



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

FRIDAY, 28 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

Community Services Directorate.....	1144, 1204, 1215
Office of the Legislative Assembly.....	1245

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Amended 20 May 2013

The committee met at 8.59 am.

Appearances:

Rattenbury, Mr Shane, Minister for Territory and Municipal Services, Minister for Corrections, Minister for Housing, Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and Minister for Ageing

Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director-General

Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Deputy Director-General

Overton-Clarke, Ms Bronwen, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services

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

Salerno, Ms Lisa, Director Housing ACT, Housing and Community Services

Tibbitts, Ms Alice, Senior Manager, Social Housing and Homelessness Services

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Executive Director, Policy and Organisational Services

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

THE CHAIR: This is our final day, pending the recall that is occurring on Monday. Minister, officials, welcome to day 11. These proceedings are being recorded on the Hansard but are also being live webstreamed. Are you all aware of the privilege card? Yes? Excellent. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Rattenbury: No, I think we will go straight to questions, Mr Hanson.

DR BOURKE: Minister, at page 355 of your 2013-14 priorities, can you tell me about the benefits of continuing to expand tenant employment programs in partnership with Spotless, Housing ACT's maintenance contract manager.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I will ask Ms Overton-Clarke to give the details of this program.

Ms Overton-Clarke: And I am going to defer to Mr Collett.

Mr Collett: Thank you very much, and, yes, it is a good news story. We have entered the second contract with Spotless as our total facilities manager. As part of the negotiations of the new contract, we were able to move from an incentive and an aspirational target for the employment of a range of people, including our tenants, to hard wiring it into the contract, as it were. So now it is a contractual obligation of Spotless under the contract to provide employment for young people, people from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, people with disabilities or public housing tenants. They have been able to work with the programs that we have piloted in the past which have provided work experience and training opportunities for our tenants through a commonwealth-funded program.

DR BOURKE: How many people are employed as a result of this initiative?

Ms Salerno: We have set targets under the contract: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, 10; tenants, 30; disability, 43; and youth 25. The targets are being met and, in fact, exceeded on disability and youth at the moment. Tenants are a little bit more difficult to meet those targets, but Spotless are working with Housing and have put some measures in place. We are advertising through our tenant newsletter and Spotless are advertising and working with Habitat to engage with Aboriginal and Indigenous people. We are a little bit low on those numbers at the moment; I believe Aboriginal numbers at the moment are sitting at nine, so we are one short of the target. But there are measures in place to move that forward and increase those numbers.

DR BOURKE: So your target was 108 people. How many do you actually have employed through the program?

Ms Salerno: I should explain that, at the moment, we are expanding that program, so I might need to take that on notice. But I believe it is in excess of 90 people.

DR BOURKE: Good. How long does the contract run for?

Ms Salerno: This current contract runs for five years with a possible extension of a further five years.

DR BOURKE: And when was it signed up for?

Ms Salerno: When did the contract take effect?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Ms Salerno: 1 July 2012.

DR BOURKE: So, you are 12 months into a five-year contract and you have already exceeded 90 per cent of your target?

Ms Salerno: Yes.

DR BOURKE: Good. What sort of feedback have you had from individuals or community organisations about this program?

Ms Salerno: We have had some feedback from individuals. In fact, Spotless now have a regular interview process with people that have come through this program, as do we through our tenant newsletter. We actually do a presentation on each of the people and we ask them a series of questions. We take photos and we promote the fact that this is working, and the response has been really positive.

DR BOURKE: You mentioned working with Habitat as well. How is that coming along?

Ms Salerno: Can I just confirm my figures—I have just been told that we have actually achieved 97, not 90.

DR BOURKE: Well done. Could you just talk us through the relationship with

Habitat a little bit more, please?

Ms Salerno: Yes. Spotless have actually engaged with Habitat—I do not have a whole heap of information on that at the moment—and are working directly with Habitat and using Habitat as a forum to promote awareness about this project and names and numbers of people interested in registering with Spotless. Spotless have a registration list of interested parties, not just through Habitat but through the various ones I talked about earlier. They have 20 people on their waiting list at the moment seeking employment.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, in that priority list on page 355, there is a discussion about the Common Ground supportive housing facility. Can you tell me where you are up to with that facility?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. As the budget papers indicate, we have just had an allocation of capital funds of \$7.95 million. That is the commitment from the ACT government. We are seeking funding from the commonwealth under the capital initiatives of the current round of the national partnership agreement on homelessness. There has been a 12-month extension of that agreement which the ACT has signed up to. There is a recurrent side to that as well, but there is a capital initiative program and we have applied to the commonwealth for further assistance.

We are looking at a facility that will be 40 units for Common Ground, and that would be 20 units particularly dedicated to people who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness and then 20 affordable accommodation units in partnership with Argyle housing. So we are looking at creating a sustainable community there, one that really is seen as a way to break the cycle of homelessness for those who are in that place. As you are probably aware, Mr Gentleman, the nature of Common Ground is not just the provision of stable accommodation, which is, of course, seen as one of the real fundamentals, but then also the provision of detailed services around that to particularly provide people with the assistance they need.

MR GENTLEMAN: Can you outline some of those services for us?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, and it will vary. I visited Common Ground in Melbourne a little earlier this year and there are a range of services which can be quite basic services, such as podiatry—many people who come out of being in a homelessness situation have those sorts of health issues—through to training and education-type assistance, counselling and mental health assistance, all the sorts of issues that affect people who have been in a period of homelessness. It really seeks to tackle their individual issues.

MR GENTLEMAN: How much funding do you expect to get from the federal government?

Mr Rattenbury: That is unclear at this point. The pool of funding available from the commonwealth is around \$40 million for the capital initiatives. But that is for the whole country, and so the ACT is obviously competing with projects in other jurisdictions.

MR SMYTH: Minister, the number of social housing properties has gone down according to accountability indicator b. on page 359. Why is that so?

Ms Howson: Thank you for your question, Mr Smyth. A range of factors provide an explanation for that reduction—primarily a delay in construction. As we have been adjusting our asset portfolio, there have been delays in construction and a higher number of individual properties demolished than in previous years. So our opportunity to replace has been impacted by issues around timing primarily. David Collett will be able to take you through that in a little bit more detail.

Mr Collett: The final number of properties we end up with is a result of a number of factors. Properties are added to the portfolio through our construction and purchase programs and they are diminished by our sales to tenant program, our shared equity program and our auction program under the public housing asset management strategy. Some projects have been delayed by appeals to ACAT, as the director-general mentioned, but we have also seen with the softening residential market a reduction in the number of properties that have cleared at auction and an increase in the number of properties that are sold to tenants or that are sold through our shared equity program.

When that occurs our revenues are lower than we project from our auction sales. Our tenants tend to buy housing that is below the median price of our portfolio and, of course, with our shared equity program, whilst it forms an important pathway out of public housing and an opportunity for our tenants to enjoy the benefits of home ownership, in the short term it returns as little as 70 per cent of the stock and so leaves us with a shortfall in the cost of replacing those properties. It is the interplay of all those factors through our capital program that results in the figure. In a softening market with a number of projects held up with appeals and consultation, it comes out with that end number.

MR SMYTH: What is the progress on the redevelopment of the ABC flats?

Mr Collett: We completed a planning report 18 months ago and referred it to the planning authority. The planning authority was satisfied with the quality and thoroughness of the report as the basis for a territory plan variation. They went ahead with that process of varying the territory plan broadly in line with the planning report and recommendations we had brought forward. That process then becomes a process of the authority. They go through their own consultation program which mirrors and builds on ours. They then make a recommendation to the planning minister who, as you would know, Mr Smyth, often refers it to the standing committee of the Assembly, which was the case.

The standing committee has held its hearings. There has been a significant level of interest in the project. The hearings ended about a month ago, I think, and the committee reaffirmed their commitment to bringing down a report to the Assembly in mid-August, I think. We are waiting for the results of that. There may be recommendations that differ from our planning report, and we will need to take on board what the determination finally is around the variation of the territory plan.

MR SMYTH: Minister, it is reported that you will change the height from 15 back to 12 storeys in this case. Why is that?

Mr Rattenbury: I have not indicated a specific height, I do not believe. I certainly have indicated I have some concerns about 15 storeys being excessive for the site. And I have asked Housing ACT to give me advice on potential other permutations for the site. Clearly that is a matter that is before the committee at the moment in terms of what will be approved under the territory plan variation. But as the proponent, I have asked Housing ACT to start thinking about other options. But at this point with the territory plan variation still before the committee, that is not something we have done definitive work on.

MR SMYTH: So what would be a reasonable height if you have concerns with 15 storeys?

Mr Rattenbury: I think that is a matter of weighing up a sense of what the neighbourhood is, trying to think about appropriate urban form and then, of course, the financial viability of the site. These things are always a balancing act of those sorts of factors.

MR SMYTH: But you are the housing minister, you are a cabinet minister. What is a reasonable height for a high rise in the ACT?

Mr Rattenbury: I do not have a definitive position on that. I think it is a contextual question.

MR SMYTH: In the context of that site, what is a reasonable height for that site?

Mr Rattenbury: I have not formed a final view on that. As I have just indicated to you, I think it is a range of factors. It is trying to think about the neighbourhood, perhaps the level of buildings that are already there and the level of buildings in the adjoining blocks in the city, the slope of the land—all of these sorts of things. I have said that we want to create an urban village environment. We want to use the best modern architecture and the best thinking about how to create a vibrant community on that site. And I know that that is a view that Housing ACT shares. So there are a range of options to be considered.

THE CHAIR: But minister, you have been in the portfolio a while now and this issue has been before you. It is a reasonably simple question in terms of the height, taking all those other factors into consideration. Surely you have got to a point where you have formed a view of what is an acceptable maximum height for that site?

Mr Rattenbury: No. It is not unlike the conversation we had yesterday about Mr Coe's desire to pull data out of ACTION. I really only ask my departments to do work that needs to be done, not speculative work. And with the territory plan variation still before the committee and no definitive answer there, I have not sought definitive work yet. I do not want my directorates putting time into things that are still speculative.

MR COE: But you just said you asked them to look at other configurations.

Mr Rattenbury: I have certainly indicated that I would like them to start thinking

about other configurations but I am talking about the line of—

MR COE: Is that speculative or is it definitive?

DR BOURKE: Mr Coe, stop interrupting.

THE CHAIR: No.

MR COE: Thanks, Dr Bourke.

MR SMYTH: You are interrupting, Dr Bourke.

Mr Rattenbury: No. I think it is one thing to have a conversation and start to talk about ideas. The line of questioning from Mr Smyth and Mr Hanson is: “Why don’t you have a definitive answer yet?”

THE CHAIR: Well, minister—

Mr Rattenbury: That is because I have not gone to the point of asking for definitive advice. I have canvassed a range of options and—

MR COE: Speculative.

THE CHAIR: Your response to me was that you did not want to create extra work and you did not want the department doing unnecessary work. Actually providing a maximum height would reduce the amount of work your directorate does because if you give a definitive height, then the directorate is not going to waste time coming to you with a 30-storey tower block or something. So the point I am making is that you can actually provide some more clarity which will reduce the amount of work being done in your directorate.

Mr Rattenbury: That is your view.

Mr Collett: And that is not necessarily true in terms of the evidence that was brought to the committee. This committee may not be aware but the planning committee received submissions that were to do with the height of other elements of the development, not just the taller buildings on Ainslie Avenue. There were comments from Reid residents about the height of buildings on Kogarah Lane. There were comments about setbacks, parking, entry into parking areas, all of which would change the configuration and potentially affect the yield. So in terms of what presentations were made and what submissions were made to the committee, there were a significant range of things and they will all affect the viability and the yield from the site.

THE CHAIR: Sure, but the point I am—

DR BOURKE: Minister, perhaps you could tell us—

THE CHAIR: Let me finish on this issue. The point I am making is that the more definitive guidance that the minister gives, then I suppose the less variety of options

that might be needless that are going to be put together by—

Mr Rattenbury: But there are not a series of options being explored at this point in time. Housing ACT originally came up with a project scope. That is the one that informed the territory plan variation. And that is the one that the committee is now looking at. It is not like we are sitting around generating options each day at the moment.

MR SMYTH: But in the—

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell us why you think 15 storeys is excessive and what is the advice that has brought you to that view?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. As I touched on before, it really is a matter of looking at what the height of the rest of the city is and also being very mindful of the nature of the suburbs that adjoin the site. I think it is very necessary that we redevelop those sites. They are a prime piece of real estate on the edge of the city and they are clearly in a state where they do need to be looked at for redevelopment. It is about being sympathetic to the surrounding neighbourhoods whilst getting the best possible return and making the best use of that prime location—I guess my view is—with an eye to both what is a human scale development and being sympathetic to the surrounding suburbs.

MR COE: So it is 10 or 15 stories. Does that make a difference?

Mr Rattenbury: Potentially.

MR COE: It does?

Mr Rattenbury: This point Mr Collett just made is a good one, around: with the whole site, where there are a series of footprints across the site, what is the combination of buildings and their footprints and their shape and how does that all come together into both a financially viable package and one that delivers a certain, I guess, aesthetic outcome and an architectural outcome?

THE CHAIR: Do you have any questions, Mr Coe?

DR BOURKE: I have got a supplementary.

THE CHAIR: A supplementary.

DR BOURKE: Yes, I have got a supplementary.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Just going back to those accountability indicators, you were talking about the reduction in public housing. There is an increase in tenancies managed by not-for-profit housing providers. Could you explain—

MR COE: This is not a supplementary at all.

DR BOURKE: Pardon?

MR GENTLEMAN: Just keep going.

MR COE: Is that a supplementary?

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, I will guide the committee. Thanks very much for your advice, though.

DR BOURKE: So perhaps you can explain the higher number of tenancies managed by these registered not-for-profit housing providers and tell me who those providers are?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes, we have got an increase. The footnote on page 360 helps. It is due to the high number of properties constructed under NRAS and also those allocated to the community housing sector from the stimulus program. It also includes the transfer on the accountability side of the Argyle properties which were part of the stimulus program. That was an increase of 53 properties. So under the stimulus program we agreed with the commonwealth government to transfer a proportion of properties to the community housing sector. We have not done that in terms of title but in terms of the financial management of those properties. It has been undertaken by Argyle housing and, therefore, is reflected on the books as being managed through the community housing sector.

DR BOURKE: So you still own them but somebody else manages them?

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is right. There were also two other sets of properties: St Margaret's church in Hackett, which was a housing project for people with disabilities and which was successfully developed on their own land—so that is owned and managed by them—and the Salvation Army site in Narrabundah as well. So we had a number of properties under the stimulus program that were owned and developed by individual organisations and then there are others, like Argyle, where we still retain the ownership but, in terms of a financial and accountability sense, because they pay for all of the outgoings and the management of that housing, it is accountable on the books as being for community housing providers. So that is the increase—the end result of the stimulus package and also NRAS.

DR BOURKE: Where is Argyle?

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is in Conder.

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, down in my electorate.

DR BOURKE: And you mentioned the outgoings. They take care of the maintenance as well, or is that—

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is right.

THE CHAIR: Mr Coe, a new question.

MR COE: Initially a supplementary: what was the original commitment in terms of transferring housing stock completed under the stimulus program?

Ms Overton-Clarke: For the transfer? No, we did not have a definitive commitment for numbers. It was that a proportion would be undertaken by community housing providers. And one of the points in being able to have such a large program in 2009 was to be able to encourage national and interstate providers into the territory, and that is what we successfully did with Argyle. So we were very pleased at that time to be able to open up the market, if you like, to larger community housing providers to be able to start to grow in the territory that sort of capacity.

MR COE: And in that same amount of time, how many community housing providers have shut down or ceased operating in the ACT?

Ms Overton-Clarke: None, as far as I know.

MR COE: Since 2008?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Since 2009. I can take that on notice. No. It is definitely none.

MR GENTLEMAN: What is the feedback from the tenants of Argyle? Do they like that style of community living?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes. Because it is one of the aged person's complexes that we developed through the nation-building stimulus package, it has quite similar outcomes to the other sites. Of course, as you may remember, what we did was to build a number of two-bedroom units, which are six-star energy rated, to enable all the tenants to be able to downsize from their original properties. They were brand new and built with that in mind.

