fully in the workplace, to identify in either of those two categories. We have had a small response to that but, again, I think that is partly because there still seems to be some reluctance for people to identify. I think that remains an issue of itself and, as a service, we need to continue to engage there. I think the answer to your question is yes, there is a task that sits in front of us as a service. It is one that we continue to discuss at the People and Performance Council and human resource directors table, to find and remove the obstacles that may still exist. We make efforts to promote ourselves as a service and as an employer through programs, like when we are advertising for the graduate program, to ensure that the message is getting out there. I think it is something that my colleagues in the service are fully committed to.

As to other opportunities that will come for the service soon, as the new arrangements for disability support roll out there is perhaps going to be a different emphasis on individuals seeking different sorts of assistance with their disabilities. One of the things that we will need to do as a service is make sure that we are working with the providers who are currently in the market and those who might come into the market in the context of those reforms and promote ourselves as a workplace where we genuinely value and want to be involving and engaging people with a disability as part of our workforce.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** You have talked quite a bit about the two significant national agreements that you mentioned in your opening statement—the national education reform and the NDIS. Chief Minister, can you tell us a little bit more about the agreement on the NDIS and what it really means to Canberrans living with a disability?

**Ms Gallagher:** I am sure the disability minister would be more up on the fine detail of the implementation of the ACT as a launch site come 1 July. In terms of the Chief Minister's role, the Chief Minister's directorate were involved through the support they provided to COAG and advice to cabinet on the signing of those national agreements. In this instance, Chief Minister's would work closely with the Community Services Directorate in providing advice to the disability minister, to me and to the Treasurer in terms of what those agreements mean. I think that is where Chief Minister's play that sort of central role. They are not conflicted by a role as a provider, in a sense, as CSD is, as a provider through Disability ACT. They can provide that central approach and advice. Chief Minister's does get involved in those national agreements. It is primarily through their role and support through the COAG agreements.

**DR BOURKE:** It was the same with the national education reform agreement?

**Ms Gallagher:** Indeed; exactly the same situation.

**THE CHAIR:** A supplementary to the Gonski stuff. We have been through this a little bit before with other directorates, but from a whole-of-government perspective and for the ACT, the analysis that I have done and the figures that I have put forward no-one has refuted. Basically, compared to what was in the budget for national partnerships, there is about a \$31 million lesser amount coming from the federal government.

**Ms Gallagher:** You are not using Mr Pyne's figures there?

**THE CHAIR:** No; it is using the ACT budget figures. Where you have figures in brackets, as you would be aware, they are proposals which are in the budget that have been removed. When you tally those up for national partnerships that are no longer in the budget compared to the Gonski funding that is in the budget, the differential there is a negative \$31 million. I look at that and I am also aware, as we talked about with higher education yesterday, of about \$60 million essentially, that we know of, going out of the university sector. It would appear that the total impact of that reform on the ACT that we are aware of is now \$90 million in the red.

**Ms Gallagher:** Well, you are wrong. I am very happy for Mr Peffer to take you through the detail of that.

**Mr Peffer:** The arrangements that were agreed to by the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister for us to implement these reforms are an injection of funding into the ACT. What is presented in the budget is an update from previous budget figures in the ACT. Those budget figures are no longer the status quo if we were not to participate in the reform. So a direct comparison cannot be made to the previous federal budget or the previous ACT budget. The comparison is against what would become the status quo

had we not participated.

Under the arrangements, over a period of six years, what we would have seen is SPP growth drop to three per cent or potentially lower. We have locked that in under the reforms at 4.7 per cent. We would have seen a series of national partnerships expire. They have been rolled into the base funding and they are indexed forward. We also would not have seen funding to bring those schools below the school resourcing standard brought up to that standard over the six years, which is \$38 million.

**THE CHAIR:** It seems that in your negotiations with federal government they have said: “Fine. Everything’s off the table. It’s now Gonski or this.” When you have compared those two you have said, “Gonski is better than the other option.” When you actually compare Gonski with the previous plan before Gonski was envisaged, there is no doubt that there is a \$31 million difference, isn’t there?

**Mr Peffer:** No, I do not think that is correct. Just so I am clear: the \$31 million that—

**THE CHAIR:** If you go to the education pages in the budget papers and look at the NPP elements that were taken out of the budget—I have not got the page here; it is budget paper 4, I would imagine.

**DR BOURKE:** Do you want to take it on notice?

**Ms Gallagher:** It is 285. I think it is probably good to get it worked out.

**THE CHAIR:** I can certainly come back to that, if you like. There are a bunch of lines under the education and training area that are new lines.

**Ms Gallagher:** On 298 I think is when it starts, or 299.

**THE CHAIR:** That is right. What I have looked at is the amounts. Page 298 is where it starts and it goes over to 299. When you add up those initiatives that have ceased in brackets and then compare that to the new funding lines, the differential is minus \$31 million.

**Mr Peffer:** Again, I think that is a comparison against a previous ACT budget.

**THE CHAIR:** I suppose that is my point. When you compare what we planned with what is happening now—so if you compare what was planned, if you go forward last year before Gonski was even mentioned, and now you look at Gonski—the money coming from the federal government is \$31 million less. Yes or no?

**Mr Peffer:** I might have to take that one on notice, but what I would say is that that is not a comparison of what the status quo if we were not to participate in the reform is.

**THE CHAIR:** I understand that. I understand that the world has changed and I understand that the Chief Minister had a decision which was about Gonski or whatever else was on the table. But I suppose I am taking the broader view of before the indications of Gonski. There was a world before Gonski. I am not trying to come up with a subjective assessment of whether Gonski is good or bad; I am trying to get

across the numbers. When I look at the numbers and compare what was the status quo if we had not ever heard of Gonski to what the reality is now, what I am seeing is \$31 million out of this budget, the ACT budget, and I am seeing \$60 million out of the university sector.

**Mr Pepper:** If there was a situation where there was no Gonski, I think you would have seen significantly more out of this budget. If your calculations are 31 million less, it would be tens of millions more less.

**THE CHAIR:** Perhaps, but if you could just—

**DR BOURKE:** It seems to me that this discussion—

**THE CHAIR:** Before we move to Dr Bourke, I want to confirm it. Can you get back to me on a question on notice? In a comparison between the figures that are in this budget—not just some hypothetical what might have been if it had not been, but a comparison of what was in this budget that has been removed to what has been added and what is the delta.

**Mr Pepper:** Okay.

**THE CHAIR:** For education.

**DR BOURKE:** This whole discussion seems to centre on the idea that these national partnerships were ongoing. They all had time lines. They were all going to finish at various points in time. They were all partnerships to achieve a particular objective; they were not ongoing funding. Is that correct?

**Mr Pepper:** That is correct. What I might also say is that indexation for the specific purpose payment, before we had the national arrangements locked in where there is guaranteed growth in funding, was trending down, and it was trending down quite quickly. I think indexation in the 2012-13 federal budget was around six per cent. By MYEFO it had dropped to about 3.9 per cent. And if you look at government finance statistics at the ABS, where you can assess trends in spending on primary and secondary education by states and territories as a whole through time, you see many years of very solid growth. In some years there was even double-digit growth. That was under the digital education revolution and various other national partnerships, which injected a lot of funding. After that time, growth dropped to 0.5 per cent following the education revolution. The following year it was minus 0.5 per cent. Growth in total state and territory funding is what is used to index the commonwealth's SPP going forward. As that has reduced quite significantly, so, too, will commonwealth funding under a non-Gonski arrangement.

**THE CHAIR:** You said that the national partnerships were ceasing, but when I look at the budget for all of the lines, and there are about eight or nine of the lines in the budget, they still appear in every line in the budget. I think there is only one—

**Ms Gallagher:** What are we talking about here? There are a lot of lines. Can we answer this in relation to the figures you are quoting?

**THE CHAIR:** From the bottom of 298, “ACT base funding adjustment—national school reform”—that has got the first two years, and that is part of school reform. But then we go to things like national grants, empowering local schools national partnership. That was in the budget for 2015-16 and 2016-17. The commonwealth grants, national schools SPP—that went from \$31 million, or it was proposed for 2013-14, going up to \$74 million in 2016-17. So it is still in the budget. There is “Commonwealth grants—reward for great teachers”. That is all the way through.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, so the SPP—

**THE CHAIR:** They were not ceasing in the time of this budget, so—

**Ms Gallagher:** The SPP is the new national partnership. That is the ongoing recurrent funding from the commonwealth.

**THE CHAIR:** That is cancelled, according to this.

**Mr Peffer:** That payment has been replaced by the new arrangement here.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, but that is the point. You said that they are ceasing, but when I look at the budget they are not. They are all in there. They are all planned, and they have all got an indexation-type figure, going from \$31 million up to \$74 million. There is no indication in this budget that those were partnerships which were going to cease at any stage in the life of this budget. They might have been planned in the outyears way beyond this budget, but for the life of this budget they were not ceasing.

**Mr Peffer:** The SPP was intended to be an ongoing payment. However, once the federal government took the decision to reform school funding, there was no ongoing line for that payment.

**THE CHAIR:** So it was going to be an ongoing thing? This is the change in language. Up until now—

**Ms Gallagher:** SPPs are different from NPPs. SPPs are special purpose payments. They are ongoing. Then there is a series of national partnerships for specific subject areas in both health and education—indeed, across government. They are not ongoing. They are never intended to be ongoing. There are arguments about having them ongoing. For example, the elective surgery one was a national partnership; that is not ongoing.

**THE CHAIR:** But for this budget, which is what we are talking about, the national partnerships are ongoing. They appear in every line between 2013-14 and 2016-17.

**Mr Peffer:** Which national partnerships are you referring to?

**THE CHAIR:** Commonwealth grants, reward for great teachers. Commonwealth grants, reward for school improvement. There are a couple for you. Commonwealth grants, reward for great teachers, non-government schools. Commonwealth grants,

trade training centres, non-government schools.

**Mr Peffer:** I think a number of those partnerships were due to cease in 2016-17. Some of the other examples—smarter schools, low SES communities and also empowering local schools—you would see, do cease.