There is access through to the garage and large storage spaces in each of the units. Tenants have been very pleased to be able to downsize into a brand new property where they do not have to maintain the grounds as much as their older properties. We have had the same sort of initial teething problems that you have when people move into a new site in terms of the odd rectification for building to be finished and so forth.

That particular site is bounded by a large supermarket and a complex. So we have been working through some matters that are to do with parking and use of the larger site. But in general, people have been pleased to move into those units, and the Conder one is no exception.

MR GENTLEMAN: Are there common areas for the tenants—meeting places and that sort of thing?

Mr Collett: Yes.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes.

Mr Collett: One of the units is available as a meeting place for the tenants. There is

also a community garden and a number of informal meeting areas through the complex.

MR COE: I move on to a substantive issue. How many tenants were evicted either late last year or this year as a result of the supposed crackdown on residents who earned too much money?

Ms Overton-Clarke: There have been no evictions to date. We are going through the process of that and 44 people have left of their own regard, have purchased homes or have moved into other premises out of the 94. We are working through that process. A number of the others have not yet met the 26-week threshold. We anticipate that might need to happen but it has not had to happen as yet.

MR COE: So 94 were issued with the 26-week notice?

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is right.

MR COE: What was the date of that notice?

Ms Overton-Clarke: They are coming up now. The six-month period—

MR COE: It was six month-ish ago?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes, that is exactly right.

MR COE: November, December they were issued?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: I think the dates were a little varied, Mr Coe. They were not all sent on one date. It was over a bit of a period.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes.

MR COE: Minister, is it your intention to go through with that notice?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, those notices have been issued.

MR COE: You are actually going to go through with forcing tenants to leave?

Mr Rattenbury: I guess there are a series of different circumstances playing out, as Ms Overton-Clarke just touched on. Some tenants have had their cases reviewed and will actually stay in public housing. Some have vacated their premises of their own volition. They have gone. They have moved into the private rental market. They have purchased. They have done a range of things. There is a small number of cases that are actually proceeding to this final point. But that is the policy.

MR COE: A number of people in the community housing sector, I have been advised, breathed a sigh of relief when you got the portfolio because of the Greens' commitment to security of tenure. Is that something that you stand by?

Mr Rattenbury: This program—the one you are asking about—is the current policy of government and at this stage Housing ACT have been working through those, taking an approach to start with the tenants most above the threshold, looking at the highest income tenants. I think that is appropriate in an era where there is considerable demand for public housing, and we do have a waiting list. It is appropriate to go through and look at those tenants who found themselves in a financial situation where they can afford to move into different circumstances. I think that that is a good, rational use of the important public housing asset.

MR COE: That is a view that is not espoused either on the Greens' website or by community groups such as ACT Shelter. Is that a deliberate policy shift on your behalf or is it simply the will of the government?

Mr Rattenbury: Well, it is the existing policy of Housing ACT and of the government from last term.

MR COE: Sure, but you are the minister now.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR COE: It is going to be under your watch that perhaps—I do not know; a dozen, two dozen; who knows how many—residents will actually get the final notification that they have got to leave. Are you going to go through with that? How many other public housing tenants over the course of the next three-odd years are going to be issued with a similar notice if it is government policy.

Mr Rattenbury: I guess the answer to your question is that for the current group of tenants who have been served with that notice, that process will proceed.

MR COE: Is this going to be a regular thing? It would seem a bit odd, pretty unfortunate or unlucky I guess for these particular tenants who, at that point in time, were over the \$80,000 or \$100,000 a year. Yet in six months or a year, other tenants might be able to stay in public housing with that level of income. Is the policy going to continue to be implemented as it has been of late?

Mr Rattenbury: The answer to your question is I think that it is important that we—it is the mission of Housing ACT to provide housing for those most in need. I think we do need to continue to examine the policy to make sure that it is appropriate. For example, with the \$80,000 threshold, I think there is an issue where it probably needs to be indexed. It is currently not. These are issues that I am certainly having a look at.

MR COE: It is fair to say that you do not believe in security of tenure?

Mr Rattenbury: That is not the point I was making. Again, you are trying to frame it in a certain—

MR COE: That is why I asked the question: is it fair to say that you do not believe in security of tenure?

Mr Rattenbury: I think we need to provide housing for those most in need. Those people who reach an income point where they can afford to move into the private rental market or purchase their properties, I think we should be encouraging that. I do not think that we are necessarily—

THE CHAIR: Encouraging it or—

Mr Rattenbury: Sorry?

THE CHAIR: Encouraging it or mandating it? Are you just encouraging them to leave or are you actually making them leave? There is a difference, isn't there? "Encouraging" suggests that they are not.

Mr Rattenbury: There is a current government policy and I will be implementing that.

THE CHAIR: Who decides that policy? Is that a cabinet-level decision?

Mr Rattenbury: That was a cabinet decision.

THE CHAIR: It was a cabinet decision? In answer to the question that Mr Coe asked before, though, in terms of security of tenure, you have given some words to that but you have not provided a clarity. Do you believe in security of tenure—yes or no?

Mr Rattenbury: What exactly do you mean by security of tenure, Mr Hanson?

THE CHAIR: If someone—

MR COE: Are future notices going to be issued to people saying you have got 26 weeks to move out because of your income? That is a reasonable question to ask of the government.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, and the current government policy—I have been clear with you on what the current government policy is. It is that in respect of people who have incomes above that threshold, the policy is to examine their situation, to look at whether they do and perhaps—

THE CHAIR: Do you agree with that policy?

Mr Rattenbury: going to the security of tenure issue that you have asked about, I should be quite clear that Housing ACT does not just take a one-off snapshot of where somebody is at. It is a case of looking at their income over a number of years. If somebody happens to have an income for just one year because they happened to get a particularly good job but that does not last or there is some other change in circumstances, people in that situation are not being forced out of public housing.

MR COE: Sure, so—

Mr Collett: In regard to the question that Mr Hanson asked about whether there were options for those tenants, of course, we have the sale to tenant program and we have

the shared equity program. A number of people who have been identified as being over \$80,000 have taken advantage of those schemes. In fact, one of the tests that the minister referred to that we go through in terms of assessing those tenants is their ability to service a loan or their ability to sustain a rental in the private market. So there are options for those tenants and—

THE CHAIR: I think the point that Mr Coe is trying to go to is whether Mr Rattenbury agrees with his policy, because he has got a long-stated position, and there is a Greens position, that basically says that they disagree with government policy. Now Mr Rattenbury is in a position of implementing a policy that he and his party have advocated against. The question is: do you agree with this policy or not as the minister?

Mr Rattenbury: I thank you for the interpretation of the Greens policy, Mr Hanson, but I am not interested in what your interpretation of the policy is—

MR SMYTH: Well, what is the Greens' policy?

Mr Rattenbury: because I just do not—

MR COE: You can have a look at it if you like.

THE CHAIR: Maybe you can table that, Mr Coe. Have you got the ACT Greens policy? It might be useful to table that. It is important for people who are in public housing who might be on the cusp. If they are of the view that this is a policy that may or may not change, it might certainly influence the way that they respond to any eviction notice and so on. It is a—

Mr Rattenbury: I think the question you are trying to ask me, and I will attempt to answer it another way because my answers obviously are not cutting it for you.

THE CHAIR: “Yes” or “no” would be good. Do you agree with this policy of security of tenure or not?

Mr Rattenbury: It depends what you think security of tenure is. I am about to have another go at answering your question. Should tenants have a public house for life? Not necessarily. If their income reaches such a point that they can afford to move into the private market, and Mr Collett just outlined some of the points, then I think it is appropriate that we use this scarce resource more carefully.

MR COE: How and when will the government be doing the next round of analysis and issue of 26-week notices?

Mr Rattenbury: I would have to take that on notice, Mr Coe.

MR GENTLEMAN: Mr Collett mentioned that you would look at what has happened in the past with these people—so their salary over a certain period of time. If people were above that threshold but were just about to retire, for example, or not far off retirement would you be looking at that as well?

Mr Collett: Security of income is one of the key questions that we look at beyond just the level of income.

DR BOURKE: You are looking at the projections into the future as well as what has happened in the past?

Mr Collett: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Moving to a new question: the accountability indicators on page 359, there is no measure there in terms of maintenance. That is a regular issue that comes to us as members in terms of maintenance of public housing. I am just wondering what you have in terms of statistics. It might be there somewhere, but I cannot find it. I know there are satisfaction ratings and so on. How long does it take for properties to be maintained? If there is an average, if there is a response time, how is that measured and how do we know how effectively that is occurring within the directorate?

Ms Salerno: We raise approximately 70,000 work orders per year and the works, of course, range. We have four priority or response codes—urgent, which is within four hours; priority, next day, which is by 6 pm the following day; within four calendar days; and then there is a 20-day, which is what we term as a normal work order. There are response times around each of one of the calls that come through. The calls will come through from the tenants. They will be vetted through the call centre and the priority time will be allocated to those work orders. There are measures in place and key performance indicators through the contract to ensure that Spotless maintain and adhere to those.

THE CHAIR: In terms of how effective they are in adhering to that, is that recorded?

Ms Salerno: Absolutely. It is recorded. Every time a work order is completed it is called through and registered through the call centre database. We run audits of five per cent of every work order at all times. It is part of our contract.

THE CHAIR: What is the percentage of those work orders being met within the prescribed time? Is it 100 per cent?

Ms Salerno: No. The key performance indicator is that we aim to meet 97 per cent of those. As David mentioned earlier, we have abatements if Spotless do not meet those KPIs. I have not got those figures in front of me, but they have and have not met them at various times.

THE CHAIR: Could you provide that maybe on notice?

Ms Salerno: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I am just trying to get a sense of how well they are achieving.

Ms Howson: Mr Hanson, can I go to Ms Sheehan just to add to an answer?

THE CHAIR: Certainly.

Ms Sheehan: Thank you, Mr Hanson. We do measure independently the satisfaction of tenants with maintenance. There is a national social housing survey which is conducted for all public housing tenants across the country. There are quite a number of questions in that survey around satisfaction rates with public housing maintenance. In the off year, Housing ACT conducts its own survey and asks questions about satisfaction with maintenance. There are a number of questions. They then go into the overall satisfaction of tenants. That is reflected in our accountability indicators, which is overall satisfaction with public housing, and our target is 75 per cent. So we do measure it and we do take the information that we get from the survey to improve our maintenance effort.

THE CHAIR: Thanks very much. Does anyone have a supplementary?

DR BOURKE: Yes. Abatements were mentioned in the contract with Spotless. Could you just tell us what that means?

Mr Collett: Those are penalties that are applied to the facilities manager for non-performance in a number of areas. We have identified areas that are important in terms of the service to our tenants and the long-term viability of our properties, and we have a number of those through the contract. We meet on a quarterly basis with Spotless. We go through their performance and we apply those abatements, I think, on a half-yearly basis.

DR BOURKE: What is the quantum of those penalties?

Mr Collett: I could give you that information. They cover a range of activities—the number of non-conformance reports, the completion of works within time, the return of vacant properties that have been repaired for new tenants or prepared for new tenants.

Ms Sheehan: Response times.

Mr Collett: The response times we have already talked about.

Ms Sheehan: The call centre.

Mr Collett: The call centre response times and the identification of the workmen when they approach our tenants. There is a range of them and we can provide them for you.

DR BOURKE: Minister, we just heard some—

THE CHAIR: Is there a follow-up there on notice?

Mr Collett: Yes, I will undertake to provide the areas in which abatements are applied to the committee.

DR BOURKE: Thank you. Minister, we just heard some talk about the satisfaction of tenants with ACT Housing. How does that compare with interstate jurisdictions? Could you tell us something about that?

Ms Sheehan: In the ACT, it is a completely good news story on the increase in tenant satisfaction over the last few years. At the moment we are sitting at, I think, third nationally in tenant satisfaction. I will just have to confirm that for you.

Interestingly—and you can see this also, Dr Bourke, in the accountability indicators—we do ask the important question of our tenants of whether not only are they satisfied generally with public housing but also has it actually assisted them to feel part of the community? You can see from the strategic indicators that over 90 per cent of tenants said that their public housing assists them to feel part of the community. That is extremely high, and that is exactly what it is that we are looking for in public housing, which is not just a roof over someone's head but the ability of Housing to assist people to participate generally in the community.

DR BOURKE: This is information and satisfaction that is coming out of a national survey.

Ms Sheehan: Both the national survey and then in the off year Housing ACT does its own survey. So we have annual feedback from our tenants on their satisfaction with their housing. That is very useful for us in tailoring and improving our services.

DR BOURKE: You mentioned that we were ranked third in the country amongst jurisdictions for satisfaction. Are the two ahead of us far ahead, or is it sort of neck and neck?

Ms Sheehan: I will have to take that on notice.

Ms Howson: Not that you are competitive!

DR BOURKE: I am competitive!

Ms Sheehan: If we could take that on notice. We will provide the national data to the committee, with the minister's approval.

DR BOURKE: But that then begs the question: what are they doing that we are not to get those levels?

Ms Sheehan: Exactly, Dr Bourke. As with any overall figure for satisfaction, there are many questions asked and then different questions are given different weighting. For example, maintenance questions have a certain weighting and ability to help people participate in the community has a different weighting. We will be able to provide the committee with that mix of what people in the ACT think is most important, what is the weighting of that, then what do people in other jurisdictions think is the most important and what is the weighting of that, and then close in on what do people really value? Are they valuing the same things in the ACT as they are valuing in other jurisdictions?

DR BOURKE: Interesting.

Ms Sheehan: For example, Housing ACT tenants highly value—and I think it is the

highest in the country—the location of their properties. That is not surprising in a way because we are living in a city-state. If you go to somewhere like the Northern Territory or Queensland, it may be that some people are less happy with the location because it might not be the closest to their family and where they would have wanted, or it might be in the middle of Melbourne or Sydney and someone would have preferred to be in one particular suburb. Of course, the housing is not so dispersed in the ACT. All of our properties are well-located with respect to facilities and our tenants are extremely satisfied with that.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, page 359 of budget paper 4, in the first indicator, shows that you have achieved well above target for allocations to those in the greatest need and you have actually increased your target for next year, which is great. Can you tell us how that has been achieved and what are the benefits for public housing tenants?

Ms Overton-Clarke: As we continue to house those who are most in need, the proportion of it increases, so we take those who are most priority in terms of actually housing them. We have three categories on the waiting list, but we predominantly house those who are on the priority listing. There are some hard-to-let properties, and we sometimes go down to the high needs area, but predominantly those who are housed are those who are most in need, and that is reflected in the statistics.

Ms Howson: I might ask my team just to elaborate on the process of allocating priority because I think that tells the story around this indicator as well. Can you go into that in some detail?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Sure. We have a multidisciplinary panel within Housing where we ask people from across the human services field to join us, as well as different areas within Housing, to be quite specific, obviously, about how to differentiate between those with the most priority need. As you can imagine, it is a triaged effect where, first of all, in order to be deemed in need of priority housing, there are a number of indicators around that. The common ones are people who are homeless or at severe risk of homelessness. It may be women escaping domestic violence and people who generally have high needs.

Once they are determined to be eligible for priority housing, we need to be able to assess who, out of that category, should be housed next. It is not just a wait-turn process. It is, at each point, continually reassessing who is in greatest need. That is how we use our multidisciplinary panel, as well as evidence and information from a range of providers. It might be support or advocacy organisations, GPs, occupational therapists—a whole range of external sources—who actually identify the need of that particular person.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you.

DR BOURKE: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Minister, does the ACT have an Indigenous housing provider? If so, who is that?

Ms Overton-Clarke: We do not have an Indigenous housing provider. We are working very hard to establish a sustainable Aboriginal housing program by a community provider. We have asked AHURI—the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute—to examine best practice across the country so that we can take that information and use it to work towards providing a community housing provider who would specialise in Aboriginal housing. We think it is really important to look at what other jurisdictions are doing and take that best practice.

MR SMYTH: We did, of course, have an Indigenous housing provider—Billabong.

Ms Overton-Clarke: I need to correct the record. We have two providers who are registered as housing providers—sorry, not registered. We have two providers who are not registered as Aboriginal housing providers. They are SHAC and Billabong. The reason that I stumbled around that is because the ACT government does not currently fund any Aboriginal community housing providers.

MR SMYTH: Why is that?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Both of those providers were given properties a number of years ago. Billabong was given a number by the ACT government and handed them back. I know that has been long debated here. SHAC were given properties through the commonwealth and they retain those properties.

Ms Sheehan: In the case of both providers, they have less than eight properties, which is the number that triggers compulsory registration as a not-for-profit provider under what is currently the ACT legislation but is soon to be national legislation. In terms of the requirements to be funded by the ACT government, with respect to Billabong, Billabong did have over 20 properties, but Billabong, despite a great deal of assistance from the ACT government, decided in the end that it did not want to become registered as a provider. That was a very reasonable requirement of the ACT government and, with the passing of the national legislation in the Legislative Assembly just a couple of months ago, it is now a national requirement to be registered. So there will be no providers across all of Australia who will receive government funding unless they have become registered.

As Ms Overton-Clarke said with respect to Southside Housing Aboriginal Corporation, they were funded by a commonwealth government capital program which ceased to exist many years ago, way back in 2008, as a result of the commonwealth government deciding to put almost all of its efforts around Aboriginal housing into remote Indigenous housing. The committee would be well aware of the closing the gap targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and safe, secure housing is an essential underpinning of wellbeing. So the funding has been diverted to remote Indigenous housing. That means that urban organisations are really required to collect rent from their tenants and so on, and the commonwealth has preferred to put its money into remote Indigenous housing.

MR SMYTH: We could debate the nature of the assistance, but I have a question for the minister: how long has it been now that we have not had a registered provider of Aboriginal housing in the ACT, and what are you doing to fix that? When are we likely to see a registered provider?

Mr Rattenbury: On the specific question, Mr Smyth, I need to seek some advice.

Ms Sheehan: There has never been a registered provider of Indigenous housing, Mr Smyth. There was a requirement that all housing providers become registered in order to receive government funding, and Billabong decided not to become registered. With respect to the future, as Ms Overton-Clarke said, Housing ACT have been working very closely with the elected body around the issue of supporting housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. What they are most interested in is making sure that there is support for housing across the whole continuum of housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, from support in crisis through to a level of public housing, a level of affordable housing, private rental and then ultimately home ownership.

With that very clear guidance from the elected body and with them approving the scope of the research, Housing ACT has commissioned AHURI, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, to do a scan of all of the existing research on models of housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and best practice models so that that can come back to Housing ACT and, working with the elected body, to then move forward on that whole continuum of support for housing for Aboriginal people. Whether the elected body advise Housing ACT and the minister that they want a stand-alone housing provider is a matter for consideration by the elected body, and we are, of course, working very closely with them. We are eagerly awaiting that research from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

MR GENTLEMAN: Ms Sheehan, could you tell us the name of that group that you are commissioning?

Ms Sheehan: AHURI, the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute. It is a large national research organisation, and it is jointly funded under the national affordable housing agreement by the commonwealth, which provides 50 per cent of the funding, and the states and territories contribute the rest of the funding. It has national research rounds where universities and other research organisations can put up research proposals. I think it would be fair to say that the research that comes out of AHURI is very well regarded.

MR COE: AHURI have published a number of reports which talk about the economic benefits of shifting stock to community housing. Given AHURI's position on that and their substantial research and evidence which point to that, does the ACT government have plans to transfer a significant number of stock to the community housing sector?

Ms Howson: It is certainly our intention to continue to support the community housing sector to grow. One of the very exciting options into the future is housing models for people with a disability. We have been talking about that in another context, in the context of DisabilityCare and changing the expectations of individuals

with a disability and families about their housing options and models that might be available to them. We are always looking for opportunities to work with other non-government providers in order to facilitate the development of the community housing sector. I do not believe we have a specific target that has been set for the transfer of properties, but that would only be one element of a strategy to grow the community housing sector.

MR COE: What are some of the other jurisdictions doing with regard to the transfer of stock?

Ms Howson: I might get Ms Sheehan to support this discussion. We do know that in other jurisdictions they are moving public housing stock into the community housing sector in large numbers; that is correct.

Ms Sheehan: The decisions have been taken differentially around the country. Tasmania have announced that they will transfer 500 units of public housing across to the community housing sector. They have begun with a very modest program which will start with the management of the tenancies, and Mission Australia has been successful in that, and then, over time, and probably not for five to 10 years, the stock itself will be transferred.

New South Wales decided to transfer almost all of the new stock that was constructed under nation building to the community housing sector. They have had a program of transfer of quite a large amount of tenancy management for the community housing sector but the asset itself has not been transferred. Queensland are considering something rather more radical over a shorter period of time but have not made any definite announcements yet. And South Australia have decided to transfer quite an amount of stock.

The reason that housing authorities are considering this is that in the community housing sector, not even with the stock transfer but once the tenancies are managed in the community housing sector—and this applies to the ACT as well—tenants are able to apply for commonwealth rent assistance. That is an income stream which can assist the organisation to manage the tenancy. So we do have that ability in the ACT and our providers do take that opportunity.

MR COE: There is a debate about how sustainable that financial model is. Given that Tasmania is shifting across, New South Wales is doing a substantial amount of management as well as transfer, Queensland is doing a radical approach, and South Australia is shifting substantial numbers as well, why is the ACT bucking this trend and continuing to do the vast majority in-house?

Ms Overton-Clarke: The public housing model that has been adopted is to charge tenants 25 per cent of their income, because we recognise that for those who are in greatest need, that is a sustainable income for them to be able to pay. The affordable housing model and the community housing model rely on a greater proportion of tenants that would pay more than 25 per cent of their income in rent. So, in considering how you would move and transfer stock, you would have to be very careful about the modelling that is done around being able to continually deliver to those most in need.

MR COE: The transfer of management does not necessarily attract those problems?

Mr Rattenbury: Perhaps the policy question on this is that I am certainly looking at the merits of it. You have touched on it already—I think there are some lessons that we might look to from other jurisdictions with the approaches they are taking. They are taking different approaches, which provides an opportunity for us to learn from either their successes or their mistakes.

You touched on the sustainability of the commonwealth rent assistance program financing model. That is something that certainly concerns me as the commonwealth shifts its funding under the national housing agreement. In some ways that is driving it. The financial viability of state housing organisations is driving this shift to community housing in some circumstances, and that is propped up by commonwealth rent assistance. One does not need to look too far into the future to envisage a scenario where the commonwealth peels that back because the states are transferring so many houses into the community housing sector. I think there is a longer term sustainability issue there that is weighing on my mind as to whether that commonwealth rent assistance model will continue—therefore whether that is a path we want to proceed down as rapidly as some of the states are.

MR COE: The other issue to consider is whether that model does support non-government conglomerates that end up being almost bureaucracies in their own right, because of the economies of scale and the pressure that that puts on smaller community housing providers. As we have seen in the ACT, the smaller ones do it tough here.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. That is certainly one of the tensions. Economies of scale is a plus and a minus. Obviously, for some of the community housing providers, the more properties they get, they get a critical mass. It makes it more viable. At the same time there is room, I think, and one might consider it a desirability, to have a diversity of players and some smaller operators for interesting social reasons.

MR COE: Can you talk us through the changes that you recently made regarding the regulations and red tape for community housing providers?

Mr Rattenbury: Do you mean the new legislation that went through the Assembly?

MR COE: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: As I said in the chamber at the time, this is a national approach, so it is about having consistency across the states and territories and having one set of rules so that organisations can operate in different jurisdictions. In light of the discussion we have just been having, that creates some nervousness for some of the small operators and the fear of the bigger operators. At the same time it offers an opportunity for people to perhaps be able to operate in different jurisdictions and have a greater critical mass.

MR COE: I know some of the community housing providers in the ACT do struggle financially. Have you considered any new ways that the government might be able to

support these organisations?

Mr Rattenbury: I have met with quite a number of the community housing providers, and, frankly, they are not all struggling. I recently met with ECHO, who are predominantly located in the inner north. They are going very successfully. In fact they are looking at expanding their properties because they have gone well and they have created a good, sustainable financial model. I also recently met with the Havelock Housing Association. Again they are an organisation that are quite stable. They are interested in whether they can take on more properties. So there are some quite successful ones.

MR COE: No doubt, yes.

Mr Rattenbury: The other thing is that ACT Shelter is currently doing work for Housing ACT. It is a paid research contract on looking at new opportunities.

THE CHAIR: Are you two on the same page? Love has broken out since I left the building! I should leave the committee more often.

Mr Rattenbury: Or perhaps the building, Mr Hanson.

THE CHAIR: Touche! Well played, Mr Rattenbury. Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you tell me about the ACT's contribution under the national partnership agreement on homelessness and why it will be useful please?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. I touched on this briefly earlier, but the national partnership on homelessness has been in place for a number of years. It came to an end this year, and the commonwealth has offered a one-year extension to the states and territories. The ACT has signed up for that. That is a matched funding exercise and, through this proposed budget, we have put in \$580,000 in additional funding in order to ensure that matched funding back from the commonwealth. Clearly it is a good investment for the ACT. It is money that needs to be spent in the territory and, obviously, the amplification that comes from having matched commonwealth funding is particularly beneficial to the territory.

Ms Overton-Clarke: And just to expand on that, the full matching amount is \$1.48 million. It was an offer of \$1.48 million from the commonwealth. We have now fully matched that to \$1.48 million. So it is a \$2.8 million program.

DR BOURKE: And can you tell us more about the initiatives that will be set up under that funding?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes, there are a number of initiatives. The whole purpose of the NPAH, as it is colloquially called, was to be able to identify the components of homelessness that tend more towards the early intervention and prevention side of homelessness. So a number of initiatives such as the sustaining tenancy service, the FirstPoint program, which is the coordinated referral point for homelessness providers, were funded through that program. There have been some that have been in the media recently, such as OurPlace and a place to call home, where we are working very

closely with, and in fact it is delivered through, non-government organisations, which is the predominance through the NPAH, where we work either directly with or outsource to non-government organisations to work with Housing ACT on how to deliver the best outcomes. So the sustaining tenancy service is run by three NGOs who work very closely not just with public housing tenants but also with community and private tenants to help them sustain their tenancies.

Of course, one of the most difficult things about those who are most in need is their ability to continually pay rent and be able to recognise and keep rent as one of the payments that they need to make. The difficulty of falling into homelessness is more present for those who are in greatest need. So the sustaining tenancy service has worked with a number of tenants across the whole spectrum.

FirstPoint is another example. We are the first jurisdiction to have, for all of our services, a central point to be able to allocate assistance for those who are homeless. That works with not only Housing ACT but all the homelessness providers in the ACT. And there are a number of other programs, as I have outlined.

DR BOURKE: You talked about the sustaining tenancies initiative and the community organisations that you are working with. Which community organisations are involved in that?

Ms Overton-Clarke: In the sustainable tenancy service, it is Woden Community Service, the YWCA and Belconnen Community Service. They are the three that are involved in that.

DR BOURKE: So this is focusing not on the bricks and mortar of homelessness but on the factors that actually lead to homelessness?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes. What we often say about homelessness is that it is not “rooflessness”. It is actually about people who have other reasons often why they have become homeless. So what you need to do is work on those factors to ensure that they do not just cycle in and out of homelessness. Domestic violence is an obvious one in terms of women and children fleeing the home and being able to be put up by homelessness providers. But in that example there are often a number of times that women return to the home before they actually are able to make the decision to finally leave.

It applies in every different part of homelessness. Poverty is an obvious example, but often there are mental health or alcohol and drug issues. So the whole way that homelessness providers work is to be able to work on the different aspects of homelessness that are the reasons which people get into those circumstances in the first place.

DR BOURKE: So your partnership with those community organisations to sustain tenancies involves utilising their skills and resources in managing those social needs that these tenants have to stay where they are and not become homeless?

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is right. And they work very closely with other providers in the field. Care Financial Services is a very strong partner both of ACT government

and the non-government sector. So there are a number of skills, a number of specialist services, that then they work with.

One of the other things that we are currently doing is making sure that that is broader across the whole system. Last year the gateway was launched out of the children, youth and family support program, and non-government providers are working across the whole area of human services. In regard to all the different factors—be it homelessness, be it parenting skills—we are working across different areas to make sure that we can garner all the resources, both in the government sector and the non-government sector, to have an approach that makes prevention and early intervention wrap around so that statutory systems are not as necessary.

That is quite a longwinded way of saying that the more that we can support families and individuals to develop their own skills, the less likely it is that the more expensive systems and the more intensive support need to be used less frequently further downstream.

DR BOURKE: How aware is our general community of these issues? When I see debate or discussion around homelessness, it does not seem to focus on those issues that you have raised now. It tends to be more a discussion about bricks and mortar.

Ms Howson: I think that is a very good question, and some of the discussion around recent reports on our statistical performance in relation to homelessness highlight that, within the ACT sector, where we have had a very positive impact on rough sleepers in the ACT and moving them into supported services just like those that Ms Overton-Clarke has described, has demonstrated a significant increase in people in supported homelessness services and overall, therefore, an increase in what the national definition of homeless numbers in the ACT is. The story, once you unpack all that, is actually a good story in the context of early intervention and prevention and being able to work with people in a supported tenancy arrangement in order to break that cycle of homelessness.

So the investment in supported accommodation support has been increased in the ACT. That has led to a significant increase in the number of people that are in those services. And we would expect to see over time, notwithstanding that each of the clients in these systems have very complex issues, a reduction in that population cohort remaining in a homeless circumstance. We would expect to see them moving through into sustained tenancies in either the public housing sector or the private sector.

DR BOURKE: You have got the responsibility of dealing with the issue but is the public framing of the debate something that you should be engaging with or is it something for those advocates within the non-government sector to take up?

Ms Howson: I think we all have a role there, and I certainly understand the compassion of our community to focus on homelessness but we do have a role to discuss where, in a fiscally constrained environment, funding for homelessness services needs to go. And given, I think, the positive impact that we have had on rough sleeping in the ACT and the small numbers—not to ignore those people entirely—it requires all of us to discuss these issues with the community about where

we need to put our effort.

THE CHAIR: The number of rough sleepers is only about 20, is it not?

Ms Howson: Twenty-nine, at the last census in 2011.

THE CHAIR: I guess they are a difficult population to actually get the census data on as well, or do we know exactly who they are?

Ms Howson: I think that is one of the advantages of the ACT again, our geographic intimacy—if I can put it that way—and we have also invested in, I think, an excellent outreach program for rough sleepers through St Vincent De Paul, which Ms Tibbitts might like to talk a little more about.

Ms Tibbitts: Street to home is one of the initiatives under the national partnership agreement on homelessness and it works in an assertive outreach capacity to contact people who are sleeping rough in our community. They might make contact several times with the person before they will actually get a level of engagement. So that service has a number of outreach workers who are always working. They also work in connection with the St Vincent De Paul night patrol van where they go out at night and have food connections that may be with rough sleepers. They do have a really good sense of where people are at in our community because they are always out.

They also conduct a quarterly who is new on the streets committee, which also involves the police, the city park rangers and other community services who will assist in the identification of new rough sleepers in our community. They will also go and visit the early morning centre, which is a breakfast place for free food where a lot of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness will go to get a warm meal in the morning, and also through the free food services operated at the Griffin Centre. Street to home are quite out there in the community.

On census night in particular, street to home, together with the ABS and a number of volunteers, actually undertook a community outreach count for people sleeping rough in our community. The census forms were taken out to places like Mount Ainslie, around the lake, the university campuses and in some of the bush land surrounding the city to try to really connect with the people who are sleeping rough in our community so that we could get the most accurate report that we could of those people.

THE CHAIR: Given the services that you have outlined, then, the people who are sleeping rough are, in some ways, doing it by choice. It is not that there is a lack of services or accommodation. I am just trying to get a picture. Is it because they simply cannot get into the housing system, in some sense they cannot find shelter, or is it because they would rather not or is it a mixture?