**THE CHAIR:** Maybe a couple do, but what I am saying is that for this budget, which is what we are examining, when you compare what was planned under NPPs or SPPs, when you do that direct comparison, there is \$31 million left between what had been proposed in this budget that has been ceased and the new funding. That is my analysis. I suppose we will get this on notice.

**Ms Gallagher:** If the question can be very specific on notice so that we know where you have got your \$31 million from. We are not able to identify that from these papers unless you step through what that is. Then we can respond to that.

**THE CHAIR:** All right. The agreement that you signed with the Prime Minister—could you table that document, please?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think it is online, isn't it?

**Mr Peffer:** That agreement is on the open government website.

**THE CHAIR:** And everything that is involved in it, so all the detail there. There is nothing that is—

**Mr Peffer:** No, that is right; the appendices are attached. Sorry, that is the CMTD website, on the intergovernmental agreement page.

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

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, what would be the difference if we had not signed up to Gonski?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think we have just been trying to answer that question. For us—and Mr Peffer took us through it—it was around locking in some certainty going forward around education funding. It was also very much with this government's agreement around targeting extra funding into areas of need within the education system and making sure that we are targeting those schools who might be under the resource standard. For us, from a financial point of view, the status quo was not on offer. We looked at this very carefully from a financial point of view. Over the six academic years of the agreement, up to 2019, it is a total of \$190 million coming into the education system here in the territory.

In addition to that, we were able to secure \$26 million in relation to a centre for quality teaching and learning with the University of Canberra, so that was a boost to the university system here and a great opportunity for us to be leading the way nationally—what works in a practical sense when you are lining up the national plan for school improvement and you have got what you need to do there, and how you ensure that you have got the quality teachers to deliver that and provide them with



quality professional development and learnings through that. I thought that, as well, was a great opportunity for the ACT government—more than the government: the ACT community, through our education system.

**DR BOURKE:** So that is an extra \$216 million as a result of this agreement?

**Ms Gallagher:** If you add those two things together, yes.

**DR BOURKE:** Chief Minister, what is the overall vision for this budget?

**Ms Gallagher:** Sorry?

**DR BOURKE:** What is the overall vision for this budget—the 2013-14 budget? What is the overall vision?

**Ms Gallagher:** So we are moving off Gonski now? I was going to answer with the vision for Gonski.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I have got a couple more on Gonski here.

**Ms Gallagher:** That is all right. The overall budget was about delivering a responsible budget that marked our way back to a surplus in line with the budget plan. It was about maintaining jobs in the ACT public service at a time when there are some concerns around employment and public sector employment. It was about transforming Canberra with some of those projects that we have been talking around through capital metro and other projects that I would list, like the University of Canberra hospital. It is around progressing longer term projects around city to the lake and revitalisation of the city. It is about doing the basics that we need to do to deliver good government to the people of the ACT.

I think it is a responsive budget to what we are seeing across the ACT. A budget is never everything you want it to be; it is a mix of compromises and targeted focus. I think, considering the environment we found ourselves in, that the budget ticks a lot of those priorities that we went to the election with against a backdrop of a pretty tough economic time.

**DR BOURKE:** Why is maintaining jobs important with this budget?

**Ms Gallagher:** We have seen the unemployment rate creep up a little. We are still very fortunate in that it remains below the national average—well below the national average. We have seen continued speculation about what will happen to this town come September and comments that are made about job losses of anywhere from 10,000 to 12,000 or 20,000. That would have a significant impact. We have looked at all of that. We went to the election with a commitment around maintaining employment levels, seeing small growth in the ACT public service, and this budget reflects that commitment.

**DR BOURKE:** That commitment to maintain employment levels in the ACT—how does that compare with other jurisdictions around the country?

**Ms Gallagher:** It is a different approach than we have seen. There is no doubt that the biggest cost, if you can put it that way, of a budget is your fixed costs around wages. That constitutes just under 50 per cent or around 50 per cent of the ACT budget. Any increase comes with financial cost and any decrease comes with savings. We have not chosen to pursue savings primarily through job losses. We have looked very closely at additional staff and where they are going in this budget—and, where there are additional staff, whether that is a legitimate increase in staff. We do that as part of the budget process.

If you look at some of the job losses that have been talked about in other jurisdictions, Queensland lead the way, I think, with about 14,000 that they announced. I think the majority of those were through redundancies, but there were some that were just cut. Victoria has cut its public service. New South Wales has cut, and WA has recently flagged job cuts as well.

It is not unusual for you to manage your labour costs in a budget. You have to when it forms such a big part of your budget. But we have not given a large wage offer as part of our EBA discussions. We have put two per cent on the table. In addition to that, we are funding the superannuation increase, which is 0.25 per cent, as part of that. But we are seeking to maintain employment. When I look at other jurisdictions, I see that their pay offer is maybe marginally above that—and I say marginally. I think in New South Wales it is 2½, but that includes the superannuation component as part of that. We are not far off finding that balance between wages growth and maintaining employment levels.

**THE CHAIR:** Has anyone got any supplementaries on the wage case? I have got a few to ask there.

**Ms Gallagher:** On the wages, yes?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, on the wages. You have offered a four year-plan; is that right?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think the unions and the government would like a four-year agreement if we can reach one. For me, the timing of an agreement has never been a huge concern. It is usually one you can negotiate around. We have had a series of short agreements. Since the global financial crisis, really we have been having very short agreements because of the effect on our budget and the unions have only been prepared to sign up for modest pay increases for a short period. I think the preference before was three years if you could reach agreement. It is not a do-or-die thing for us, the four years. I think the unions would prefer it because it locks in pay and pay rises over a longer time without having to put all the effort into negotiating.

**THE CHAIR:** But that is then wage restraint over four years, is it not?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think that is the thing. If we were able to reach agreement on quantum, I think the unions would prefer a longer agreement. But if we are not going to be able to reach agreement on quantum, then I doubt four years will be agreeable.

**THE CHAIR:** Where are you at with those negotiations? Are you able to give us an update in terms of the process?

**Ms Gallagher:** They have frequent meetings, probably fortnightly or weekly meetings. There are a range of other discussions that can be had outside the wages component. We have put a fully supplemented, no conditions loss, everything remains the same offer to the unions. They have rejected that. Now it really is at the bargaining table.

**THE CHAIR:** What is CPI in the budget?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think it is two point something. I do not know. It is in the front table. It is above two per cent. It is 2¼. Yes, it is marginally—

**THE CHAIR:** This is not a wage cut in real terms?

**Ms Gallagher:** We are funding 2¼ in the sense of a superannuation component. CPI is always convenient when it is under. When you look back over our time in government, and we have been very reasonable on wages, we have paid way in excess of CPI at times. So CPI is not an issue during some negotiations and it is during others. I guess we are running the line that it is better to maintain jobs for people than it is to see larger than we can afford wage increases.

But I have to say that it is a bargaining table and at the moment we have not seen a great deal of bargaining. We have seen a rejection of a government offer, which did not involve any bargaining. “Here is the agreement, here is a fully supplemented, paid-for wage offer,” without anything being sought back. They have said no to that. Now it is over to them to say, “All right, two per cent is not good enough. You tell us what is good enough and how you will pay for the difference.” That is why you have a bargaining and negotiating table. That is where we are up to at the moment.

**THE CHAIR:** In terms of wages growth in the budget, what amount have you put in over the forward estimates for anticipated wages growth?

**Ms Gallagher:** We do not usually disclose that, but I can tell you it is not much. It is not anything more than we have offered. We do not usually highlight it as, “This is our wages strategy over the next four years.” I do not think it has ever been done like that, because you do like to keep some capacity to bargain.

**THE CHAIR:** If you go above two per cent, it would require the budget to go further into deficit; is that what you are saying?

**Ms Gallagher:** The offer we have made, we have provided for. And what we are saying is: “If you are wanting more than that, over and above what we are providing through this budget, then we will have to talk about productivity, savings, conditions, other things that cost money.” I have been a union organiser. That is the normal way you bargain. When you front up to the boss and they offer you something and you say no, then you go back and you say, “Right, we have said no, so now where do we take this discussion?” It is not an abnormal—

**THE CHAIR:** What sorts of productivity measures would you be looking at?

**Ms Gallagher:** We are not looking at any. We are not saying anything. We are saying two per cent and no productivity measures. What I am saying to the unions is: “If you want more than that, then you need to start talking to us about conditions that come at a cost, that cost money and are provided through the budget, which you would prefer to receive as a wage increase.” There is no magic pudding. “We are going to maintain all your jobs, we are going to maintain all your conditions, there is going to be no change to anything and we are going to give you more money.” That is just not the way public sector bargaining or any sector bargaining works.

So I think it is an entirely reasonable position. I am not an unreasonable person and I am very happy to have the discussions. But it does need to be a two-way engagement. It cannot be just the boss fronts up, the boss gives everything, the boss accepts the unions’ position and then we all go and sign up to an agreement. It is not how it is going to work.

**DR BOURKE:** Could you take us through the process of negotiation and how it is actually happening, the nuts and bolts perhaps?

**Mr Kefford:** We commenced discussions with unions shortly after the government had formed after the last election, and those conversations focused in the first instance around the sorts of housekeeping issues in the current agreements that we might all like to improve. By far the most significant part of those conversations, though, was to do with the structure of the agreements and we have proposed to the unions this time around a change in the structures which reflect the reality of the changes made to the Public Sector Management Act a few years ago with the creation of the single organisation under the head of service. Rather than being based around directorates, it is being organised across classification streams.

We have had some of these agreements for some time. There has been an agreement for nurses, doctors and so on and for teachers for some time. But essentially the change that we have proposed and that we are negotiating around now with the unions would see, for example, the administrative stream applied right across the service so that everyone who is engaged at the ASO classifications is engaged under the same agreement, whereas at the moment we have what are essentially the same provisions mirrored in directorate-level agreements. A similar thing applies for general services officers and for professional and technical classifications. We are essentially employing everyone in the service in the same classification under the same agreement, and that will make the task of actually managing the workforce more efficient and simpler as we go into the future.