Mr Rattenbury: Choice probably is not the word. I see where you are getting at, and that goes to the point Ms Tibbitts was just making about the assertive outreach program. I think, for some people who are rough sleepers, their ability or willingness to engage with programs is quite minimal and so that is where—

THE CHAIR: I suppose what you are saying is that there are programs available, if

they chose to take part in them there would be shelter, but the decision not to take part in them, for whatever reason, is what is keeping them sleeping rough. It is not because there is a lack of services or shelter, or is it?

Ms Howson: Just speaking in general terms, I do understand the nature of your question. I guess one might think that if these people were ready to come into a program there would be a place for them. That is probably true. The question is that the service system still needs to evolve to be able to meet their particular needs.

I do not know the 29 individuals, or however many there are today, but I would be absolutely confident that there would be significant mental health issues sitting behind their circumstances and extreme trauma that they have experienced through their life as children and as adults that would be putting them in a place, essentially, to resist engaging in group settings or with government services or others that they do not trust. So I think the assertive outreach program is incredibly important to continue to build trusting relationships to be able to bring these people to a place where they can seek the help that they need.

DR BOURKE: So it is a question of their actual capacity to make a decision, given that there are likely to be significant mental health issues.

THE CHAIR: Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, can you take me through the process of how Housing acquires property, new property, for example?

Mr Collett: Yes. Housing acquires properties through the spot purchase program and through a construction program, and those are coordinated through the capital works program and the capital committee within the directorate. In recent years, and particularly since the stimulus funding was available, we have tended to focus on construction rather than spot purchase. We find that we tend to get better value for money but also can provide for the energy efficiency, the low running costs and maintenance costs and the efficiency in terms of the development that we need to pursue in order to protect the portfolio.

Our purchase programs, then, usually are around individual tenants with special needs that need to be accommodated through a specific purchase. It might be the size of the accommodation, it might be the location of the accommodation, close to medical services or families for tenants who have these particular needs or it might be around specific configurations, the slope of the block or those sorts of things, significant disability modifications that are not possible in existing properties. So it is a mixture of construction and purchase, with purchase being focused largely on individual properties for specific needs.

MR GENTLEMAN: So now there is a move to construction of normal properties?

Mr Collett: Since the stimulus package and prior to that, yes, our focus has been on construction. We are able to, what we call, program-design our maintenance. We have identified the key elements within the home that lead to most of our maintenance expenses, and we have got specific design requirements to preclude those. They might

be wear and tear inside the house. We move, for instance, for impact-resistant plasterboard, solid core doors, three hinges on all internal doors. So we have gone through and identified the areas that take the most wear and we have tried to reduce our maintenance costs by doing that.

Another obvious thing that we have done is remove all exposed timber work from the outside of buildings. We will use colourbond, metal sheet or metal sections rather than timber and, again, it is a question of maintenance costs.

MR GENTLEMAN: So if you are looking at greenfield sites, do you salt-and-pepper your construction?

Mr Collett: Yes, and we have an active program with the Land Development Agency which allows us to identify early in the development sequence where we would be seeking blocks, where we would be wanting to provide accommodation for our tenants, our accommodation for specific purposes. So we have had one-off initiatives from the commonwealth government or from the ACT government that has meant that we have constructed properties for a particular purpose.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I will defer to Mr Coe.

MR COE: Minister, will you advise what the government's strategy is for the property holdings in the inner north and inner south, especially the older dwellings which will require or are requiring significant work in terms of refurbishment and renovation?

Mr Rattenbury: Are you specifically asking about the multi-unit sites?

MR COE: No, the single blocks.

Mr Collett: Thank you, Mr Coe. That is a good question, because one of the advantages we have in a social sense is the salt and peppering of public housing throughout the community, which means our tenants get access not only to services, transport and employment opportunities but also to schools in which we do not have a concentration of children of public housing tenants. So there is a significant advantage to the community in terms of the history of public housing in the ACT. But one of the downsides to that is the age of our properties in those older suburbs.

Our work is guided by the public housing asset management strategy. Every time a house becomes vacant we run it through a series of criteria to determine what is the most appropriate use for that property. It will include the age of the property and what we have spent recently in terms of maintenance on the property. It will be based, in part, on what our expectation is of spending money on it in the future. It will look at whether it suits particular cohorts of our tenants that we have trouble housing or where we have pressure on the waiting list for housing. It will look at what our concentration of housing is in that particular location and in that suburb generally in

order to understand the demand. Once we have gone through that process we then have a very good idea about whether the property is suitable for sale, for redevelopment by ourselves, for upgrading or for re-letting, and we make that decision on a one-by-one basis through the capital committee that I referred to in the previous answer.

MR COE: When you sell a property, what process do you use? Do you have a panel of agents that you sell through?

Mr Collett: We have a panel of agents. We also have a panel of valuers. So the first step, if a decision was made to sell a property, would be to have a valuation of the property. Our internal processes preclude us from selling outside the value range.

MR COE: Even on the upside?

Mr Collett: No, we will always take more money.

MR COE: So the range is the minimum, yes.

Mr Collett: The financial controller has a particular interest in that and watches that activity very closely. The valuers will establish a range. It is typical that you get a valuation back saying, "This is the range," and that is particularly useful at auction when we are getting advice about whether we have met the reserve price and we can make a judgment about whether we should sell. Our preferred mechanism is to auction the property because that is an open and transparent process which generally gives us the best value for money. We have a panel of real estate agents that we use as well as the panel of valuers. But, frequently, in the inner areas, particularly if there is redevelopment potential, there might be a neighbour who is interested in putting a development together. So we will do our homework to ensure we get the best value for money by making sure that people who might have a development interest in our properties are aware that we are going through a sales process. We would still almost always use an auction process, but we would make sure that the auction was as competitive as possible. We also look for opportunities to purchase properties which are adjacent to our own. That is the other aspect of dealing with our older stock. We will purchase a property adjoining ours if it gives us the capacity to redevelop that site for more appropriate housing.

What we try to do with our purchase program or our construction program is to continually get a better alignment between our portfolio and the needs of our tenants. What we see with our tenants are the same trends that we see in the general population—an increase in the number of smaller households, some increase in the number of very large households, but a reduction in the demand for three-bedroom, stand-alone properties, again, mirroring what is happening in the broader community. Our portfolio, though, is skewed towards three-bedroom, freestanding properties. One of the options we look for is the redevelopment of our properties to provide more two-bedroom, apartment-style housing to tackle the most significant element within the public housing waiting list. We will do that through the capital committee processes, which I described earlier, and that includes representatives from our gateway services and the people doing our allocation. So we join up that system to make sure that we are constantly focusing on where we have got the greatest need.

MR COE: Has Housing ACT recently brought single-dwelling properties in the inner north or inner south for use in their current form as opposed to redevelopment?

Mr Collett: I am not aware of any. Our stock purchase program tends to be in the middle-ring suburbs, if I can put it that way, although, on occasions, we will purchase in Gungahlin. That is because of the drivers I spoke of earlier—the access to medical or specialist services, access to family and other demands. The skew towards constructing rather than purchasing is also because of the age and general condition of the existing stock in the market which means that it does not come up to our energy rating and we would need to spend money on bringing it up to an adequate energy rating. I believe all of our purchases in the inner north and inner south would be to provide development opportunities for stock we already own.

MR COE: With regard to the report on government services, the ACT rates as one of the poorest in terms of the turnaround for tenancies in public housing. Why is that?

Mr Collett: Again, Mr Coe, that reflects, to an extent, the age of our properties. We are doing more work on our properties when they become vacant before they are returned to stock.

MR COE: Surely other jurisdictions would have a comparable age profile?

Mr Collett: No, Mr Coe, that is not correct.

MR COE: I know we are the oldest, but there still would be jurisdictions that would be comparable.

Mr Collett: We are the oldest by a margin.

MR COE: What is a typical project that took place between tenancies for a single dwelling that you are keeping?

Mr Collett: Obviously when the properties are vacant that is the opportunity for us to undertake substantial upgrading work because we are not faced with the additional costs of re-housing the tenant and, of course, the tenant does not have the disruption of having significant activities occurring.

We might replace floor coverings. We might do an internal re-paint. We may complete a refurbishment of the wet areas—typically the bathroom, the laundry and/or the kitchen. We might change the appliances. We have been the fortunate recipients of government funding to improve the energy performance of our properties. We have been spending that money for more than four years now in terms of upgrading our properties. It is very important, as I said, given the condition of our properties.

We would upgrade the insulation. We would change the appliances, being the space heating and the water heating, in our properties either to gas or high-efficiency, low-energy electrical appliances. That is typical of the larger-scale works that would be carried out on the properties that are vacant, taking advantage of the fact that there is

no-one in the property at the time.

MR COE: Does the average length of tenancies change suburb to suburb? For instance, if somebody gets into a coveted house in Ainslie or Reid or somewhere like that, do they tend to stay there for a significant period as opposed to a dwelling in an outer suburb?

Mr Collett: I do not think that it is geographically based. It is probably more aligned to property type. We see our older public housing tenants tending to be in place for a longer period of time. The demographics, as I say, are not all that dissimilar to the general population. I think previous answers referred to the initiative we took in providing older person's accommodation through the stimulus package and downsizing our tenants from three-bedroom homes into two-bedroom clustered accommodation.

Some of those tenants had been in their properties for 40 years, or in excess of 40 years. I think the oldest might have been approaching 50 years in a house. The older tenants tend to be more stable in their existing properties. They have raised families in those properties. They have got strong connections in the neighbourhood or in aged accommodation where the accommodation itself better meets their needs. It is low energy; it is low maintenance; it is designed specifically to make life easier for older people. Younger people, similar to the general population, tend to move around a bit as they find their way or as their family circumstances change as they explore different options in life.

MR COE: Has CSD or Housing ACT expressed any concern with the ROGS indicators?

Mr Collett: We regularly look at the ROGS data and talk to our colleagues in other jurisdictions to try and establish a common measurement. I think in the past that has been a characteristic of ROGS data. We have sometimes felt that we have suffered from being too honest and we sometimes believe that because the data definitions have not been as tight as they might have been we are probably comparing apples with oranges. But, of course, we cannot use that as a reason for not looking at those areas and trying to focus on improving our performance.

The question earlier was about abatements under the contract and what we measure in the total facilities management contract. Certainly the turnaround time both for our routine maintenance, our vacant properties and our non-routine vacants, are key areas that attract not only close scrutiny in terms of our management of the contract, but also attract abatements when their performance falls.

Of course, whilst I mentioned Spotless, it is also our internal processes that we need to keep focusing on—getting the keys returned, having the property assessed, getting it to the maintenance contractor, getting it back into the system and getting it allocated. These are also points that we need to watch closely in terms of improving our performance in that area.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell me more about the \$75,000 allocated for design work on the public housing community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander people? Is it to convert existing housing stock?

Mr Rattenbury: No, it is intended to be a new build. This is design work for culturally appropriate accommodation for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. We are looking at accommodation very specifically designed for that target group.

DR BOURKE: Why has this initiative been taken forward?

Mr Rattenbury: This was an issue raised with us by the ACT Indigenous Elected Body. It was specifically a recommendation in their most recent report.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Two years ago.

Mr Rattenbury: Two years ago?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Initially.

Mr Rattenbury: Initially.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes.

Mr Rattenbury: It was in this year's report as well; so it sat there. It has now been funded.

DR BOURKE: Good. What will the design work encompass?

Mr Rattenbury: This is where I will defer to the technical approach.

Mr Collett: We have had an officer with an Aboriginal background working within housing for a number of years now. His work has been very important to us in terms of getting tenants with Indigenous backgrounds to self-identify so that we have got a better handle on how successful we are being in providing housing for people from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background.

He has also been very useful in identifying family pressure, accommodation pressure and over-crowding. We have taken a number of steps. I know I am not answering your question directly, but I will give the context. We have taken a number of initiatives to increase the size of houses and to build extensions to houses in order to relieve that overcrowding. We will be utilising that officer again to make contact with the elected body and try to determine a design brief around what is the appropriate form of accommodation to meet the cultural needs as well as the accommodation needs of those tenants.

Ms Overton-Clarke: The current part of it is that we are working closely with the elected body on specific sites. We have identified a number and we are just working on whether we can make it close to Winnunga or other services that the elected body have identified. I think there is a bus trip that has been organised within the next week or two to actually take some of the members of the elected body to visit the different sites that we have identified.

DR BOURKE: This is going to be an intentional community of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with their own separate homes?

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is right.

DR BOURKE: In the same place.

Ms Overton-Clarke: It is a much smaller number. Rather than the 11 and then 22 in the broad intentional community, it is three, because of the additional rooms for carers and so forth. Yes, it will be a cluster site. That is right.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, on page 361 of budget paper 4 there is a line item there for the design of housing for elderly public housing tenants. Can you tell us what you have planned for that funding?

Ms Overton-Clarke: The model for this—we have talked quite a lot about it this morning—is, as Mr Collett said, the nation building downsizing project that we did. We are really looking through the feasibility and design elements of this to identify something along the same lines. It would be relatively substantial and would be really using the success that we had through the nation building project to identify a similar type of housing going into the future.

We did have a lot of success and we had a number of people wanting to downsize. A number of jurisdictions have taken different approaches. The New South Wales government has come out today and said that they will be charging for additional rooms that are not used by elderly tenants. I note that Queensland has taken the same sort of course. What we try and do as much as possible is to purpose-build fit-for-purpose buildings that older people really, as Mr Collett said, enjoy moving into—a place that is purpose built and does not require as much work on their part in order to maintain it. That is the thought process around all of that, to be able to take that same model and replicate it into the future.

MR GENTLEMAN: Have you looked at locations yet?

Mr Collett: We are just starting to.

THE CHAIR: We might leave it there, members. Thank you very much, minister, for appearing. Could you make sure that questions on notice are provided within the five days prescribed? We will now suspend till 11 am when we will see the Minister for Ageing.

Hearing suspended from 10.43 to 11.02 am.

THE CHAIR: Welcome back, minister and members. I would like to especially welcome Mr Doszpot, who has made it here for the last day. He has been very busy representing the Assembly in London at the Houses of Parliament. It is good to have you back, Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thank you, Mr Hanson.

THE CHAIR: Minister, do you have a statement you would like to make as Minister for Ageing?

Mr Rattenbury: No, I am happy to go straight to questions.

DR BOURKE: Minister, can you tell me about plans for an age-friendly city conference in 2013 and another older persons assembly in 2014?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I would be delighted to. The conference is proposed for October this year. It is being organised in partnership with the Council on the Ageing and the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing. It is designed to flesh out the notion of what an age-friendly city is. The concept comes from the World Health Organisation, and we are working in partnership with the ANU and various others to identify a number of high level speakers, including international speakers, to really advance this concept. I think the idea has gathered some momentum in that we have invited a range of councils from jurisdictions around the country. We have had a very good acceptance rate of people who are interested in attending the conference. I think that is testament to the fact that the agenda is coming together well and we have a good line-up of speakers.

A consequence of having this conference is that there had been an intention to host an older persons assembly in 2013, two years on from the first one in 2011. But the advice I received from the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing was to defer that. Their preference was to have the conference this year. The advice is—and I agree with this as it works quite well—to have the conference where people will look at some of the detail and then that will flow into the older persons assembly in 2014.

DR BOURKE: How many attendees are you expecting?

Ms Whitten: We are expecting around 200 delegates for the conference, which will be held on 9 October at the Ann Harding centre at the University of Canberra.

DR BOURKE: Where will those delegates be coming from?

Ms Whitten: We are just about to launch the application for delegates this weekend, at least for half of them. Half of the delegates will be interstate participants, such as the minister has already identified. We have written to all local governments in Australia and also to our state and territory counterparts to invite them to attend the conference so we can have the opportunity of sharing ideas and initiatives with other jurisdictions who are also working to be age-friendly cities. The information we will be advertising this weekend is to invite ACT delegates to the conference. We are looking at at least half of the conference being from the ACT.

Mr Rattenbury: Just to elaborate very quickly on that, of all the local councils and state governments that have been invited, nineteen have expressed an interest in speaking. That, again, speaks to the depth of presentations we are looking at at that conference.

DR BOURKE: How will you go about ensuring cultural and gender diversity within

the conference?

Ms Whitten: We have the experience from the 2011 older persons assembly. As part of that process where we identified 70 delegates to attend that assembly, we asked delegates to nominate and identify some particular demographical information, such as gender, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status or whether somebody was a person with a disability. We are using a similar methodology for delegates to attend the conference.

DR BOURKE: Minister, you talked about some discussions or research with ANU around the development of this conference. What does that involve?

Mr Rattenbury: I was specifically referring to the fact that the ANU has come on board as a sponsor of the conference and they are assisting particularly with one of the international speakers in funding that speaker to come. This is helping us contain the costs of the conference but also ensures we are getting the highest calibre of speakers we can.

Ms Whitten: The guest speaker we are bringing to the ACT and who the ANU is funding is Dr Alex Kalache, the former World Health Organisation director responsible for launching the WHO active ageing policy framework and the global movement for age-friendly cities. Canberra is a member of the global network.

DR BOURKE: Do you expect any specific outcomes from the conference?

Ms Whitten: In terms of our development for the 2011 older persons assembly, we held a planning day prior to that so that delegates could have a greater understanding of what their participation in the older persons assembly would involve. A similar approach is being taken by holding this conference—to gain a greater understanding of what is important for older people in our community and also in relation to building a more age-friendly city in Canberra and Australia. The conference outcomes will be informing delegates for the next assembly about what their role is and what kinds of initiatives and thinking are happening internationally and nationally around making cities more age friendly.

MR DOSZPOT: Clarification, minister, through you to Ms Whitten, you have mentioned that 70 delegates will be invited, is that correct?

Ms Whitten: Could I just clarify that? There were 70 delegates in the 2011 older persons assembly.

MR DOSZPOT: And how many of those people who were at the older persons assembly have been invited to attend this?

Ms Whitten: What we will be doing for the conference is making an open invitation to older people in the ACT to attend the conference.

MR DOSZPOT: A general invitation to everyone in the community?

Ms Whitten: We will be advertising for people over 55 who are interested in

attending the conference, and we will then go through a selection process based on similar criteria that we used for the identification of delegates for the older persons assembly.

MR DOSZPOT: Further clarification: with the 70 delegates that attended the older persons assembly, do you intend to invite some of those delegates to this conference?

Ms Whitten: I do not think we have made a specific commitment for that. But obviously if somebody has previously attended an older persons assembly, then that would be something—

MR DOSZPOT: I should imagine that some of the issues that cropped up during that assembly would be good to be canvassed.

Mr Rattenbury: It is a fair point, Mr Doszpot, and I think we have a contact list for them, so we will add them to our circulation and can email them all and make them aware of it.

MR DOSZPOT: Also, could we get some idea of the criteria you would be looking at to select the general members of the community?

Ms Whitten: How we selected the delegates in 2011 was based on the motion the Assembly agreed to in relation to holding the 2011 older persons assembly. Some of the criteria are around obviously people's age, making sure the delegates are diverse and also a geographical distribution across the Canberra community. In terms of developing the model for identifying delegates in the 2011 assembly, we had quite a sophisticated tool to determine how the delegates could be selected based on specific criteria, such as age across the age range from 55, diversity and geographical distribution. Then we had a subcommittee of the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing which worked with the Office for Ageing to ensure we created a fair process.

MR DOSZPOT: I am very much in favour of what you are trying to do, but I am also very conscious of the fact that we seem to be inviting the same people across a whole range of topics, and I would like to see fairness come into a more equitable opportunity for people from within the community who may not be generally on the government listings for the pool of talent.

Mr Rattenbury: I think that is an important point. The invite this weekend will actually be placed in the *Canberra Times*, so, in that sense, it is open and, hopefully, will garner some of the people I think you are alluding to who perhaps have not engaged before. At the same time, we also want to think about whether people will come to not only this conference but come through into the older persons assembly next year so that we can start to build some level of engagement in the discussions on that. But, certainly, if there are particular people in the community you are aware of who would be interested and have not been invited before, please let them know. I think the application—

MR DOSZPOT: Well, I would be very pleased to get information on that. Obviously I will look at the *Canberra Times* article, but if there is anything you can send to us, I would be very pleased to—

Mr Rattenbury: It will actually be an ad in tomorrow's paper.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, page 332, output class 3.1, item g., the seniors grants, that has moved from the other output into the area. Can you tell us what the grant program is for?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, certainly. The priorities for funding under this program have been developed to align with the priorities and goals of the ACT's strategic plan for positive ageing for 2010-14. Specifically, projects were sought that encourage and support older Canberrans to access information about healthy living, support services and products, entitlements and community groups and clubs. We encourage programs that share existing skills, experience and knowledge with other people, things that maximise personal and financial safety, opportunities for people to learn new skills and expand their interests through recreational, educational, volunteer or employment opportunities, and also programs that help plan for retirement. You can see there is a real breadth there.

One recent example that I went to the launch of was a new Nordic walking program that has been funded through this program. That has been auspiced through Southside Community Services, and it is a terrific program. It not only provides activity for people—some of the seniors I met who are on that program said it really helped them with their balance because it is with walking sticks and they felt more confident—but there is obviously a strong social side to a program like that. There is a whole formal list, but that Nordic walking example gives you a sense of the style of things we try to encourage through this grant program.

MR GENTLEMAN: Can you advise what community groups and clubs are involved in that communication?

Ms Whitten: It is quite diverse. Our grants are published on the seniors online information portal. Some of the other initiatives we have funded most recently in the 2012-13 round was a business mentoring program, a program where older Canberrans with Chinese heritage can introduce Chinese calligraphy to younger people. The funding is quite diverse. It allows organisations to increase the participation of older people in our community.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I will defer to the age and experience of Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Thanks, Mr Smyth. Going back to the previous question on the age-friendly cities and communities conference, I have a couple of substantive questions on that. What is the total funding that has been allocated for that conference?

Ms Whitten: It is estimated to be about \$40,000. Of course, we will have some sponsorship as well that will contribute to that budget.

MR DOSZPOT: Is \$40,000 the government component plus additional sponsorship, or is that the total?

Ms Whitten: I can confirm that it is around the total. I just do not have the figures in front of me.

MR DOSZPOT: What component of that would be government money?

Ms Whitten: About \$40,000.

MR DOSZPOT: That was my question. So \$40,000 is the government allocation?

Ms Whitten: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: And you are looking at sponsorships?

Ms Whitten: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Do you have any idea how much additional sponsorship you have the potential to bring in?

Ms Whitten: My recollection is that we have about \$8,000 from the ANU centre for population health for the cost of the travel for Dr Alex Kalache from Brazil to Australia. We have also had some recent sponsorship from IRT, formerly known as Illawarra Retirement Trust. I do not have those dollars in front of me.

MR DOSZPOT: What is the qualification or the expertise that Dr Kalache will bring? He is Brazilian based?

Ms Whitten: He is travelling from Brazil. He is the former director of the World Health Organisation who developed the age-friendly network.

MR DOSZPOT: Obviously conditions are slightly different within Brazil, having regard to some of the issues that we are confronting here. Is it the worldwide experience that you are looking at or his Brazilian experience?

Ms Whitten: It is the fact that he was the person who initiated the age-friendly network, and his experience in terms of his role at the World Health Organisation.

MR DOSZPOT: Is there any other speaker that will be covered under that expenditure?

Ms Whitten: There is another speaker, Paul McGarry. He is the Senior Strategy Manager, Valuing Older People, with Manchester City Council in the UK.

MR DOSZPOT: Will any cost be incurred by any of the individual delegates who will be attending? Is there any fee for attendance?

Ms Whitten: There is a fee. Obviously we take into consideration people's ability to pay. In terms of delegates, it is a registration fee of \$50.

MR DOSZPOT: Has any thought been given to waiving the fee in certain cases

where people cannot afford to do that?

Ms Whitten: Yes, we will take into consideration people's needs.

MR DOSZPOT: If we have a maximum number of delegates attending and we are talking about particular age groups here which obviously are not exactly flush with funds, why do we have to charge delegate fees for some of these people?

Mr Rattenbury: I think it is appropriate to have at least a nominal charge, Mr Doszpot. Certainly, from my experience of organising events, to some extent you want people to value their attendance. Where something is free, people often do not show on the day. For something that is going to have a high demand like this—and this is something I specifically discussed with the agency—I do not think we want to have a situation where people are not showing up on the day because they have not had to pay and they say, “It doesn't really matter.” If someone would be unable to attend because the \$50 was a hardship, there is certainly scope to waive that.

MR DOSZPOT: I agree with you that there is some justification for having a cost from a certain point of view, but I can also see that a lot of people in our community, and in the particular age groups we are talking about, may find \$50 quite an impost. I certainly recommend that you look at that fairly closely.

Ms Whitten: With the 2011 older persons assembly, which was very much focused on Canberra, there was no cost to attend that and we assisted people in their travel arrangements to the older persons assembly. We would do the same for people who need to travel to the conference as well.

MR DOSZPOT: I think this has been asked to a certain extent by Dr Bourke: with the measurement for fulfilling the criteria that this conference is based on, what sort of measures are there in place and what will you be expecting as an outcome from it?

Ms Whitten: In terms of the measures for people attending the conference?

MR DOSZPOT: The outcomes.

Ms Whitten: The important reason to hold the conference is so that there is a greater awareness of the participation of older people in our community, not just in Canberra but nationally. There is also the outcome that, as Canberra is a member of the international age-friendly city network, we are recognised as an age-friendly city by this community, and nationally and internationally. People are travelling to Canberra to share their knowledge and expertise and the important outcome is that we can all learn from each other.

Mr Rattenbury: Specifically on that, of course we have the positive ageing action plan for the territory. The current one is the 2012 to 2014 plan, so obviously we will be moving to the next one. You can see a step-through approach here. We will have the conference, we will have the older persons assembly in 2014 and we will really be building towards the development of the next phase of that plan.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot, I am happy to defer to you, if you have another one.

MR DOSZPOT: No.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, what are the main non-government organisations that you work with around ageing?

Mr Rattenbury: There are a number. I have touched on a few of them already in talking about the discussions around the conference and the older persons assembly. There is the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing, a formal government body in that sense. It is made up of community representatives but it is formally organised by the government. The Council on the Ageing in the ACT is perhaps the most recognised community stakeholder group but there are a range of other groups. There are all of the seniors clubs across the city. There are a number of other national organisations. I am just having a mental blank on the names. There is National Seniors Australia, who I did meet with recently, so I should know that off the top of my head. Of course, we have the elected body. We discussed earlier the specific aged persons accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There are other specific groups that raise issues, such as people lobbying on behalf of pedestrian activity, which is particularly relevant to older people. The feedback that comes through groups such as the various community services—Northside Community Service, Southside Community Services—often provides government with a level of intelligence. There is a whole host. Then you get issue-specific groups, such as Arthritis ACT, which predominantly affects older people. Of course, unfortunately, it affects some younger people too.

Ms Whitten: There is the Retirement Village Association—

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, of course.

Ms Whitten: who have been very active with the passage of the retirement villages legislation recently, which commenced earlier this year.

Mr Rattenbury: There are groups like the unit title owners association. Again, whilst it is not an age-specific thing, many of the members of that group are in the older part of the community as they are downsizing. So, again, it takes on a particular relevance. There are the specific groups and then there are the ones that come through with more of an issue focus.

DR BOURKE: How do you ensure that ageing Canberrans are not left behind when so much more of the government's interaction with the community is done online, with their online interactions, or is this no longer an issue these days?

Mr Rattenbury: That is a really important question. Certainly, Ms Little, when she was here from Libraries ACT the other day, talked about the number of older people who are taking up the opportunity at the libraries to come in and get what is essentially free IT training. The demand amongst older Canberrans has been very high. So the government has certainly got that stream going through. At the same time we

need to be mindful of not just assuming that we can do everything online. There are times and places where, particularly when we are targeting older people, there may still need to be hard copies, a phone line or something like that.

An example would be the guide that goes with the senior citizens card in the territory. We are still producing hard copies. In some ways it would be better to go online because you can keep it up to date. Whilst there will be an online component, we do still print a hard copy of that, for example.

DR BOURKE: Do we have any data or intelligence about the online activity of older Canberrans?

Ms Whitten: That is a very good question, Dr Bourke. I know that when the ANU reported on the age-friendly survey back in 2011, information and access to information was a very important concern for older people in the territory. In fact yesterday we had an age-friendly city network meeting. Essentially the government directorates come together and contribute to the strategic plan on positive ageing. We do that in collaboration with the key seniors organisation of the territory, including COTA and National Seniors. One of the issues that came up as part of that conversation yesterday was raised by National Seniors. Older members of the community are saying that they are very mindful of the use of online services and tools as a primary source of information, but older people are saying that they do like to talk to people and, as part of that conversation we had yesterday, Canberra Connect, for example, was discussed in terms of the range and the amount of people who access Canberra Connect in terms of being an information service. So we could see whether Canberra Connect can give us any kind of demographics around the number of people that are making that contact.

Ms Howson: Dr Bourke, we would be happy to take that question specifically on notice and put it to our chief information officer, because there certainly is data around about the level of usage and the access that Canberra citizens generally have. But it would be very useful to be able to disaggregate that into different population demographics.

DR BOURKE: I am wondering whether this is still one of those urban myths or whether it is still a reality that older Canberrans perhaps are not using the internet enough.

Ms Howson: There is certainly a broad increase and it is a generational issue, but we need to understand who is not able to access online services and how we support them.

THE CHAIR: Do you have a supplementary in this area?

MR DOSZPOT: Yes, I have. With the number of community capacity building projects that are supported, how many of those grants are specific to the ageing sector?

Ms Whitten: The community capacity grants are a grant program that is the responsibility of Minister Barr, as the Minister for Community Services. But there was a recent grant in the last round in 2012-13 where Woden Senior Citizens received

\$5,276 for funding for modular storage facilities for their centre.

MR DOSZPOT: Is that the only aged-related funding in that capacity in that area?

Mr Rattenbury: In that program.

MR DOSZPOT: In that year?

Ms Whitten: For that particular grant program.

THE CHAIR: We might need to leave it there, Mr Doszpot, as we have run out of time for this output class.

MR DOSZPOT: I have some questions, but I will send them to you.

THE CHAIR: Yes, put them on notice. Thank you very much, minister and officials. If you could just make sure that questions that have been put on notice are answered within five days.

We are now moving to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. It is still Mr Rattenbury, but in a different capacity. Welcome, Mr Manikis.

Mr Manikis: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Can I confirm that you are aware of the privilege statement that is before you?

Mr Manikis: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Great. Minister, would you like to make a statement in your capacity as the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs?

Mr Rattenbury: Just go straight to questions.

THE CHAIR: Right. I do have one. Minister, there is an amount of funding that is provided to Indigenous people in the ACT that comes from a variety of different sources—federal, obviously, from a number of departments, and in the ACT as well. I am trying to map exactly what that total bucket is and for what purpose it is. Do you have visibility on that so there is no duplication in terms of funding or that the gaps are identified? I am trying to get a quantum of what that is. Do you have that information?

Mr Rattenbury: I will get Mr Manikis to give you the detail in a moment, but you have touched on something that is interesting in terms of the capacity of this ministerial role in the ACT. Much of the service delivery comes through specific agencies, whether it be Health or the justice portfolio. I think the nature of the role that both myself as the minister and the unit within CSD relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs is to do exactly what you have just described—that is, try and have an overview and identify, between the various government sections that are working on those things, some of those gaps. I make that as a general observation.

THE CHAIR: Right.

Mr Manikis: We have got a document called the Indigenous expenditure report. The first document was done on 2008-09 expenditures. It was released in 2010, but it was based on 2008-09 expenditures. It was done by the heads of Treasury, the COAG working group, and it was a nationwide exercise for each jurisdiction. Whilst it identified targeted expenditures to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders by jurisdiction, it also, on a formula basis, came up with access by average of Torres Strait Islanders to mainstream services as well. We received earlier this year the latest report from the expenditure review and that showed around \$214 million expenditure.