We have been meeting since, I think it was, February—and my staff will correct me if I have overstated that, but certainly since the beginning of this year—on a regular basis with the unions to discuss issues around how that structure might work. We needed to have the structure settled before we could commence the bargaining process. We formally commenced the bargaining process a short while ago. And we are now in a process of regular and formal negotiation discussions.

We have sought, as we are required to do, nominations from bargaining representatives who seek to represent themselves or groups of colleagues as well. And we have been having useful discussions with the unions now for some time and, as the

Chief Minister has outlined, these are wide ranging and cover the full range of issues that you would expect to be addressed in that sort of forum.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, if I could bring you to page 39 of budget paper 4, in the output class at the top there, the first indicator is whole-of-government policy and project initiatives and shows six in the estimated outcome for 2012-13 and then three for the new target. Could you go through what those projects are?

**Ms Davoren:** Each year we identify a series of whole-of-government projects as an accountability indicator. We had predicted we would do four in this current financial year. We are expecting to deliver six. The first was implementation of service planning, which has been discussed before at these committees. The second was the Auditor-General Amendment Bill. The third was the support for the review of the size of the Assembly. We provided secretariat support for that review.

The fourth was the implementation of oversight of the targeted assistance strategy, which was released last year. The fifth was implementation of triple bottom line reporting on policy proposals to cabinet, which is a whole-of-government project. Again, I think we have discussed that issue here before. And the sixth was a pilot for mobile apps which is being run in conjunction with NICTA.

In this next financial year we have predicted that we would do three projects. That is largely because one of the projects around service planning is a slightly larger project. We think that would take more time. That is to continue the implementation of service planning, which is a quite substantial across-government initiative. The second one we expect to be a project around digital city, which is looking at opportunities for Canberra and also the region around digital and ICT. The third is one of the initiatives in the budget, which is to support the scoping and implementation of study Canberra.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** And it was estimated that the six would be completed? They were all completed in that first—

**Ms Davoren:** They will be, yes. I think we have pretty well done all of those, yes.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I am quite interested in the NICTA project, the mobile apps. How far along is that now?

**Ms Davoren:** That has been quite well progressed, and I ask Mick Chisnall, who has been working directly on that project, to address the committee.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, we can ask questions on both in 1.1 and 1.2, given the blurred distinction between the two and where we are heading as well.

**Mr Chisnall:** The mobile Canberra project is being undertaken in a number of phases. What is particularly interesting is that it is a collaborative partnership through the e-government cluster committee group as part of the NICTA arrangements. What we are doing here is somewhat experimental. A young SME, small to medium enterprise, is working with us to overcome a number of technical problems associated with the creation of apps by government. Our main strategy in terms of apps is not to be the source of apps. It is rather to provide the data to the community so that the community,

developers and others can build things out there and hopefully make an economic impact associated with that.

But from time to time we do have to commission apps that we believe should be created and provided to the community. The nature of the apps is such that there is an implied universal service requirement. It is unfair for the government to release apps that only favour a certain device rather than another sort of device. So it is very important to have a technology that does not require really expensive maintenance with a whole lot of different devices.

The nature of the experiment with NICTA, which has been successful in the first phase, the production of a prototype, is to use so-called HTML5 technology, which effectively means that you can use a single code base for a variety of apps. So there was a level of innovation, a technical risk, a technical innovation in this project.

We have completed phase 1. Phase 1 was completed with some success. Phase 2 started this financial year, whereby we are overcoming some of the few technical issues that came out of that associated with performance. A lot of it is fine. However, we did not think it was releasable because it is a bit slow when it comes to the location. In the next phase, we will be looking at a hybrid of device and also HTML5 technology. There are a number of things going on. With the success of that, we will be releasing an appropriate app. September is the target date.

**MR SMYTH:** Chief Minister, what are the savings for the Chief Minister's directorate this year?

**Ms Gallagher:** We can certainly address those for you.

**Ms Davoren:** Total savings for the Chief Minister and Treasury Directorate, which includes the superannuation provision account, is 1.353 in 2013-14. The SPA has identified savings by reassessing its future supplies and service estimates for the amounts paid to ComSuper for the administration and management of CSS and PSS member accounts and actuarial fees and legal expenses, and the savings represented by a reduction in supplies and services as detailed in the SPA statement of income and expenses on page 66 of BP4.

The balance of the CMT portfolio savings will be realised by the directorate. So the savings target for the directorate this year is \$950,000, and it is represented by a reduction in appropriation. We will be achieving that by some savings in the centenary, restructuring the Treasury function and also reducing use of consultants across the agency and applying general savings across the directorate to reduce costs.

**MR SMYTH:** The \$950,000 figure appears on page 43 in the changes to appropriation. Why are there no savings for 2014-15 and 2015-16?

**Ms Gallagher:** Because I have not agreed to those yet.

**MR SMYTH:** But you have agreed to savings in 2016-17?

**Ms Gallagher:** There will be savings. Page 43—

**MR SMYTH:** About halfway down.

**Ms Gallagher:** Paul can answer that.

**Mr Ogden:** As Ms Davoren mentioned before, the starting total for savings for the portfolio was 1.3, going down to 192 in 2016-17. With the SPA able to achieve savings of \$403,000, \$427,000 and \$429,000, the balance of that is transferred to the directorate itself. So for 2014-15 and 2015-16, there were no savings for the directorate component of the total portfolio savings.

**MR SMYTH:** Is Chief Minister's the only directorate immune from savings in 2014-15 and 2015-16?

**Mr Ogden:** Not that I am aware of.

**Ms Gallagher:** In the sense that they have met the target; I think that is what Mr Ogden is saying.

**MR SMYTH:** On that page, a bit above it, ACT government 2.0. Where does that \$75,000 come from and has it since been expended?

**Ms Davoren:** That was rolled over from an initiative in a previous budget. It has been put into supporting the mobile apps project this financial year.

**MR SMYTH:** So that has gone to the apps?

**Ms Davoren:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** If you go down to the commonwealth grants, second-last line, liveable cities, what is happening there in 2012-13 and 2013-14?

**Mr Ogden:** Liveable cities in 2012-13 was originally funded for \$500,000. Based on the commonwealth budget this was revised down by \$143,000 in 2012-13 and then rolled into 2013-14. The original appropriation provided an additional \$14,000 in 2013-14. So it is just a re-profile.

**MR SMYTH:** Is that city to the lake or is that the city plan?

**Ms Gallagher:** It is both.

**MR SMYTH:** A bit of both. In the last line, the ACT Ombudsman: why are we taking \$104,000 off the Ombudsman in 2016-17?

**Mr Ogden:** This represents that the funding was only provided for four years. It is a technical adjustment that removes the funding from the budget itself. It was a 2012-13 initiative and only provided a four-year budget.

**MR SMYTH:** If it only provided for four years, why are there funds in the fifth year?

**Mr Ogden:** What happens with the budget system is that it rolls automatically into the outyears and you have to remove the funding.

**MR SMYTH:** The savings you said were the centenary, Treasury and consultants. How much money has been taken out of the centenary?

**Mr Ogden:** \$100,000.

**MR SMYTH:** Why was that taken out?

**Mr Ogden:** We went through a process of identifying where savings could be achieved and the centenary found \$100,000.

**MR SMYTH:** What is not going ahead as a consequence?

**Mr Ogden:** I would have to take that on notice.

**MR SMYTH:** Okay. What are you reducing the consultants spend by?

**Mr Ogden:** I would say \$120,000.

**MR SMYTH:** That was just unallocated funds that were there for consultancies?

**Mr Ogden:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Can we go back to the accountability indicators on page 39. Why is there no update to the ACT strategic plan this year?

**Ms Gallagher:** Because I have been working with the directorate about a new way of reporting. That work is almost finished. It started in this budget around themes that you will see in this budget. It is just in the final stages now. So you can attribute that failure to deliver to me.

**Ms Davoren:** Our accountability indicator was to propose a new strategic plan format to the Chief Minister, which I think she might agree we have done, and that will be delivered early in the next financial year.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, you have. So they have delivered.

**MR SMYTH:** But is that the outcome for the 2012-13 year—that you have updated the strategic plan; in this case, its format?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** There will be no work done on the strategic plan next year?

**Ms Davoren:** Because it is a one-off initiative to update the strategic plan. Therefore in effect it is not applicable for 2013-14. Obviously we have got, across the years, the government progress report, which is then reporting on progress against the strategic plan. So it is that periodic update of a long-term strategic plan and then reporting on



progress.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving to further accountability indicators in budget paper 4, on page 39 there is a ceased initiative, which was a review of the Public Sector Management Act. It says:

Discontinued measure. This measure covered the conduct of a review of the *Public Sector Management Act* ... as recommended in the Hawke Review ...  
This measure will not be completed due to changed priorities.

Can you explain why that review will not be completed? I understand that was a recommendation from the Hawke review that the government had accepted.

**Ms Gallagher:** It was a recommendation of the Hawke review. It has not been achieved because when the directorate have looked at what needs to be done they have provided me with advice that it is a much larger piece of work that needs to be undertaken to align the Public Sector Management Act with the enterprise agreements and associated instruments that hang off that to align for work. I think the advice to me was that it is a two to three-year project.

**Mr Kefford:** Mr Hanson, I think it is also the case that the work is continuing in another form. With respect to what you are seeing here, the measure against this was to be a discussion paper around the review. That is still the process that we are continuing to do work on. The Chief Minister is correct; we have been providing her with some draft advice on how to tackle it.

The recommendation that Dr Hawke made was very broad and there remains work to be done in that space. Part of how the delay has come to be is that shortly after the Assembly passed the changes constituting the single organisation it was our advice to the government that to focus around the values and behaviours was a more fruitful place to start than launching straight into the act. So we went through the process that we have spoken about here before, which led to the new code of conduct which was released in October last year. Having had that discussion with staff about what a single organisation looks like and how we should expect our people to behave and the values that underpin that structure, that then gives us a better base to commence the rest of the discussions.