THE CHAIR: \$214 million in the ACT?

Mr Manikis: In the ACT. But that—

THE CHAIR: That is across federal and ACT?

Mr Manikis: Across federal and ACT. Around \$18 million of that is ACT expenditure. But I can take that—

Ms Howson: Can I just come in there, Mr Hanson, if you do not mind. This particular report that Mr Manikis is referring to is a focus of attention for the director-general's strategic board and the subcommittee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. We have commissioned some work from our working group to go to the sorts of questions you are asking. That work is progressing and we are expecting a report shortly to one of our next meetings. That will form the basis of advice to the minister.

THE CHAIR: Is that report publicly available?

Ms Howson: Yes, it is.

Mr Manikis: Yes, it is.

THE CHAIR: It is?

Ms Howson: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Where would we find it?

Ms Howson: We can get you a copy. I think it is also on the Treasury website.

THE CHAIR: We can maybe put a link in the committee's report or something like that.

Mr Manikis: Sure.

Mr Rattenbury: We can provide that to you.

THE CHAIR: Maybe you could provide us with that. I assume there is an electronic

link, and we may attach it. There is \$18 million of ACT-specific expenditure.

Mr Manikis: Approximately.

THE CHAIR: That \$214 million, is that specific—

Mr Manikis: No, that is a percentage of mainstream as well.

THE CHAIR: That includes a percentage of mainstream. So if you talk about just the specific when it is ACT and federal, what is that amount?

Mr Manikis: I do not have those figures with me.

THE CHAIR: Is that in the report, though?

Mr Manikis: That should be in the report.

THE CHAIR: Right.

Ms Howson: Again, we can take that question—

THE CHAIR: Again, if you could take that on notice. What is the specific amount? Does the report break it down in terms of where that money is expended and who it is coming from?

Mr Manikis: It does, against the building blocks of the COAG national Indigenous reform agreement.

THE CHAIR: Right.

Mr Manikis: There are six blocks.

Ms Howson: Mr Hanson, can I also indicate that we will need to work with our Treasury officials. It is their report and if it is not disaggregated in the way that supports your question, we will just need to work with them on responding.

THE CHAIR: Okay. That would be great. Having seen that report, are you confident that it captures everything that is being expended by the ACT and the federal government? It has not missed any big chunks?

Mr Manikis: As I said before, part of that report is based on a formula that is applied across all jurisdictions in terms of access to mainstream.

Ms Howson: I would always say that we certainly support Treasury in pulling that report together. It would be our best informed view—

THE CHAIR: As best as you are aware, it incorporates everything?

Ms Howson: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: Have you got analysis, then, on what that is on a per capita basis? There is an identifying number of Indigenous people, but not all of those people would access the core support services, I guess. They would access the mainstream, but perhaps not the specific. Is there a per capita number of people that are accessing those services and then what is that amount?

Ms Sheehan: The report itself generates a per capita figure, and that is very easily done arithmetically. You take the total dollars and you divide it by the population at the time. In terms of how many people are accessing the individual services, that goes to the issue of how do we know what proportion of mainstream service dollars are actually going to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? That is where the formula comes in. There is a national formula which is used to determine the proportion of mainstream services nationally, and then in each state and territory, which is estimated to be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. It is cost modelling rather than counting up every single occasion of service. But it is a robust model.

THE CHAIR: Access to mainstream services—I would imagine that it would be different in the ACT than perhaps it would be in the Northern Territory. Is that factored in or is it a national figure?

Ms Sheehan: The model is looking at estimating the features which would enable you to say that that is the right proportion. I think the question you are asking is: is it different in remote areas?

THE CHAIR: A different formula, yes, in remote areas.

Ms Sheehan: Yes.

THE CHAIR: It is?

Ms Howson: It is probably better placing these questions with Treasury, who have pulled the report together. It is using some modelling techniques to provide indicators that will allow us to compare over time. Some of the specific questions we might put to the report would need to be answered with a different dataset and used in a different way. I just want to be cautious in terms of how we are responding to the question. While, in a sense, these models that rely on population formulas provide us with indicators of expenditure, they do not necessarily give us granular views on what services people are actually taking advantage of.

Mr Rattenbury: Mr Hanson, if you like, we will take it on notice and provide you with a brief written explanation of how the various formulas work.

THE CHAIR: That would be very useful, thanks.

Mr Rattenbury: So there is crispness there rather than a general commentary.

THE CHAIR: As a question arising from that—you might not be able to answer this and it might vary depending on what those services are—in terms of access to mainstream services, do Indigenous people and Torres Strait Islander people access

them more or less? There might be a greater need, but whether they are then accessing them or not?

Ms Howson: In this jurisdiction, you mean?

THE CHAIR: Yes, in the ACT. Health services, I assume, would be one category. Do you consider that Indigenous people, generally speaking, are heavier users, or whatever the right term would be, or are they just not accessing the service? How do you work it out?

Ms Howson: Again, it comes down to, I think, looking at our accountability indicators by electorate and where we are actually measuring occasions of service. I do not have that information at hand. In terms of the nature of the discussions that we have with our minister and how we look at these issues at the strategic broad, we are looking more at outcome measures—things like, for example, the Australian early childhood index. We can get some indication of how ACT children from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background compare with children nationally in terms of their readiness for school, and other indicators of early childhood development tell us something about how our service system is supporting children in that group.

THE CHAIR: Do you separate, because people might identify as Indigenous—and perhaps Dr Bourke is a good example of this, but in terms of social disadvantage I do not imagine that Dr Bourke is experiencing great social disadvantage—

DR BOURKE: Chair, I do not think I am here to be—

THE CHAIR: No, I am trying to use it as an example—

DR BOURKE: Well—

THE CHAIR: It is the difference between Indigenous people who we need to target because of social disadvantage and perhaps people identifying that are very successful. There is a difference between where that money is targeted, I suppose, and where the need is. Are we able to capture that?

Ms Howson: If I understand the nature of your question, Mr Hanson, the index that I just mentioned does assist us with exactly that sort of question. It allows us to look at some groups within populations and where they are residing. In fact, that early childhood index has informed our service response in different parts of Canberra and the nature of the programs that we are running through child and family centres.

Those types of data investment certainly do. I am just looking at Mr Matthews, but we have also done some work on SEFA data, which is produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It assists us again to look very regionally and by postcode within the ACT at where there may be pockets of disadvantage within areas that, in a broader population sense, do not present as being indicative of disadvantage. We use that information again to target the way in which we direct our service response.

Mr Rattenbury: There is a series of other indicators right across the portfolio that

really point us to where we need to be investing, whether it is the over-representation of Indigenous people in the AMC and the justice system generally, smoking—there is a whole series of indicators which also guide that investment.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell us about the main aims of the \$880,000 allocated for the CHANCES program?

Mr Rattenbury: Yes, I can tell you about that, Dr Bourke. It is an excellent program run by Northside Community Service and Capital Careers. I am just looking for my notes on this, Dr Bourke. I might get Mr Manikis to run you through it.

Mr Manikis: The CHANCES program has now had three programs. Each program is for 15 weeks. There are generally between 15 to 20 people participating. They are people who have been long-term unemployed, mostly vulnerable people, people who may have come out of Bimberi or who have been homeless. The program, as I say, has been going for three lots of 15 weeks. It is being run by Capital Careers, ably assisted by Northside for the logistical support.

It runs from about 4 o'clock to 8 o'clock each night on the Tuesdays and Thursdays of those 15 weeks. Childcare, a home work club and meals are provided in the evening for the participants and their families as well. Transport is provided—getting the participants there and back home—for those that need it. The venue and presenters are all part of the program.

We have conducted some surveys. They are three-part surveys for each of those three programs—when people sign up, when they have had a few days to settle in and then at the end at graduation. We have seen some very good results, particularly in terms of people's own development over those 15 days, their optimism.

Many do start getting interviews for jobs, because through that program they learn how to do resumes, work the computers and do general administration work. This is while babies and toddlers are being taken care of in another room and older children are being assisted with their homework. Also, the family group can get together for a meal halfway through. This program is not just supported by Northside. It also has very good support coming from other groups as well—the private sector, for example. The ACT Police are a great supporter and often turn up to work with the participants.

What we are looking to do now is actually follow through on some of the past participants to see where they have landed as a result—in full-time jobs, part-time jobs and what types of jobs they are doing. TEMPlar, for example, is a recruitment company that has been very closely associated with this program as well, with the intention of providing pathways into employment at the completion of the program.

That is what has happened in the past. It commenced with an idea by the principal of Capital Careers. It was put together with the assistance of the directorate. We have been sort of piloting that as we go along. Now that we see it does work, and we have the evidence that it does work, and that at the very least people are back on track for the most part, what we are now looking at, and would be grateful for, is an appropriation to take it through for the next four years. That will be an open tender. That will be going out soon. There will be a requirement for an Aboriginal or Torres

Strait Islander organisation to be part of the conglomerate that delivers this program into the future.

MR GENTLEMAN: I have got a supplementary if I could?

THE CHAIR: Has Dr Bourke finished his question?

DR BOURKE: Not quite.

THE CHAIR: Let Dr Bourke finish his, and then you can go, Mr Gentleman.

DR BOURKE: Thank you. Minister, just looking at this program which is designed to give people a chance, as it says, what sort of job outcomes have been enjoyed by graduates as a result of the program?

Mr Rattenbury: Do you have the specifics on that?

Mr Manikis: I do not have the specifics, and I do not think—whilst there are individuals that are celebrated, it is a handful of people from each of those programs that actually go into full-time employment, permanent employment. They are certainly celebrated by all of us. Others go into, as I said before, part-time jobs. Others just go on to further training. Others get a run of interviews, which they have never had in their lives before. We have not captured, we have not done a longitudinal study for each of these programs. But certainly it is something that we can look forward to now that the program is running proper out of the pilot stages. It is worth doing.

DR BOURKE: You talked a little about the homework provided for school-aged children or homework support. Could you tell us a little more about that?

Mr Manikis: There are people who come along—they are not necessarily fully qualified teachers; they are volunteers—who spend three or four hours with the children assisting them with their homework. They become part of the CHANCES family, the people who deliver that program. The feedback, as I understand it, that we get from these teenage children is that it is a structure. They like the structure, they like the support and they like the fact that their parents are close by as well. It is also fun.

The feedback I have had is that they do their homework—obviously it is not a 4-hour chunk—in half-hour to one-hour chunks. They had Kenny Koala rock up the other day. It sort of adds variety and it is a fun atmosphere as well. The learning is occurring in a fun environment. People volunteer for that. Some of them who are there volunteering to help with homework also drive the bus from time to time whilst others are just coming along to help with the homework.

THE CHAIR: Mr Gentleman, you have a supplementary?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes. You mentioned TEMPlar and the pathways to employment program. Can you give us a bit more information on how that works?

Mr Manikis: The principal from TEMPlar comes along and identifies opportunities.

They have opportunities on their books. They mostly operate in the hospitality sector. They are on the steering committee that governs the CHANCES program. They also turn up and are closely associated with the group on the Tuesdays and Thursdays of those 15 weeks. What they do is connect the opportunity with the people at the end, the participants that graduate. They offer the opportunities. That might be gigs at the Hyatt for a three-month period or at Parliament House in the catering area. It is those sorts of jobs that TEMPlar is pretty big on in town.

MR GENTLEMAN: Good. I might just go to my substantive.

THE CHAIR: Certainly.

MR WALL: May I ask a supplementary on that one beforehand, Mr Chair?

THE CHAIR: Yes.

MR WALL: I was wondering how many participants have been through the CHANCES program in the last 12 months?

Mr Manikis: In the last 12 months, 14 participants have gone through the last program.

MR WALL: The budget this year sees a \$40,000 increase in funding for this program. I was just wondering what extra capacity or additional services are going to be provided through this program with the additional funding.

Mr Manikis: What has been provided are another two programs. There will be two programs and possibly an increase in the number of participants that are part of the program. This program has enjoyed some support from our Education and Training Directorate as well, and that is on merit. Capital Careers was successful in a merit application-type process. That may or may not be there in the coming years; so this \$220,000 compensates a little for that as well.

MR GENTLEMAN: I bring you to page 321 of budget paper 4 and the top indicator there, establishing the scholarship program for ATSIC people to support local Indigenous people. Can you go through that program with us and tell us how it works?

Mr Rattenbury: Certainly. That is a new initiative under this year's budget. It has been allocated \$100,000 a year for the scholarship over the next four years. This will support members of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who wish to study or train to gain qualifications. That support can include transport, childcare, materials, equipment, meals allowance, textbooks—all those sorts of things that are part and parcel of going back to study to improve qualifications.

MR GENTLEMAN: With that amount, how many do you expect that you will be able to assist?

Mr Rattenbury: It is anticipated that between five and 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students would be able to gain access to the program. It is really

targeted at identifying the barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people completing tertiary study as well as encouraging more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the childcare sector to enhance the delivery of culturally appropriate services. That is the rationale behind the program.

MR GENTLEMAN: I guess that if you can identify the barriers then you can find other means to make it easier for people to study in that sector.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. Some of those areas are listed where the money is allowed to be spent. I guess they are perceived as things like childcare. Perhaps a woman who has had a child very young wants to go back and study. You can imagine that childcare would be a significant issue.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I will defer to Mr Wall.

MR WALL: Thank you. Minister, I wanted to ask a couple of questions around welcome to country ceremonies.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes.

MR WALL: First up, what is the government's protocol for welcome to country as to who can perform them and when they are performed.

Mr Rattenbury: Yes. There is a detailed bit of information around this. I will ask Mr Manikis to respond. We have got a panel approach and I will get him to give you the details of that.

Mr Manikis: With welcome to country we have on our website those Ngunnawal elders who have agreed to conduct and to be approached. We encourage people who are organising events in Canberra to access that site and they choose who they like off that site.

MR WALL: They must be a member of the Ngunnawal Elders Council to perform a welcome to country?

Mr Manikis: They are Ngunnawal people of Canberra who have identified as Ngunnawal and an elder by the way, sorry.

MR WALL: Someone who is a member of the Ngunnawal Elders Council has approached me and said that they had been restricted from providing a welcome to country service at their child's school, which is a government primary school. I was wondering why that might be the case.

Mr Rattenbury: Without knowing the specific details, it would be hard. I would rather not speculate on that. As you appreciate, there are some sensitivities around this very issue. I would feel more comfortable, Mr Wall, taking this one up as, perhaps, a one-on-one discussion rather than necessarily prosecuting it through the estimates process, if you are agreeable to that. I do not want to put it to one side but given that

there are some sensitivities in this area I think that might be a better approach.

THE CHAIR: Are there any systemic issues that you could refer to in terms of why it might be that people are being given access or not? If it relates to a specific constituent issue, then I would be comfortable that that be addressed directly with Mr Wall.

Mr Rattenbury: I am not aware of any systemic pressures. If there is a systemic issue, I would agree, Mr Hanson, that that would be quite appropriate.

MR WALL: I am happy to take that up perhaps after the public forum. I have a further question around the payments for welcome to country ceremonies. I was wondering how much the government spent in the previous or in the current financial year on welcome to country ceremonies. How many ceremonies were paid for?

Mr Manikis: I do not have that information readily available.

MR WALL: Will you take that on notice?

Mr Manikis: I will take that on notice.

THE CHAIR: I note that we have asked for that previously. It is difficult information to capture and it would be useful if you could take that on notice and make sure that information is provided in terms of who is conducting the ceremonies, for what purpose and which directorate, I suppose, is commissioning that and what the total amount is that is being spent.

Mr Rattenbury: I imagine we will be able to provide it for those ones that government is specifically commissioning. Of course, there are many others that take place in the community which we will not be able to provide information on.

THE CHAIR: That is fine.

MR WALL: I am obviously asking for the ones that have come out of ACT revenue.

THE CHAIR: Yes, that the budget is paying for.

Mr Rattenbury: We will be able to access it.