The other issue that plays into this space is the simple practicalities of what has been a rolling cycle of industrial negotiations. Trying to have those discussions at the same time as undertaking the sort of work that is involved in a review of the act puts a strain on us and, indeed, on the unions with whom we would need to consult, such that it has been our advice that we need to stage it differently. But, as I say, it is certainly the case that that work will continue and the Chief Minister has agreed that we will prepare a discussion paper around reform to the act by the end of this year.

**THE CHAIR:** If I can put that in plain English, your barney with the unions is making it difficult for you to have a chat with them about what reforms need to be made; therefore you put it on hold until the barney is over?

**Mr Kefford:** No, I would not characterise it that way at all, Mr Hanson. It is more a

reflection of the effort that needs to be brought to bear on the capacity of the service to support the sort of work that is involved in reforming the act. I think it is also the case that one of the areas that make this discussion complex is the extent to which the Public Sector Management Act interacts with, and in some cases is overridden by, the industrial agreements, as well as the nature and complexity of the standard. So it is not just a simple matter of picking up the PSM and saying, “Is this okay?”

The other element that feeds into our considerations here, of course, is that the commonwealth has just been through a very lengthy process of reforming its own act. So it seems to me there is some sense in waiting for that process to play out too. And New South Wales is in a similar space.

**THE CHAIR:** When do you anticipate that this process will be complete and we will see something that is an analysis or a review of the act?

**Mr Kefford:** I think the first tangible thing would be the discussion paper to which I just made reference, which is at the end of this calendar year. Depending on what the response is to that, and the capacity of the Assembly—

**THE CHAIR:** Does that discussion paper go to the Chief Minister or is that a public document?

**Ms Gallagher:** There will be a very public process undertaken as part of the review.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving more broadly to the Hawke review, that is a bit of a change to what he had recommended or how it is being implemented. Are there any other changes that you are making to the recommendations that you previously agreed to? If so, why?

**Ms Gallagher:** I cannot think of any. I am not sure we are changing our position in relation to the Public Sector Management Act. It is just going to be a very thorough response.

**THE CHAIR:** In terms of the recommendations that you are implementing, are they all complete or are there any outstanding recommendations from the Hawke review?

**Ms Gallagher:** In the interests of having a fulsome answer, we will take it on notice.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Smyth, a supplementary.

**MR SMYTH:** There are a just a couple more figures I would like to go through before we finish this sort of stuff. In the staffing on page 31, you went from 139 to 275. That is the transfer of Treasury and injury management. It says it is mainly due to that. What is the component? What is the breakdown of the 136?

**Ms Gallagher:** We might take that one on notice too—hang on.

**Ms Davoren:** The increase from the original budget is primarily due to inclusion of staff from former Treasury, as we have mentioned.

**Ms Gallagher:** That is 86.

**Ms Davoren:** It is inclusion of staff from injury management safety.

**Ms Gallagher:** That is 36.

**Ms Davoren:** Additional centenary of Canberra temporary positions—five.

**Ms Gallagher:** Five.

**Ms Davoren:** Short-term contracts and leave backfill arrangements to cover maternity leave and leave without pay situations is an additional nine people. And a decrease in three FTE in the 2013-14 budget is primarily due to the cessation of centenary of Canberra temporary positions, offset by recruitment actions or short-term contracts and leave backfill arrangements.

**MR SMYTH:** I go to page 35, output class 1, government strategy. The budget this year was \$42 million. The budget next year is \$30 million. What are the ins and outs?

**Mr Ogden:** I would have to break it down into each output, rather than the output class, so bear with me. With output 1.1, the increase in the 2013-14 budget from the estimated outcome was mainly due to the transfer of the local government membership from TAMS, 115,000, and the study Canberra initiative. This is partially offset by the movement in allocation of corporate overheads. For 1.2, public sector management, there is a decrease of \$1.613 million. This is a result of the cessation of the ACTPS workers compensation and work safety improvement plan and the removal of the impact of rollovers from previous appropriations, again partially offset by the full-year impact of the transfer of the injury management and safety unit.

**Ms Gallagher:** And then it is 1.4.

**Mr Ogden:** Sorry, 1.4.

**Ms Gallagher:** That is the big change. It is the centenary program ceasing.

**Mr Ogden:** Which is a decrease of \$13.019 million in 2013-14. That is a decrease in the centenary program activities, removal of the impact of the rollovers of prior years and removal of the impact of rollovers for the community centenary initiative fund, offset by revised funding profiles for the centenary of Canberra that roll into 2013-14.

**MR SMYTH:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Dr Bourke.

**DR BOURKE:** I have a supplementary on where we have been going with the staffing there. How would updating the recruitment guidelines fit into this process that you are talking about? Mr Kefford?

**Mr Kefford:** The guidelines were the subject of comment in the Auditor-General's report around public sector recruitment. We accepted the recommendation that those

guidelines needed to be updated to both reflect the passage of legislation in the time during which that existed and also ensure that they were consistent with current practices and procedures. That work is underway. We are preparing a draft for consideration by first the HR directors group and then the People and Performance Council for their endorsement. That is work that is underway.

**DR BOURKE:** What sort of consultation is involved in that process?

**Mr Kefford:** Those two groups exist across the service for us to have conversations about matters going to the employment of staff. So we are able to both share information with our colleagues in other directorates and also draw on the good practice that exists. One of the things that we are still finding is that, reflecting the history, particularly across the age of this document, directorates have prepared their own guidance which addresses similar sorts of spaces, and so there is an exercise of synthesis as well as engagement with the Government Solicitor for their specialist advice as well as with Shared Services around the practical delivery of those particular processes.

**DR BOURKE:** Moving to another topic, the demographic update on page 39, at d., what are the main features of that update, Chief Minister? And what influence has it had on government policy and strategy?

**Ms Davoren:** We have an ongoing commitment in our accountabilities to improve our demographic information. That is to both inform policy and work across government but also to publish that so that it is available more generally to the community. The work is largely focused around doing finer, detailed work that has flowed out of the 2011 census. The information has been used to compile profiles of areas. With areas that are the focus of planning strategy in particular regions such as SEROC, the South East Regional Organisation of Councils, we have used that in the preparation of a strategic land use plan for our work in the region. But also it has been used across ACT government. The demography areas delivered this year are the 2011 census fact sheets. There have been a series of fact sheets—15 so far. As we have got increased detail out of the 2011 census, there has been work on those. There is a working paper on—

**Ms Gallagher:** Available online.

**Ms Davoren:** That is available on the CMTD website. There is a working paper on planning for the future population of Canberra, or C+1, which is about the areas surrounding Canberra, trying to move our focus from just ACT demography to an approach to regional demography. There is a working paper on recent trends in births and fertility in the ACT, a study investigating current patterns of and likely future trends in net overseas migration for Australia, a study of a hundred years of Canberra's population growth and a series of activities addressing the goals of the ACT information development plan, including six assessable workshop training sessions to improve statistical capability and share information. And there is the start of a demonstration project assessing the scale and pattern of cross-border service utilisation during 2011 and 2012.

**DR BOURKE:** What are the trends of overseas migration for the ACT?

**Ms Davoren:** I would have to take that one on notice.

**DR BOURKE:** All right. Just moving out of the detail and going back to the big picture, what is the overall take-home message from this demographic work for the ACT?

**Ms Davoren:** For us it is the issue about population ageing and where that is happening across the different areas of Canberra, and also enabling our approach to spatial data. Over time, we would like to be able to get more detailed information about local areas. It is also looking at the dynamic nature of our regional population.

**DR BOURKE:** Obviously that ageing population is going to have impacts around health, which we are all very aware of. In what other areas would an ageing population start to bring about effects such as workforce availability and those kinds of issues?

**Ms Davoren:** The issue for us is, as you say, that the participation rate over time is going to be an issue of concern. So you are looking at informing—sorry; I am about to lose my voice—policies around older workers and maintaining retention of older workers in the workforce, but also looking at skills enhancement for workers of all ages so that you are getting more agility within the entirety of your workforce. The other interesting issue is the reliance on the region in terms of our workforce: it is not just a workforce within the ACT borders; we are drawing on a broader region.

**DR BOURKE:** You have talked about work you are doing with SEROC around that area?

**Ms Davoren:** Yes. There is great interest from all the regional councils. They do not always have that same kind of capability within their area; so that is one thing that we have been able to bring to the table. I think it is the start of a long-term area of work. But that issue about working together to understand the demographic diversity and influences in the region is an important issue and, as I said, well appreciated.

**DR BOURKE:** Of course, those towns that surround Canberra are particularly important as almost dormitory suburbs for Canberra. Do we have any greater information about that as a result of this demographic work?

**Ms Davoren:** We are just about to release work—either late this financial year, which is, obviously, over the next week, or early next financial year—which will start to paint a more detailed picture of our regional demography. What we had done last year was just sketch out what that framework might look like, and we are going to populate that with new data over the next few months.

**DR BOURKE:** How is that going to factor back into our focus on regional development?

**Ms Davoren:** I think it will provide an immense support for more detailed service planning, because that is an issue of great importance to the ACT. There are very strong growth rates in those surrounding areas. Also, it would impact on both the

workforce in the ACT and also our key service areas. There is also the issue about not just approaching the region as a deficit model but looking at the opportunities available to officers—broadening that kind of statistical information to look at it from an economic perspective and look at the economic opportunities that the region might offer us

**DR BOURKE:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** I note that the Minister for Regional Development will be appearing at 4.10 this afternoon.

**Ms Gallagher:** That is when I am turning up.

**THE CHAIR:** You are going to turn up, are you? You do not feel as though you are here at the moment?

**Ms Gallagher:** Not with my regional development hat on.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, on page 39 of budget paper 4, the publication of the state of the service report gets its own line. Why is the report so important?

**Ms Gallagher:** I will let the commissioner own that one.

**Mr Kefford:** Thank you, Chief Minister. Mr Gentleman, thank you for your question. The reflection here is the kind of final formal change away from the publication of separate documents—the workforce profile, which is the ACTPS report as it was, which is largely a statistical bulletin on the service, which I have for the last two years combined into a single document which picks up the statistical information, a report on my activities as commissioner and a range of matters, including reporting on the implementation of the RED framework as well as some statistical data around behaviour and conduct across the service. It has been my desire, in combining those documents, to bring together in one place the information that we have about our service so that it is a much more useful base of information for us as managers and leaders in the service.

The last element of that to be brought together will be the findings of the census, about which we have had conversations here before. It is not only a useful document internally to the service but it gets provided to my colleagues in the other jurisdictions and, I know, to other people who are interested in the way in which the service operates and functions and the role that we play in serving the people of Canberra. As I say, it is my intent, in bringing them together in one document, to provide an overall picture of the service that we are and how we are performing.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** In that last document, you said that you would be looking at “articulating and codifying service-wide values and behaviour” and implementing the RED framework, and then, of course, reporting on the RED framework. So that will occur in this—

**Mr Kefford:** The first report on the RED framework was incorporated in my state of the service report last year. This will be the second one this time. It is my intention that, as we get used to this being a single document, it will, hopefully, become—I would characterise last year's as a stapling together of three separate documents. Each time we do it, we are going to get better at telling a coherent story.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. We might leave it there; it is time for a break. After the break, we will get on to coordinated communications, community engagement and *Skywhale*.

**Sitting suspended from 3.13 to 3.29 pm.**

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome back, Chief Minister and officials. This must be your last go at it, is it, Mr Lasek?

**Mr Lasek:** I believe so, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** We will try and make it a memorable one for you then.

**Mr Lasek:** Thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Were you here earlier for the administrative details I went through regarding the privilege statement?

**Mr Lasek:** I was here. I understand it and have read it.

**THE CHAIR:** That is great. We are moving to output 1.4, coordinated communications and community engagement, incorporating the *Skywhale*. I might move directly to that, if I could.

**Ms Gallagher:** There is not a *Skywhale* output class.

**THE CHAIR:** There is not a separate one? You did not decide to put one in the budget?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** Not in future years? Maybe you can go to that anyway.

**Ms Gallagher:** I would point out that the centenary program is bigger than the *Skywhale*, although not as well endowed perhaps.

**DR BOURKE:** Would it not be an input of hot air rather than an output?

**THE CHAIR:** I think the rest of the budget is the output of hot air and that is the input, but anyway.

**Ms Gallagher:** There are jokes galore with the *Skywhale*, aren't there?

**THE CHAIR:** I believe Mr Stanhope was in the Assembly today.

**Ms Gallagher:** There has been a sighting of the—

**THE CHAIR:** I had reports that there was a sighting. I note his comments regarding the *Skywhale*. You might update us as to whether you have had any discussions with him about this.

**Ms Gallagher:** I have.

**THE CHAIR:** I have been partaking in quoting Mr Stanhope quite a lot lately. His quote was: “I just think it is selfish. I think it is self-indulgent. It sort of smacks of arrogance. I think it was a misstep. I think it is politically naive. I fear that this particular incident, this particular expenditure, this particular piece of public art, will come to symbolise the year. It is divisive.” Have you had any conversations with Mr Stanhope about those comments?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, I have.

**THE CHAIR:** Have you? Would you like to—

**Ms Gallagher:** No. I have conversations with Jon about a whole range of things. Nothing more than what I said publicly, which is on this matter I disagree with him, respectfully.

**THE CHAIR:** Right. What other feedback have you got about that particular piece of public art?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think the *Skywhale* elicits strong views on both sides. That is my reading of it. There are people that disagree with it and its artistic merit and there are those that speak very highly of it and its artistic merit. In that sense, perhaps that is what all public art does, in my view, after watching public arts debates rage across the city, some being fuelled by others. In that sense, I do not see it as any different from the discussions that have been had in Canberra for a long time.

**THE CHAIR:** In all seriousness, do you think that is going to perhaps take away from the way the centenary year is viewed by Canberrans?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**THE CHAIR:** That the negative feedback about *Skywhale* is going to colour the way people see the year?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, I do not think so. I think it forms an extremely small part of the centenary program. It is obviously a very visible part and a very visually stimulating image in people’s minds, negative and positive, but, no, I do not think people would define it by the *Skywhale*.

**THE CHAIR:** If I can move to Robyn Archer’s appointment. There has been some commentary in the media about her pay. If I can just get the detail of what that is in terms of the full entitlements that she has been paid and what is expected out of that in



terms of how much work she has been doing—for example, how many hours or months she has been doing, and also the details of things like business class trips that she has been taking, the flights I believe she has been taking, and what was the purpose of those.

**Ms Gallagher:** How much detail do you want on that? I am not sure we can give you details of every flight she has taken. She has done at least two overseas trips that I am aware of that I can recall straightaway.

**THE CHAIR:** What was the purpose of those trips?

**Mr Lasek:** The trips were primarily to promote the centenary. They came after the launch of the centenary program in September last year. Ms Archer did a national tour to promote the centenary, primarily to the media in the Australian capital cities. That was followed by visits to India, the United Kingdom and Washington. She was invited to speak in London at Australia House. She gave a memorial lecture. She was the first woman invited to give that lecture and that received some solid media coverage. At the invitation of the ambassador to the United States, Kim Beazley, Ms Archer spoke at the Washington embassy and did some media engagements in the United States as well. It was, I guess, trying to piggyback off the launch in Canberra in September last year to spread the message about our centenary further afield. It is always one of our big challenges, getting the message about Canberra out further.

**THE CHAIR:** The appointment that Ms Archer has—that is a part-time appointment with the ACT government because she is maintaining a number of other roles?

**Ms Gallagher:** She is not contracted by hours. She is contracted over a period of time, a calendar year, for example. I think her last contract goes for 16 months; it was extended once the decision was taken to have an entire year of the celebrations. I think in Robyn's response to some of the concern that has been raised around her salary level—I do not believe it was you that originally raised the concern; it was the *Canberra Times* that decided to run that story of a contract that had been published since 2009—a report I saw from Robyn as part of her normal reporting processes in the centenary, was that in a 180-day period there had been three days or four days without a centenary responsibility. It is not your average job. She will at times work 14 hours a day. I have seen her at both ends of it, doing multiple speeches and a number of events. She works on the weekends frequently. It is not a nine to five Monday to Friday or 8.30 to 4.51 job, and the contract reflects that.

**DR BOURKE:** How many centenary events have there been so far?

**Mr Lasek:** I do not think we have tallied them up, but I think it is fair to say hundreds and hundreds, and Ms Archer has been at the vast majority of those. There was a procurement process and expression of interest to seek someone of status and experience. Following that process we went for a request for tender and Ms Archer was successful. There was a negotiation on a fee. It was informed, I guess, by the remuneration that she has received previously. I do not think she would mind me saying that she felt a four-year commitment—in fact, it will be more than four years—warranted a reasonable fee. But the fee she requested, she said, was in fact perhaps below what she would normally earn in an average year. We felt we had the

outstanding candidate and we were able to meet the fee. The budget for the centenary had been set. We still believe we are getting great value for money from someone of such international repute as an artistic creative director.

**THE CHAIR:** Does Ms Archer reside in Canberra, or does she reside interstate and then come to Canberra?

**Mr Lasek:** She has a residence in Canberra.

**Ms Gallagher:** She has had to. This is not her home city, so she has had to—

**THE CHAIR:** Come here for the duration.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, for the work, and rent a house and live there. I would just say that Ms Archer is not able to be here today. She has a personal commitment to her mother. I did not want people to think she was avoiding this committee.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** It is quite an interesting position, isn't it? I have not seen a position like that where you actually have to create-manage a program like this. I think that at almost all of the events that I have been to she has been there and has informed the community at the event. She has provided the message and entertained at the same time.

**Mr Lasek:** Yes, it is a very unique role. I guess that has been one of the challenges. The centenary itself is unique. We have researched and I do not think there has been a city in Australia that has tried to do what we are doing this year—to roll out a 12-month festival, essentially. Festivals in Australia tend to be two or three weeks duration. That is how difficult it was to find a benchmark remuneration package. Robyn has been the festival director for the Melbourne Festival and the Adelaide Festival. She has created festivals in Tasmania and other places. She has worked in Europe. But they were festivals over a two or three-week period. It was very difficult to find something similar. I know that she has made some big sacrifices for some amazing offers that have come her way because she has committed to our program over such a long period. She has put her career largely on hold as an entertainer, someone who is sought after nationally and internationally, and that is because she has been so passionately committed to our city and our centenary program.

**THE CHAIR:** Does the remuneration include her accommodation?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, there is an accommodation allowance. That is all available as part of the contract. There is a professional fee, which is this year. It has been indexed, essentially, with the CPI, I think. This year it is \$291,000. There is a residential accommodation allowance of \$26,000, technology expenses of \$4,000 and travel expenses of \$20,000.

**Mr Lasek:** If I may, I think for most of the four-year contract Robyn has underspent on her travel. She has travelled a lot, primarily for the centenary, but a lot of that travel has been paid for by people who want her to come and speak to them, which has meant there has been minimal impact on the travel budget for most of the time—other than that very busy period when the program was launched and we really

wanted her to be out there spruiking Canberra and spruiking the centenary.

**THE CHAIR:** That is \$341,000, is it? Is that what that adds up to?

**Ms Gallagher:** Roughly, yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Plus she is doing other jobs on top of that.

**Ms Gallagher:** Well, that is her own decision. She is certainly not able to do what she would have. There are sacrifices that she had to make for a four-year commitment.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes.

**Ms Gallagher:** But she is paid appropriately for it, I think. There is no way anyone is suggesting she has been badly paid. She is being very well paid, but she is doing a very good job. I cannot think of anyone—and I have had more insight into this than perhaps anyone other than Jeremy and Adam—that has worked harder for the centenary year or harder to promote Canberra over the last four years. On our tourism numbers alone, if you have a look at what has been delivered through those tourism numbers, I think you will have to acknowledge that the centenary has played a part in that. If you acknowledge that, you have got to acknowledge that the creative director has played a part in that.