Ms Howson: It might take some time to pull together. It will be difficult to get that for you within the specified 48 hours.

THE CHAIR: You have got five days.

Ms Howson: The five days.

THE CHAIR: If you wish an extension, I am happy to say let us have an extension—I am fine—but certainly before this committee reports. How long is realistic? Do you need 10 days?

Ms Whitten: I think what the logistical issue for us is that each directorate would be working individually with the relevant elders. So it is quite a coordinated response across the whole of the public service to bring that together because we do not hold that information centrally. I would think that probably 10 working days would be what we think is realistic.

THE CHAIR: I am satisfied with 10 working days. I accept that. I just make the point that we might put into the report that it is interesting information, just how many of these things are going on and what is the cost of them. And it might be useful for annual reports if you have got that information readily available. But we will note that. Where were we at? I think you just asked your question.

MR SMYTH: Yes.

THE CHAIR: The genealogical study that was commissioned was done in two parts. There was the confidential one and then the non-confidential one. Have you had any response to that? Has it achieved anything with regard to, I guess, establishing who the elders are and has it resolved some of the systemic issues that are apparent within the Indigenous community or not?

Mr Rattenbury: There have been various books produced. I am not sure how much you know about the details.

THE CHAIR: Quite a bit, actually.

Mr Rattenbury: Each family has been presented with an individual version. The feedback that I have had, both through my staff and also from individuals, is that they have found the information very useful. For some people, it has told them things they did not know before or in some cases confirmed things they did know. I think for some people there has been some confronting information as well. So it has been a mixed response at that individual level. On the more collective issue of defining specifically the heritage in the ACT region, I think I can best summarise that by saying there is a level of contention in the community about what the answer to that is.

THE CHAIR: I am just trying to resolve some of that because we have had these discussions dating back five years before this was even on the map probably. I remember Jon Stanhope talking about it and his desire to try to resolve some of these issues. They do not appear to be resolved. And maybe they cannot be resolved. That is maybe just the natural lie of the land. But has this initiative actually taken us a step in the right direction? If it has, what is that step?

Mr Rattenbury: I think it has added to the information that is available. At the same time it has not provided a definitive answer that says, "This is it." And in some ways it has not provided that definitive answer. My view is that that contention remains in the community, and I am seeking some advice at the moment as to what the best way is to perhaps try to move past that, those differences of opinion, and whether government might play some role in assisting that. I think it is important that the community leads that conversation, that the community really drives the conversation, but there may be some place where government can assist to facilitate that, to find a clearer point of resolution.

THE CHAIR: And there was a court case, I think, where the Ngarigu people had said that there was a breach of the Human Rights Act. It had gone to the High Court. Is that still pending? What was that one?

Mr Rattenbury: I am just trying to recall the details. There is a case. I believe it is still in train.

Mr Manikis: This is not so much the Ngarigu people as a collective, it is an individual and a family in the ACAT.

THE CHAIR: It is in the ACAT, is it?

Mr Manikis: Yes. That was finalised at the end of last year, with us having to satisfy some conditions. And they were satisfied as far as we are concerned.

THE CHAIR: Can you illuminate the committee as to what those conditions were?

Mr Manikis: It is an individual case, which I cannot at this stage.

THE CHAIR: But I thought you said it had been resolved.

Mr Manikis: It has been resolved. I can talk in general terms.

THE CHAIR: Yes.

Mr Manikis: It was around the genealogical study as well. Most of the issues that we needed to come forward with were: that a full, not-for-public genealogical report of the Indigenous families in the Canberra region had to be completed; that the particular individual would need to be consulted, which they were; that an abridged version of the genealogy report was to be published, which it was—*Our kin, our country*, you may recall, last year; that the individual would be provided with print and electronic copies of that summary report, with no conditions; and that the individual would be provided with their family pack, and they were.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Just a further question on the genealogical study, minister, the need for this is predicated on the basis of 200 years of dispersal, dispossession and discrimination. What do you think is a reasonable time frame to achieve some sort of outcome of consensus within the Indigenous community?

Mr Rattenbury: To be honest, I have reflected on this quite a bit. What is the best way to try to reach a point of resolution on this and, in fact, is resolution possible? I find it very hard to put my finger on a time frame. As I said earlier, it is a place where I am seeking advice from a range of sources, and it is hard to know whether it is something that can be achieved in the next few years or whether it takes a bit longer with generational change and whether that will be the sort of timescale we are looking at.

DR BOURKE: And the ACT is not the only place where this trauma has occurred and where these disagreements have occurred?

Mr Rattenbury: And I think your earlier observation about the long history of this points to the difficulty of resolving the question in some way. The disruption, the lack of records, the loss of family connection—these have disrupted what you might call the chain of custody and the sense that people have of knowing their own history. And that is what has actually made this a difficult issue in some ways, the pattern that you have described.

DR BOURKE: And what sort of feedback have you had from individuals who have been involved in the genealogical survey? Have they discovered relationships and ancestors that they did not know about?

Mr Rattenbury: As I touched on before, for some people it has been perhaps a source of joy. They have learned new things that are important, drawn connections that they did not know were there. There is sadness attached to that as well, at seeing the disruption. At an individual level, I guess in some ways it is a full range of emotions, as you can imagine, as any family history throws up at times. I think people who are affected by or involved in these studies have had the same gamut of reactions.

DR BOURKE: And moving to a substantive question, how will the \$400,000 Indigenous scholarship program operate and be promoted?

Mr Manikis: The new Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will be responsible for the implementation of that program. It will be promoted with the assistance of the elected body across the Indigenous network, and also we would seek the assistance of our Koori preschools as well. We would be, I would imagine, trying to link in with the participants of the chances program as well. So what we would be trying to do is promote that to those individuals that would probably most benefit from the assistance that this program provides.

DR BOURKE: You mentioned a new office; could you tell us about that, please?

Ms Howson: I will take that question, if you do not mind. We are about to stand up a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs branch within the Community Services Directorate. Up to this point the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs unit has been incorporated with the multicultural office as well. This is quite a deliberate step on our part to raise the profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs across the directorate and also across the government.

It has flowed from a review that was undertaken last year. Katrina Fanning joined the department to undertake the review to determine how we might improve our capacity within the Community Services Directorate to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both in terms of policy development and in service delivery practice. That review led to a suite of recommendations to the board of management within my directorate, and we have discussed these with the minister before taking them forward. Essentially, we are strengthening our capacity in terms of improving cultural competence across CSD and then transferring that across whole of government. We will be dedicating more effort to building stronger relationships with the Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander community and supporting particularly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body in their role in building relationships with that community and informing policy through those relationships.

The third arm of this new branch is in strategy and policy development. In that respect we are very excited about working with the elected body on their proposal around a single whole-of-government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs strategy akin to what was achieved under the justice agreement. I should say that it is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agreement across government. That will be one of the first pieces of work this new branch will undertake.

We have an executive position dedicated to heading this branch, and the recruitment process for that position is almost at its final point of conclusion. We should be in a position to announce the successful applicant for that role, shortly. I am looking forward to the leadership that the branch will offer not only my own directorate and the staff within the directorate but across government. The branch will also be supporting all our staff working in service delivery around issues of a culturally competent approach to service delivery.

DR BOURKE: Can you outline for the benefit of the community what cultural competence is?

Ms Howson: That is a very difficult question to answer; I ask that question often. It is probably better put to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, but my understanding is that it is around understanding connection to country and the notions of kinship most particularly in the context of the work that we do in our directorate and understanding the different approach to family relationships and structure and also, importantly, recognising our history with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the trauma that has imparted and essentially being more aware as we move into our service relationship and not assuming that the way in which we are received by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community is the way we might be received by other communities.

DR BOURKE: So those cultural competence skills are transferrable to other cross-cultural situations too?

Ms Howson: I believe they are. In fact, I met with a group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff just two days ago, and we were talking about “stuff”, having a chat about what we could do better. They emphasised to me the point that if we get things right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families we will get things right for all vulnerable families in our directorate.

DR BOURKE: Are you familiar with the term “cultural safety” as well? Is that an element of the cultural competence training?

Ms Howson: I am familiar with the term. Again, I would feel a little awkward trying to explain in depth what it means, but my understanding is that it a very important concept for our staff, particularly in the context of child protection work and the work we do in youth justice

DR BOURKE: Maybe you could help the committee and let them know what your understanding of cultural safety is?

Ms Howson: Again, I think it is about understanding the context in which we may well be received by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The notions of kinship support and relationships are very important in the context of the work we do with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Have I got that right?

DR BOURKE: Cultural safety is essentially around avoiding the possibility of impacting on somebody's culture negatively through the way in which you operate or undertake an action. So respecting and recognising how you, with your particular cultural views, may be perceived or may undermine someone else's culture. But I am not here to give evidence.

MR WALL: I was wondering if you would be able to make available for the committee a copy of the review and the recommendations that were made that led to the establishment of the stand-alone Indigenous branch.

Ms Howson: We did not actually commission a report. Ms Fanning was working within the directorate at the time, and Ms Fanning's consultations were informing the board's discussion around the presentation of her findings. She presented the findings of her consultation in what I would call more of an informal suite of documents to the board of management. I can certainly provide a copy of her work to the committee, but it was not a formal report.

THE CHAIR: So the FTE that works as part of Mr Manikis's area transfers to this branch so that there is a one-stop-shop?

Ms Howson: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: Yes. How many FTE will that be?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Fourteen.

THE CHAIR: That is a massive expansion based on previous. When was this decision made? This is news to me I have to say.

Ms Howson: Just in terms of the number of staff, that also incorporates staff that were part of the Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander unit in the Office for Children, Youth and Family Services. We have also had a core focus on relationship building with communities and supporting our cultural competency.

THE CHAIR: So when you consolidate this together, are there any new FTE or is it just a consolidation?

Ms Howson: No, there is not new FTE.

THE CHAIR: So it is just a consolidation.

Ms Howson: That is correct.

THE CHAIR: It seems to make sense.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, if I could bring you to page 334 of budget paper 4, there is a change to the indicators. I know this is not your particular output class, but there is a change there which affects ATSI people in f. and g. Could you tell us what the benefit to ATSI people would be with that expansion of the service?

Mr Rattenbury: I will ask Ms Howson to go through this one.

Ms Howson: Would you mind repeating the question, please, Mr Gentleman?

MR GENTLEMAN: Indicators f. and g. on page 334 seem to show quite an expansion of the service—another 200.

Ms Howson: First of all it is important that I point out that indicator f. is actually a point-in-time measure where indicator g. is over the full year. So that talks about median response in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people that are receiving support throughout the year at 500, where previous reports have said it has just been at the point of reporting. So the measure in g. is a much more informative measure.

MR SMYTH: The former National Museum of Australia buildings at Yarramundi Reach, what is happening with them?

Mr Rattenbury: At the moment there are two primary activities taking place out there. One is the art gallery which is operated as a private enterprise and which leases the space from the Community Services Directorate. I believe that is going very well. The last time I was out there chatting with them they seemed to be going along quite nicely. Then there is the area occupied by the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre. They also lease space from CSD, and they have just received a substantial funding boost from the commonwealth, which was announced last week, of \$8 million over four years. They will need to look at some expansion; whether that is on that site or somewhere else is a matter that has just arisen. There are also some common spaces that are available for hire. So that is the use of the centre at the moment.

MR SMYTH: When did the art gallery move in?

Mr Rattenbury: Do you want a specific date or just a general idea?

MR SMYTH: If you have got it, that would be fine, but just a—

Mr Rattenbury: About three years ago. Is that sufficient?

MR SMYTH: Yes, that is fine. Are there any residual issues to be resolved over the previous tenancies before the art gallery moved in?

Mr Manikis: No.

MR WALL: Minister, in last year's budget paper there was the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support and capacity building program. What services did that initiative provide and why has it been discontinued?

Mr Rattenbury: That is from the 2012-13 budget?

MR WALL: Yes.

Ms Howson: Is this something you are reading from the budget papers?

MR WALL: Budget paper 4, page 356, from last year.

Mr Rattenbury: We might have to take—

Ms Howson: Can you repeat the name of the program?

MR WALL: The program was called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support and capacity building program. It had funding for this current financial year of \$100,000.

Mr Manikis: I think that was chances, the pilot.

Ms Howson: Without having the budget paper in front of us, I believe that would be the chances program—

MR WALL: Chances is also listed in there for \$180,000.

Mr Rattenbury: In the absence of having the budget papers with us, we will take that one on notice and give you a reply, Mr Wall, if that is okay.

MR WALL: Yes.

THE CHAIR: The United Ngunnawal Elders Council: how many times has that met in this financial year? It might be a calendar year measure, but over the last 12 months.

Mr Rattenbury: The last meeting was held in Canberra on 4 and 5 October 2012. The next meeting is scheduled to coincide with NAIDOC Week in early July 2013. I met with the chair, Ms Roslyn Brown, and Auntie Agnes Shea, a Ngunnawal elder, in March this year. One of the issues raised at that meeting was the need for a UNEC meeting to be held in the near future, and the meeting in July will fulfil that.

THE CHAIR: So it is about one meeting a year, then; is that right? Is that standard?

Mr Manikis: It is up to the United Ngunnawal Elders Council members when they meet. The government has given a commitment to support four meetings a year. There have been two occasions this year when meetings were organised and, for personal reasons and other reasons, they did not proceed. But we stand ready to support the council.

THE CHAIR: Are members of the council remunerated in any way?

Mr Manikis: They do get, not so much remuneration but certainly we have a policy in the directorate of engagement fees. They get \$100 a day.

THE CHAIR: \$100 a day?

Mr Manikis: Yes, per day.

THE CHAIR: Every day?

Mr Manikis: Of their meeting.

THE CHAIR: Every meeting. So they turn up to a meeting—

Mr Manikis: Yes, one day, they get \$100.

THE CHAIR: In terms of outcomes of meetings and advice to government, I assume there are minutes that are provided to government—

Mr Manikis: Yes.

THE CHAIR: that have recommendations and such?

Mr Manikis: With the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, we provide secretariat services. It is clearly understood that those minutes belong to the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. With the work of those meetings, it is not just our directorate that benefits but also other directorates that are invited along to seek advice from around the table, particularly on connection to country matters and those sorts of things. So there are minutes. The minutes belong to the United Ngunnawal Elders Council. Advice is provided to government directorates and recorded in the minutes.

THE CHAIR: I believe that Mr Stanhope, the previous minister or the one before—

Mr Manikis: Two before, I think.

THE CHAIR: Two before, is it? Was it you?

DR BOURKE: No, I think it was Ms Burch.

THE CHAIR: Ms Burch as well; two before, then. He wrote to the Ngunnawal elders council because he was, if I can paraphrase, dissatisfied with the way that meetings were being conducted. As a result of that letter, minister, are you confident now that the appropriate action has been taken so that meetings are being conducted properly?

Mr Rattenbury: On your earlier question, the elders council are asked to provide advice to the ACT government in relation to heritage and connection to land matters for the Ngunnawal people. They also provide advice to the Indigenous elected body. That is just to clarify that earlier question. In terms of the current conduct of the elders council, again, it is not a secret that there is disquiet within the council about its operation.

THE CHAIR: Certainly, and I am not wanting to litigate a whole bunch of issues. I am just wanting to make sure that it is serving its purpose and that if there were concerns raised by the Chief Minister directly to that organisation you are confident that that organisation has responded in an appropriate way and has taken the necessary actions. And if not, what are you going to do about it?

Mr Rattenbury: I do not believe that is resolved, and it is something I am giving further consideration to. I have written to all of the members of the council, introducing myself and seeking feedback from them in the future. Certainly, the elected body, through its engagement with the elders council, has recommended that the organisation be supported by the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate. Again, that is a role in heritage and connection to land matters. I am also seeking feedback from UNEC to confirm that that is a preferred approach or whether, with the new structure that has just been described by Ms Howson, that might be a better place of support.

THE CHAIR: In terms of a time frame for various actions you are taking and assurances you are seeking from the council, when is all of this happening? This is ongoing, is it?

Mr Rattenbury: As I said, the next meeting is in early July. So I think that will provide us with some further clarity.