**DR BOURKE:** Is there an update on those tourism numbers there?

**THE CHAIR:** Just while we are going through the costs, is there an additional cost for reasonable out-of-pocket and entertainment costs?

**Mr Lasek:** No. I believe that is factored into the total package.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it, of the \$341,000? Can you just confirm that for me?

**Mr Lasek:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** You might need to take on notice whether that entertainment expense is in addition or inclusive?

**Mr Lasek:** I am told it is wrapped into the full package.

**THE CHAIR:** Is it?

**Mr Lasek:** As the Chief Minister outlined.

**THE CHAIR:** Thank you. Dr Bourke, you had a question?

**DR BOURKE:** It was a supplementary about those tourism numbers, as to whether there was an update that you could share with the committee.

**Ms Gallagher:** The national visitors survey, which is the most up-to-date data that we have got, has seen big increases in domestic travellers to Canberra and, importantly,

in domestic overnight travellers, against national trends. I am not talking about small adjustments here; we are seeing a 16.9 per cent increase on the previous year in tourism compared to a growth of 0.8 per cent nationally. It has obviously had something to do with the centenary year. Visitor nights are up 38 per cent, when we are seeing visitor nights up 4.3 per cent nationally. I know our figures jump around a little bit, but these are really positive results, and we should be proud of what has been achieved to date. It will all be continuously evaluated, as I know Mr Smyth's question will go to.

**MR SMYTH:** No, my question is not on that.

**Ms Gallagher:** Tourism numbers will feed into that as part of it. But there have been many times this year when you have not been able to get a room in Canberra, and that is an excellent result. I acknowledge the interest in being accountable for one salary, but I cannot express to the committee how much I have witnessed and how hard Ms Archer works. In a whole range of areas, the woman is a dynamo, and I feel very confident that we have got value for money through that contract.

**DR BOURKE:** Moving to the coordinated communications and community engagement on—

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry, before we go off the centenary—

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

**MR SMYTH:** Yes. With reference to the *Skywhale*, why was the decision taken to give the balloon away and how was it determined that it go to a Victorian company?

**Ms Gallagher:** It feels like *deja vu*; we have had these questions. We did not want to own a balloon.

**MR SMYTH:** So if you did not want to own a balloon, why did we commission a balloon?

**Ms Gallagher:** As part of the centenary celebrations, we wanted a balloon, or a balloon was decided to form part of the celebrations. But in an ongoing sense, outside the centenary year, we did not want, nor did the territory want, the costs of maintaining and looking after a hot air balloon long term.

**Mr Lasek:** There is always a safety factor. We do not have the expertise within government to operate, maintain, fly and keep safe something like a balloon. There has been a bit of a history of governments paying for balloons. Some of us may have seen the Questacon balloon, the Quit Smoking balloon, and I think Sunsmart. My understanding is that they were balloons paid for by governments but run and operated by independents. So essentially the balloons—

**MR SMYTH:** But my understanding is they are still owned by the government and there is an operating arrangement with the balloon company.

**Mr Lasek:** I am not aware of that.

**MR SMYTH:** Was that option explored, the government owning it and—

**Mr Lasek:** It was, yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Why wasn't that followed?

**Mr Lasek:** There was no interest within government or the areas within government who might operate the balloon.

**MR SMYTH:** No, but the government kept ownership but allowed somebody else to operate it.

**Mr Lasek:** I beg your pardon?

**MR SMYTH:** The government would keep ownership and contract a company to provide the flights.

**Mr Lasek:** We looked at it. We sought GSO advice, and the advice was that the option that perhaps was best for the government and for the future of the balloon was that it is run by a professional company. We went through a process to seek out the best company to run it, and it turned out that the Melbourne-based company won the day.

**MR SMYTH:** How was that process run that gave the Victorian-based company as the best company to run it?

**Mr Lasek:** We went through, I think, a tender process and assessed the responses from two or three companies who responded. At least one was local. Based on the Melbourne company's expertise and their commitment to the project, this was not just about owning and flying a balloon around Canberra; it was about getting the message about Canberra out nationally and potentially internationally. We thought that was the best option, the best value for money going forward in terms of projecting the centenary project. Through international media, 28 countries have seen *Skywhale*. We have looked at the stories across those countries, and only four per cent have anything negative to say about the *Skywhale*, but all of them refer to Canberra, the centenary and Australia's national capital.

**MR SMYTH:** How were the three companies that responded contacted? Were they contacted directly or was it advertised?

**Mr Lasek:** I believe they were contacted directly.

**MR SMYTH:** How were those three companies determined?

**Mr Lasek:** I think we did some research. We sought advice from those who understand ballooning companies and they were the three that we went to.

**MR SMYTH:** Who were the three companies?

**Mr Lasek:** I will have to get that. I will have it for you in the next five minutes.

**MR SMYTH:** The largest company that operates special-shaped balloons in Australia, and certainly the southern hemisphere—possibly the world—was not contacted. Why were they not contacted?

**Mr Lasek:** I do not know.

**MR SMYTH:** How extensive was your search for—

**Ms Gallagher:** Can you let us know who you are talking about? We are going to be naming other businesses.

**MR SMYTH:** Picture This Ballooning. They are a company that will operate a balloon—they operate the football balloon over the MCG and things like that.

**Mr Lasek:** That is Mr Crock's company?

**MR SMYTH:** It is Mr Crock's company, yes. They operate but do not own the balloons, and they were unaware of this. How could we have not gone to the largest operator of special-shaped balloons in the country?

**Mr Lasek:** I do not know. We sought advice. I claim no expertise in ballooning, so we went within government to people who—

**MR SMYTH:** Who did we get the advice from?

**Mr Lasek:** I will have to get that advice for you.

**DR BOURKE:** Do you think, Chief Minister, some of the confusion around how this balloon is viewed relates to the relatively ethereal nature of the balloon and the services that it is providing to the community, in the same way that the fireworks, the golf, the symphony, the football match and the cricket were all things we did not own but happened here?

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**DR BOURKE:** And that we paid for.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, and in some instances, particularly relating to sport, paid a lot more for. I think it goes to exactly the feedback I have been getting around the centenary. I have had feedback from people considering that paying money for the one-day international was a waste of money, considering it only went for a certain amount of time on one day for a certain amount of people that could go and watch it at the ground. With the *Skywhale*, because it is unusual, it is different, it is art, it is not sport, people have found it difficult to measure the success or otherwise of the *Skywhale*. So, yes, I agree with you completely.

**THE CHAIR:** Members, we are moving into the time for—

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Lasek has got the—

**Mr Lasek:** I have got the—

**THE CHAIR:** Has he? I just want to make a point—

**DR BOURKE:** I have got a question as well.

**THE CHAIR:** Yes. I just want to make the point that we have moved into time for the ACT executive. I am happy to take questions on all of those categories.

**MR SMYTH:** I promise not to ask a question on the executive.

**Mr Lasek:** I have some quick advice on the run. We tend not to release information about unsuccessful tenderers. As for the other balloon company, I am just hearing that there may have been some safety concerns over an incident that happened in Victoria which may have influenced our decision.

**MR SMYTH:** Which other balloon company?

**Mr Lasek:** Picture This.

**MR SMYTH:** What were the safety concerns?

**Mr Lasek:** All I am told is there may have been an incident where the balloon went into the water somewhere. I guess safety—

**MR SMYTH:** I went into Lake Burley Griffin on a balloon flight. Balloons go into water all the time. It is the vagaries of the wind.

**Ms Gallagher:** *Skywhale* has not.

**MR SMYTH:** Be careful what you wish for!

**Ms Gallagher:** That is why she is named *Skywhale*.

**MR SMYTH:** Mr Lasek, we have given away a government asset on what appears to be a very thin selection of companies. I understand there are about 30 ballooning companies in the country. We managed to find three. I would like to know who the other two companies were—

**Ms Gallagher:** It is a subset of the ballooning companies, I think it is fair to say.

**MR SMYTH:** Sorry?

**Ms Gallagher:** As I understand it, it was a subset of ballooning companies with particular expertise in unusual-shaped balloons.

**MR SMYTH:** What expertise does Global Ballooning have in special-shaped ballooning?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think it was around the expertise that was required, Mr Smyth.

**MR SMYTH:** I say again: what expertise do Global Ballooning have in special-shaped ballooning? Did you assure yourself that they were qualified and the best-qualified people in the country to operate it?

**Ms Gallagher:** We have had no concerns with Global Ballooning in terms of the execution of the contract or their fulfilment of the responsibilities. The government took a decision not to own the balloon. We do not own the symphony, Mr Smyth. We have taken that decision as well—or the ballet.

**MR SMYTH:** We will get back to the symphony and the ballet in a moment.

**Ms Gallagher:** The sport, a whole range of things.

**MR SMYTH:** I am intrigued why the biggest provider of special shapes in the country was not asked.

**Ms Gallagher:** But the poor old Skywhale should be treated differently. We should own it, we should lock it in a cupboard—we do not have a balloon pilot or a department of ballooning—and keep it there outside of the centenary year.

**MR SMYTH:** Nobody suggested that. You can run the ridicule line, but that is not what I suggested. I would like to know the name of the two companies please.

**THE CHAIR:** If you could provide on notice, Chief Minister, the details regarding the three companies and their names.

**MR SMYTH:** And who provided the internal advice?

**THE CHAIR:** Yes, and what the process was for selecting those three companies and excluding other companies involved. We do need to move on.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I do have a question in regard to an event coming up later in the year, the centenary rally from Jervis Bay to the city. I just want to know how that is progressing.

**Mr Lasek:** It is going very well. The National Trust were provided with a grant through our centenary community initiatives fund. There was \$1 million in that fund, and that gave us the capacity to support 51 projects during the centenary year. The rally is one of the bigger projects, certainly in terms of scale, and it will be very visual as well. It will connect to our SPIN weekend on wheels in October, where we hope tens of thousands of Canberrans will get along to events that celebrate our connection to wheels, spinning wheels, spinning tops, wheelchairs and so on.

The rally will be from Jervis Bay, the ACT's historic port, through the hinterland to the ACT where there will be a major gathering of these vehicles on a weekend in October. And the planning is going very well. The National Trust have had some challenges this year but they have assured us that planning is on target and it will be a



terrific event as part of the final fling, I guess, in the centenary year.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** And the invitations to the event go out across Australia?

**Mr Lasek:** They do. Again, the National Trust are handling that. They have got interests from car clubs and car enthusiasts around the nation, we are told. The entries are still coming in. But it is a work in progress and appears to be going quite smoothly.

**THE CHAIR:** Moving, Chief Minister, to the ACT executive, why is it that you do not want to appoint or will not appoint a sixth minister?

**Ms Gallagher:** It is ultimately my decision.

**THE CHAIR:** That is right. And I am asking why you have made that decision not to do so.

**Ms Gallagher:** I have not. I have not appointed a sixth minister at this point. I think it is interconnected with some of the views you have got about committees and the views around the size of the Assembly. I am not saying that a decision around it is dependent upon achieving an outcome on the other two, but I think it is part of the consideration that needs to be had. I do not think we can just agree to expand one part of the Assembly without looking at the consequences on the other sides of the Assembly and the other parts of the Assembly that are equally as important for the Assembly to run efficiently and effectively.

**THE CHAIR:** And the decision to increase the size of the Assembly or not will not take effect until at the earliest October 2016. The decision to allow for a sixth minister can happen right now. The decision to have your backbench tied up on committees, two people on each committee, is yours. I am at a loss to understand why it is that you do not want to appoint a sixth minister, because you have got the mechanisms that are available to you now. You adjourned the debate—

**Ms Gallagher:** They are not available to me now.

**THE CHAIR:** Only because you adjourned the debate and refused to debate it.

**Ms Gallagher:** Ultimately it is a decision for me, and I will make that decision. You cannot read my mind; so you do not understand where I am at in forming a decision around that. I know what you are up to, basically is what I am saying. I know you would like to relieve one of our backbench off the committees. You would like to ensure that the Liberal Party has a majority on all committees, even if we hold chairs, and I can understand that from your point of view.

We have to consider the impact of that in terms of the overall running of the Assembly. It is very convenient for you to want one of our members off a committee, freeing up a committee spot for another Liberal member and to have majority membership, and not deal with the size of the Assembly. I think we should deal with the size of the Assembly, at least have a discussion—I have written to you about it and still have not had a response—along the lines of executive, size of the executive, size of the backbench or size of the non-executive members and size of the Assembly

overall, even though they may, indeed, happen at different times over the next few years. But it is a very convenient position for you to have, wanting to be so helpful—and forgive me for being a little cynical about that.

**THE CHAIR:** It is not my position. The advice from the Clerk that I provided to you said that the decision to put two members of the government on the committees was not consistent with the Latimer House principles and may be not in accord with the continuing resolution of the Assembly under the Latimer House principles. I would not say that this would be characterised as my position. That is the position of the Clerk of the Assembly.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, and I think we knew that. I do not know where you were with the debate in the Assembly in November last year. I think there was an acknowledgement that the result of the election created a different Assembly. Never in the history of the Assembly have opposition members had majority membership on all of the committees. And that is what you are seeking.

**THE CHAIR:** No, in all but one Assembly, non-government members have had a majority.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, non-government, but not one party, because there has been an effective crossbench to sit on the committees, which we do not have in this parliament. So it is very convenient, is what I am saying. And I thank you for your interest and your desire to be helpful on how we run the executive. But forgive me for being a little cynical and also for requesting that we have a look at the size of the Assembly as a genuine issue that this group of parliamentarians should be dealing with.

**DR BOURKE:** How does the size of the Assembly help the committee system?

**THE CHAIR:** I will finish, thanks. When I said I was not going to make a decision straight away on the size of the Assembly, you said that that was a lack of leadership, that that was a decision that should be made and a failure of leadership on my part, noting that that is a decision that does not need to be made for a couple of years, having sought advice from the Electoral Commissioner in this forum, and that that is something that cannot take effect until 2016, whereas there is something you can do right here and right now and you are refusing to take action on it and you are saying that it is your decision and you will make it when you want to.

**Ms Gallagher:** Because it is all interrelated.

**THE CHAIR:** One you characterise as a lack of leadership, but your decision you see as—

**Ms Gallagher:** It is all interrelated.

**THE CHAIR:** Will you provide that own criticism of yourself?

**Ms Gallagher:** I am providing leadership about the future of the Assembly. I am not shirking from that, even knowing how difficult it is. I do not believe that you can have a rational discussion about increasing the size of the Assembly in 2015. Forgive me, I

have been here a little longer than you. I do not think you can. I think if you are going to start making decisions about whether or not there should be more politicians in 2015, you are not a very good politician, because it will get heated, it will get political, people will be driven into camps and you will not be able to have that rational discussion that we do have the opportunity to have now but are not having.

In terms of the size of the ministry, I agree. You do not have to wait till 2016, and I may not. But I do think if you are going to increase the size of the executive, you have to look at the consequences on the committee system and you have to be thinking long term about the size of the Assembly.

You would like to participate in debates on two out of three of those. I want to have debates on three out of three. That is the difference in where we sit at the moment.

**DR BOURKE:** I rather thought the Electoral Commissioner gave a different piece of advice in his evidence to us two weeks ago regarding the increase in size of the Assembly. I rather thought he said that a decision would need to be made by next year, not in a couple of years. Chief Minister, perhaps you could expand more about how the larger Assembly, which has been recommended by the recent review, will impact upon the committee system?

**Ms Gallagher:** I think the briefing I had with the expert reference group when they were briefing me on their report said that they had started looking at what does a reasonable size of the executive need to be. And their view was that it needed to be eight or nine. And once they had agreed on that as a reasonable size for the current workload of the executive, they then translated from that how many members would you need if your executive was eight or nine. Obviously 17 is not going to cut it, because you will not have an effective opposition or enough members to sit on committees. That is my understanding of where they formulated the view that 25 growing to 35 over time was the right number.

You cannot expand the executive without having an impact on other areas of the Assembly. I said last year I would like to move to six ministers. I have had to look at how that would work in the current 8-8-1 Assembly, and it compromises the role of non-executive government members on committees, without a doubt. And I have to think about that, because I do not think that the Labor Party removing members from committees, allowing one party to have majority membership on all committees, which has never happened in the history of the Assembly, would always act in the best interests of the Assembly as a whole. Forgive me for thinking that.

**THE CHAIR:** What is the purpose of committees like this, would you consider, Chief Minister?

**Ms Gallagher:** I actually see the committee system serving an essential role in a functioning parliament and a functioning democracy. But that comes from having balance and equal representation of the elected members of the parliament. I do not think giving majority membership to the Liberal Party on committees is actually representative, as committees have been, of the elected parliament. It is a hung parliament, and it is a hung committee system at the moment in terms of the major parties.

**MR SMYTH:** So you think a hung committee system is good for democracy in the ACT?

**Ms Gallagher:** It can be and it should be. We are all adults, aren't we?

**MR SMYTH:** So you have deliberately hung the committee system in the ACT?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, we have not deliberately hung it. I am saying it is reflective. It has got equal membership of the committees. As I said in November, it is up to us to make the parliament that was elected by the people of the ACT work. This is what the people of the ACT have given us. Now, as adults, surely we can make that work. From my feedback, or from feedback from Labor members to me about how the committees are functioning, the committees are tabling reports, the committees are conducting inquiries, estimates processes are being had, annual reports processes occurred and recommendations are being made. I cannot see what the drama is that has got the Liberal Party so concerned about this. And forgive me again for being a little cynical that it is not about genuine concern about the size of the executive or the Latimer House principles—a late advocate of the Latimer House principles, Mr Hanson.

**THE CHAIR:** You seem to adopt them when they suit you, I suppose would be the point there.

**Ms Gallagher:** Well, we do, and you do have, under the—

**MR SMYTH:** You do adopt them when it suits you?

**Ms Gallagher:** No, under the—

**MR SMYTH:** That is what you just said.

**Ms Gallagher:** No. You keep interjecting, so I keep stopping.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** That is what Mr Hanson said, not the Chief Minister.

**Ms Gallagher:** What we have done is adopt the Latimer House principles. What you will see is that those important committees, PAC and the JACS committee, legal affairs, are chaired by opposition members, as is the estimates committee. As far as we can, within the membership that is here before us, acknowledging that Mr Rattenbury does not have a role on committees as a crossbencher, I think we have gone as far as we can with the elected representation that we have.

**THE CHAIR:** In the last Assembly you had five ministers and two backbenchers. This time you have got four ministers and four backbenchers. You could appoint another minister right now and you would still have five ministers from the Labor Party, just as you had last time. You still have not explained your reluctance to do that.

**Ms Gallagher:** There are different responsibilities around the committee system, acknowledging that the Greens do not sit on every committee. In fact, they do not sit

on any, and we have had to compensate for that. Our members are carrying as much as, if not more than, they were carrying in the last Assembly. Again, I am not complaining about that. No member has come to me and complained about that. It is a reflection of the elected will of the people of the ACT, and it is over to us to make it work.

**DR BOURKE:** Talking about communications and community engagement, how have the government's community engagement policies and practice evolved over the last few years?

**Mr Lasek:** They have evolved, I think, quite rapidly to reflect a changing environment, not just in Canberra but across the world. There is a greater adoption of use of social media. We now have embedded a regular community noticeboard in the *Canberra Times* that is also available online. That is where all key government information is posted. We have a time to talk website that came out of a major community consultation a couple of years ago, and that is now the one-stop shop for any community consultation or engagement.

We are running regular training in modern communication and community engagement methodologies, not just for staff within the ACT public service, but we have opened it out to allow some in the community to get involved as well. Another session is taking place in the next couple of weeks. It is always fully subscribed, so we are providing up-to-date training on modern engagement techniques to not just our staff but people in the community. They are getting tremendous take-up.

**DR BOURKE:** You talked about social media. Could you expand on which platforms you are actually using?

**Mr Lasek:** Yes. I guess it is all platforms—Facebook, Twitter, obviously web. It is the full gamut. These days I do not think governments cannot not be in that space. We have created a social media policy and guidelines document to guide our staff in that space. It is still an evolving piece of work in terms of people adopting that as a new method of communication. I do not think governments can avoid being in that sort of space at this time.

**DR BOURKE:** What about Twitter cabinet? How has that gone?

**Ms Gallagher:** It has worked really well. We are having a look at some of the feedback we are getting about the first four. I think the feedback we are getting is that people would like them scheduled with notice, having an understanding that they are going to occur every three months or something like that, rather than just two weeks out getting notice that it is going to be on. They do not want them necessarily on specific topics. They want them on general, all-encompassing topics. We had thought about doing separate ones, but I think the general ones are what people want. I think they have been very useful.

**DR BOURKE:** So there is quite a deal of engagement during the actual session. Is there any way that you can measure how many people are watching but not actually engaging?

**Ms Gallagher:** No.

**Mr Lasek:** No, unfortunately that is one of the challenges. We will never know. We do understand how many people are participating, but as with social media, I think a lot of people are there observing, interested, and I think social media is just another tool. People are still looking for information in letterboxes, ads in newspapers, perhaps on television and radio. So it is just another layer where we have got to be playing in that space for those who are seeking information in that space.

**DR BOURKE:** Of course, that is a particular demographic. But you also do some city-wide, whole-of-government newsletters?

**Mr Lasek:** Yes. The last one was the ninth annual newsletter. Again, with the responses to those newsletters, we do not do surveys every time we put them out but we have done two or three surveys. The feedback has always been very positive in terms of people liking to get information that way. In fact, with every survey we have done, they have said the preferred method of getting government information is through those newsletters in letterboxes. Every directorate is putting information out there. Of course, the one that has just gone out was very much focused on the centenary program, the activities in March. There is a whole range of other information that the community seems to be interested in. They seem to value getting the newsletter, and the feedback—

**Ms Gallagher:** They would like them quarterly, not annually.

**DR BOURKE:** How do you do those surveys, Mr Lasek?

**THE CHAIR:** Members, I have to draw your attention to the fact that we are now needing to move to regional development.

**Ms Gallagher:** Arboretum, is it?

**THE CHAIR:** We have moved past the time for arboretum. There were no questions on the arboretum. We will move forward. Noting the time, this might be something that we have a look at for next year so that there is further time available. But we have moved to the point where we have come to regional development. Before the staff perhaps disappear, we might do an adjustment on the run. I note that there is a committee inquiring into regional development.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** I do not know if members actually feel the need to go to that area or whether they would like to continue on with other areas.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, and we appeared before the regional development committee not long ago.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any particular questions on regional development? I am happy to go to it, but if there is a committee inquiry into it—

**DR BOURKE:** Can I finish off the line of questioning that I was running there? I was about to ask Mr Lasek about his surveys that he referred to about the government newsletters.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay, just noting that we will have less time for regional development.

**Mr Lasek:** The last survey we did was a random survey done independently of 1,000 Canberrans over the age of 18. They were surveyed this year between 15 and 17 March. The majority—almost 60 per cent—said they or someone in their household saw the newsletter. That was up on previous surveys. They recalled primarily the centenary of Canberra program. That was the most dominant content recall. Support for the newsletter increased for 2013, with eight in 10 rating it as excellent, very good or good. Nil rated it as poor. Around four in 10 people—38 per cent—say the newsletter prompted them to seek further information and/or attend events this year. As the Chief Minister said, quarterly is the preferred frequency for the newsletter—48 per cent said they would like to get the newsletter quarterly—and newsletters are the most preferred way to receive information from the ACT government. This year's survey was 67 per cent, in 2011 it was 58 per cent and in 2005 it was 56 per cent. So it seems to be delivering what people want.

**DR BOURKE:** And that is a telephone survey?

**Mr Lasek:** Yes, it is.

**DR BOURKE:** Mobiles, landlines or both?

**Mr Lasek:** I do not know. It just says telephone; I am not sure.

**THE CHAIR:** Are there any further questions for the ACT executive, coordinated communications or the arboretum?

**MR GENTLEMAN:** I might just go to the arboretum, to ask one question.

**THE CHAIR:** So it will be the arboretum, and then regional development, if there are any.

**Ms Gallagher:** The arboretum is just bringing the TAMS people in, because of where it sits.

**THE CHAIR:** Welcome, Mr Byles, and other officials. I remind you that these proceedings are being webstreamed. Can I confirm that you are aware of the content of the privileges statement?

**Mr Byles:** Yes.

**Ms Gallagher:** Yes, thank you.

**THE CHAIR:** Mr Gentleman.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Minister, there was a lot of discussion when the arboretum was

first proposed about how we were going to water the trees. Can you advise us how the water security irrigation proposal for the arboretum is going and how it will contribute to the upkeep of forests?

**Mr Byles:** The budget has funded a significant amount of money over the next four years to essentially future-proof the arboretum in terms of irrigation. Of course, prior to that and up until this current point in time, we have been trucking in water to water the trees. It is very important that we protect the natural asset there—arguably one of the most important parts, if not the most important part, of the arboretum itself. I might just ask Ms Steward, who is the executive director, to talk about the details of the irrigation project, with the Chief Minister’s permission.

**Ms Steward:** This project is going to effectively complete the master plan for irrigation for the arboretum. It is effectively to augment the existing system. We presently have a 40-megalitre dam with a bore and a 1.6-megalitre tank at the top of Dairy Farmers Hill. Effectively, from that, water is distributed to 34 forests. For the remaining forests, we have to use potable water, so we have to cart water in. What that means with the new system is that we will have an additional bore going in plus the reticulation system to enable all of the forests to be irrigated on site without the need to use any potable water whatsoever. At this point in time, we effectively have to fill up the tanks in the other parts of the arboretum that are not being fed from the existing bore and dam.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** And the dam plays a part in the amenity of the arboretum?

**Ms Steward:** Yes, it does.

**Ms Gallagher:** It does, yes.

**Ms Steward:** We have just had some plantings completed around the dam.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** What has been the rate of tree loss to date, and how do you think this water security plan will reduce the losses in future years?

**Ms Steward:** In terms of the tree losses, I will refer to Jason Brown, who is the general manager of the arboretum, if that is okay.

**Mr Brown:** At the moment, we have lost 2,677 trees. They have been replaced whilst they have been under contract. In terms of trees that have come across to the ACT government, we have lost 1,620 trees, which represent about four per cent of the collection to date.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** And that was due to?

**Mr Brown:** Various reasons, but one of the main reasons was that in the summer of 2011-12 and 2012-13 we lost a number of young trees due to the climatic conditions at the time. That was the main driver. Those trees were quite young and therefore quite susceptible. That is where most of the losses came from.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Finally, I want to ask about visitor numbers. What has been the



number of visitors we have had since the arboretum opened?

**Mr Brown:** At the moment we are sitting on approximately 198,000, give or take a few hundred. In the next few days, we will hit our 200,000th visitor to the arboretum. We are averaging about 45,000 visitors per month.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** What interest have you had in the new pavilion at the arboretum?

**Mr Brown:** Prior to the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion opening, we had a lot of interest; and since the opening that interest has grown significantly. At the moment I am probably approving three to four functions per week; at least two of those would be for the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion and the others would be for the visitors centre. Bookings are coming in thick and fast. Obviously, at the moment, because of the time of the year, we are not having a lot of events. Come spring and summer, we are not quite booked out but it is challenging to find an available date at the moment.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Thank you.

**DR BOURKE:** A supplementary on that. What sort of functions are you getting booked into the Margaret Whitlam Pavilion?

**Mr Brown:** We have had a range of functions to date. We have had corporate functions; we have had parties. We have weddings that are booked in as well. There is quite a range. We have had one funeral to date. All of those events have been quite a success, even though they are quite diverse.

**MR SMYTH:** Could you just elaborate on exactly what the irrigation infrastructure will be?

**Mr Brown:** Sure. As Ms Steward mentioned earlier, the irrigation program is quite extensive. It is constructed over a four-year period. In the first year, as Ms Steward indicated, we need to tap an existing bore and use the water for that bore to pump up to Dairy Farmers Hill, where there is a tank. The associated filtration equipment, pumping equipment and piping equipment need to be installed to get that water to Dairy Farmers Hill. From there, we can gravity feed to the forests under an automated system which provides a number of benefits. Primarily we can irrigate more than we can now. When we are using labour to irrigate, obviously we are restricted to about eight hours a day. Once we go into automation, we can start irrigating into the evening. We are getting less evaporation and we are obviously utilising the water more effectively.

**MR SMYTH:** And that is utilising the existing bore which has a licence and belongs to the ACT government?

**Mr Brown:** That is correct, yes, to the southern end of the site.

**DR BOURKE:** The pressure through your reticulation system that you are getting off the tank on the hill—that is adequate?

**Mr Brown:** Yes. It will be adequate for a certain amount of forest, but obviously not the whole of the site. That tank will not irrigate every forest. That tank obviously has a limited capacity, and the time of the year and how often that tank is utilised will determine how long we can keep that water source going for from that tank.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** As the trees mature, though, you would need to water less for the mature trees and then more for the immature?

**Mr Brown:** What we are doing at the moment—and this would carry on—is this. There are irrigation rings around each tree. In the first couple of years, we have about five holes around that irrigation ring. By about year 2 or 3, we restrict that to approximately two holes. So we are weaning the tree off the water supply and getting that tree used to natural precipitation.

**THE CHAIR:** Anything further for the arboretum? Thank you very much for attending this afternoon. We have only got five minutes remaining for regional development. I propose to the committee that, given that there is a separate select committee reporting in this area, we not inquire into this area. I just want to confirm that members of the committee are comfortable with that.

**DR BOURKE:** Okay.

**MR GENTLEMAN:** Yes.

**MR SMYTH:** Yes.

**THE CHAIR:** Okay. You get an early mark. As you are departing, I remind officials and members that questions on notice need to be answered within five business days, the first day being the day that you receive those questions. Thank you for appearing.

**The committee adjourned at 4.23 pm.**