THE CHAIR: If that meeting occurs and if there is any change to something, if you could provide something to this committee in writing, perhaps, before this committee reports, that would be useful.

Mr Rattenbury: Before we go on, we now have the answer to Mr Wall's earlier question.

Ms Howson: In relation to last year's budget measure, it was actually \$100,000 for the 2012-13 Indigenous childcare scholarships. That program is now being run through the education directorate.

MR WALL: As a supplementary, minister, why has the rebranding of it been announced as a new initiative when it is just continuing?

Ms Howson: You are talking about—

MR WALL: The scholarship and grants program has essentially just had a rebranding for this year's budget, into the new scholarship program?

Ms Howson: That is a question for the education directorate.

MR WALL: Even though it appears under the Community Services Directorate output class?

Ms Howson: Are you talking about our measure in our budget?

MR WALL: Yes.

Ms Howson: It is supporting people that win scholarships. They are not scholarships themselves. That is the new dimension of that program.

MR WALL: So it has gone from a scholarship to support for a scholarship?

Ms Howson: The scholarships are being administered through the Education and Training Directorate and are still available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our program is about supporting individuals that win scholarships to be able to optimise the opportunity that those scholarships offer them. In that way, it is a new program. It is a support program rather than an education program.

THE CHAIR: Members, it being 12.30, we have to finish there, so I would ask that any further questions be put on notice. That might be it for you, Minister Rattenbury?

Mr Rattenbury: I believe so.

THE CHAIR: Pending a recall—

Mr Rattenbury: Indeed.

THE CHAIR: which is not planned at this stage, you will be glad to know, for you.

Mr Rattenbury: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: I would like to thank you and officials for appearing today and also previously over the course of the estimates committee in your various capacities. I would ask that you respond to questions on notice within five days, except for the matter for which you have got 10 days. On the issue of the Ngunnawal elders council, if there is any more light that can be shed, could you provide that to the committee in writing. We will reconvene at 1.30.

Ms Howson: Mr Hanson, I know you have just wrapped up, but we do have a specific link to the website, on the Productivity Commission website, for the Indigenous expenditure report.

THE CHAIR: Could you provide that to the secretariat and we will incorporate that within our report.

Ms Howson: Thank you very much.

Sitting suspended from 12.29 to 1.30 pm.

Appearances:

Barr, Mr Andrew, Deputy Chief Minister, Treasurer, Minister for Economic Development, Minister for Sport and Recreation, Minister for Tourism and Events and Minister for Community Services

Community Services Directorate

Howson, Ms Natalie, Director General

Sheehan, Ms Maureen, Deputy Director-General

Overton-Clarke, Ms Bronwen, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services

Gotts, Mr Robert, Director, Community Sector Project, Housing and Community Services

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Executive Director, Policy and Organisational Services

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Chief Financial Officer

Matthews, Mr David, Senior Director, Governance, Advocacy and Community Policy

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, minister, officials and members. We are at Community Services, output class 3, community participation and community relations. Can you all confirm that you have seen, read and understand the privilege statement? All good? Yes. Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr Barr: Given that we only have about half an hour, chair, I will—

THE CHAIR: Zip straight through it.

Mr Barr: I will zip straight through it into the questions.

THE CHAIR: As Kevin Rudd would say.

Mr Barr: As he would, yes.

THE CHAIR: I know that Dr Bourke has missed you, so we will go to him.

DR BOURKE: Minister.

Mr Barr: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Good afternoon. In relation to the new funding for a microcredit program, who will be eligible, and do you have any examples of another successful microcredit program in the ACT?

Mr Barr: Ms Howson will be delighted to take that question.

Ms Howson: Who will be eligible for the microcredit program? It will be a number of subsectors within our population group. So women will be eligible, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, older people and young people. I think those are the subgroups that will be eligible for that program. There are obviously specific eligibility criteria that relate to the business proposals that will be coming forward and how they are

considered that will also go to the specific eligibility. I can ask David Matthews to go into that.

Mr Matthews: The government's announcement of the microcredit program in the budget is a very welcome extension of those initiatives that already exist in the community. In terms of the specifics of that initiative, we are still working through the details of that and confirming the provider and also the eligibility.

In a general sense, microcredit programs will be offering loans between about \$3,000 and \$10,000, depending on the scale of the business. Obviously it is very important that those loans allow people to get their business venture off the ground but do not unnecessarily shackle people with debt that they cannot repay at an early stage of their business. Generally, the loan repayments are made over a two-year period so that there is enough time for people to pay back that finance and, if necessary, establish the basis for seeking additional credit that they can then use to expand their business.

I would point out that in the community already there is a very successful microcredit program through the Lighthouse Business Innovation Centre, which is focused on women—the brilliant idea program. Since the brilliant idea program has been initiated, 21 new businesses have started and, through that, 19 new job opportunities have been created.

I think it is also very important to bring to the committee's attention that there has been a very high repayment rate of finance that has been lent under that program. With only one or two exceptions, all of the people that have received finance under that scheme have paid it back to Lighthouse, with directorate funding, and that has enabled it to be reinvested in new business opportunities.

DR BOURKE: Do you have other examples of where these microcredit programs have been successful elsewhere in Australia?

Mr Matthews: I cannot go into detail regarding other jurisdictions, but obviously there is a lot of interest in this area across states and territories. We have used that at an earlier stage during the development of brilliant ideas with Lighthouse. I think the important thing with that—and it falls very much into the area of social enterprises as well—is how we can get not only social outcomes with this kind of economic investment but also employment outcomes and economic benefits where people can gather skills and get longer term employment opportunities.

Ms Whitten: In relation to other microcredit programs, there has been a fairly well established program in Tasmania. Certainly, that was one of the jurisdictions that we looked at when we established the original microcredit program for women. There are other microcredit programs available through banking institutions and other types of services as well.

DR BOURKE: On the community day, Women With Disabilities ACT came in and made representations around this program and their desire to see appropriate marketing of microcredit programs to women. How do you propose to make sure that that happens?

Ms Howson: As Mr Matthews has mentioned, we will certainly be leveraging from the success that we have had through brilliant ideas with the Lighthouse Foundation and drawing on those successes in publicising the impact of these programs to potential female business owners. I might just ask Ms Whitten to talk more specifically about the promotional aspects that sit with that.

Ms Whitten: When we originally initiated the microcredit program under the women's program, Lighthouse did a lot of the marketing. They have got a very good website which has got a great deal of information about the forums that they conduct and also the promotion into the community. Through our Women's Information and Referral Centre we promote the program as well through its calendar events and other initiatives.

DR BOURKE: Minister, Mr Matthews talked about social enterprises. What support does CSD provide to social enterprises?

Ms Howson: Apart from these microcredit programs, through a range of our grants programs we can make funding available to individuals or groups that have initiatives. For example, the disability innovation grants program is one avenue for organised groups or individuals that have good ideas that they want to turn into something, whether it is a developed business plan or some investment in some infrastructure that will assist with a social enterprise.

Other avenues are through our community services organisations. More often than not, they are the source of identifying collectives or projects that require collaboration across groups. They will put together, again, a business plan, a proposal and approach the directorate directly or, through the funding that they receive through our community development program, seed fund some of these initiatives. Do you want to add anything to that, Meredith?

Ms Whitten: We have had initiatives such as the White Nile catering arrangement, which is around catering for, I think, the Ethiopian community. Also, one of our recent initiatives is funding the No Sweat Fashions organisation in terms of engagement of women.

Ms Howson: I should add, Dr Bourke, that our own purchasing capacity assists social enterprises. Where we can and where it is appropriate, we certainly promote social enterprises throughout the public sector. For example, at Christmas time there is a social enterprise for a young person with a disability who is an artist and produces Christmas cards. I know that there are a number of directorates across government that purchase their cards from that business. With catering organisations—again, where it is appropriate and competitive—we draw on their capacity to support the things that need to happen so far as government purchasing is concerned.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps for the benefit of the committee you could give us a definition of what a social enterprise is as opposed to a microbusiness?

Ms Howson: You are testing me on a lot of definitions today! I do not know if I know the precise definition of a social enterprise, but I am happy to talk to you about what I understand they are. I think the most important element of a social enterprise is that

they are an organised arrangement that will provide a social outcome as well as whatever the specific business outcome might be. That would be largely around employment of people that might not normally get access to other forms of employment. Or it might be part of their arrangements around providing work experience opportunities and so on for people that would normally not be able to access the standard employment entry points, if you like.

THE CHAIR: The Wikipedia definition of a social enterprise is “an organization that applies commercial strategies to maximise improvements in human and environmental well-being, rather than maximising profits for external shareholders”. You did all right.

Mr Barr: Civilising capitalism, then, hey? Is that the shorthand two-word version?

THE CHAIR: For what, sorry?

Mr Barr: It does not matter.

THE CHAIR: I thought you were going to give us a lecture in Fabian socialism or something, Mr Barr.

Ms Howson: Ms Sheehan has just passed me a definition—

Mr Barr: It is a bit early on a Friday afternoon for that.

THE CHAIR: You do that later in the evening, do you?

Mr Barr: That is right, over a chardonnay.

THE CHAIR: Over a chardonnay?

Mr Barr: Over a chardonnay, Jeremy, yes.

DR BOURKE: It might be falling on deaf ears, I think.

THE CHAIR: There are plenty of unoccupied Fabian socialists around at the moment, I understand. I am sorry; Ms Howson.

Ms Howson: Dr Bourke, I was just handed a definition that exists within the Procurement Solutions guidelines, which is that it allows social benefit to be included in the assessment of value for money.

DR BOURKE: I am sure no socialist is ever unoccupied.

MR GENTLEMAN: Talking of occupied socialists, if you could go to page 336. There is a line item there for the pay equity award, the SACS award. Can you tell us what the benefit of that will be for the community sector?

Mr Barr: I am sure Mr Gotts would be delighted to provide the detail of that. In short, it is a \$57 million injection into the sector from the commonwealth government and

the territory government. Robert, the detail.

Mr Gotts: Yes, I am familiar with the pink sheet and what is on it. Could I just get you to give me the question again?

MR GENTLEMAN: Yes, what are the benefits of this program for the community sector?

Mr Gotts: Essentially, it means that a group of people who would otherwise have fallen behind other types of employment get to keep up, in salary terms. The full bench of Fair Work Australia found that there was a significant gender-based gap between the salaries of community sector workers and comparative groups of workers. They increased the salaries for community sector workers by between 45 and 21 per cent, or 21 up to 45 per cent, depending on the classification. That is to be implemented over an eight-calendar-year or nine-financial-year period. What it means is that the salaries of people who deliver those services for the disadvantaged in our community stay in touch with the salaries of other types of employment across the community.

MR GENTLEMAN: Do you think that will help you recruit and retain people in that sector?

Mr Gotts: I think it will very much have that effect. The employment market for the community sector in the ACT is very, very competitive because there are two governments in this town. So that is a lot of competition. It will contribute markedly to the ability of community sector organisations to keep their staff. In fact, one of the measures of success will be changes in turnover in the community sector over the next few years. That is something we will be watching.

MR GENTLEMAN: It is not just a straight increase, is it? It has got a graduated increase period.

Mr Gotts: That is right. The decision by the full bench of Fair Work was to take into account the potential pressure on employers, so they required the increase to be made over a nine-year period. For eligible workers, as they become eligible, it is staggered over nine years.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thank you.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Just on the numbers, there are a couple of lines there. What are the revised index parameters for community sector indexation?

Ms Howson: Can you point to a page?

MR SMYTH: Page 336 of budget paper 3.

Mr Barr: It reflects wage price index. So the community sector indexation is 80 per cent WPI, 20 per cent CPI. WPI has moved down.

MR SMYTH: So it is coming down.

Mr Barr: From four to three, yes.

MR SMYTH: So we are giving them more on one hand and taking some from them with the other?

Mr Barr: We fund by way of a composite of the wage price index, and if the index moves, which it has, the level of funding adjusts accordingly.

MR SMYTH: We are giving them more on one hand and taking some from them on the other?

Mr Barr: The costs are rising more slowly, because wages will not be increasing as fast. The 80 per cent component goes to meet increased wage costs.

MR SMYTH: Mr Hubbard had a comment?

Mr Hubbard: Yes. The minister is correct there. That actually shows that the community sector is being fully compensated for changes to the various costs that they face based on 80 per cent of their structure being employment costs, and then the other 20 per cent. So they are being fully compensated with the current indexation.

MR SMYTH: With the new wage case, does that mean we have to go back and revise all the contracts with all the community groups?

Mr Gotts: The way that it works is that each employer that seeks support from the ACT applies for support under one of the clauses of their existing contract. We have done a series of calculations to work out what the support amount is, and then that is paid to them through a letter of variation to their agreement. So it is through a contractual device to provide the additional support.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, at page 329 of BP4, accountability indicators, there are a number of partnership forums with the community. Can you tell us what were the details of the partnership forums held in the last financial year?

Ms Howson: I will ask Ms Overton-Clarke to come up to the table for that particular question.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Could you point me to the page again?

MR DOSZPOT: Page 329, partnership forums with the community.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Sorry, which measure is it?

Ms Howson: I am having trouble locating the measure as well.

Ms Overton-Clarke: That is disability?

Mr Barr: It is 331. Page 331 of BP4.

Ms Overton-Clarke: Okay. With the partnership forums, that is actually a discontinued output for 2013-14. But in terms of 2012-13, there is the joint community government reference group, the community recovery subcommittee of the community services program and the community sector reform advisory group. I will take on notice the precise breakdown across the 16 of how many there are. Certainly, I chair the community support reform advisory group, and we have had eight meetings this financial year. Ms Sheehan co-chairs the JCGRG—the joint community government reference group—and that meets on a quarterly basis, so there would be four of those. So we are up to 12. I would say the other four are the regular meetings of the community services program, which is the one referred to as the community services program forums.

MR DOSZPOT: As I understand it, these forums were held to foster strategic partnerships and to improve sector viability in the ACT?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Why have they been discontinued?

Ms Sheehan: I am able to take that one. Mr Doszpot, the forums themselves will continue on, because they are important forums. The issue which the committee has raised with the directorate quite often is: if what we are trying to measure is community participation—which we are—with the accountability indicator, is the number of meetings that you have with the community sector the best way of measuring the participation with the community? So it is important to meet with the community but it is not necessarily a good measure of how well you are doing at engaging the community in working with you.

MR DOSZPOT: Surely, if you are not having a discussion with the community, you are not getting adequate feedback?

Ms Sheehan: In fact we are continuing to have all of these meetings with the community.

Mr Barr: The performance indicator stops, not the meetings.

Ms Sheehan: Yes.

MR DOSZPOT: Okay, thank you for that. So the forums will continue?

Ms Sheehan: The forums are all still continuing.

MR DOSZPOT: With the number of community capacity building projects supported, how many grants are allocated each year?

Ms Whitten: Those grants are part of the community infrastructure and support

grants. In fact we are about to launch that grant program this weekend.

Mr Barr: 1 July, yes.

Ms Whitten: We do not actually have a set number but we do have a dollar value for each of those grants. I think it is in the order of \$15,000. I will need to get that figure. The amount of funding that has been made available for the grant program that we are about to launch tomorrow and last year was \$300,000 in total. There are three parts to the community infrastructure and support grant program, and they get a different proportion for each part. So the total value of the program that we administer is up to \$300,000. It just depends on the types of grants that we receive—the applications that we receive. We have a committee that considers the grants and makes recommendations to the minister.

MR DOSZPOT: Was the funding \$300,000 last year as well?

Ms Whitten: Yes, that is correct. For the community support and capacity grants, for 2013-14 there is \$90,000 available for that particular part of the program, and it is a value of \$20,000 per grant maximum.

Mr Barr: A maximum value.

MR DOSZPOT: Is that a cap?

Ms Whitten: It really depends on the grants that we get. If there are not so many grants in one of the other categories, the committee will provide advice—

MR DOSZPOT: So you have flexibility within that?

Ms Whitten: Yes, we do.

MR DOSZPOT: What are the selection criteria?

Ms Whitten: The selection criteria are published as part of the grant guidelines. I would have to get the specific details of those criteria. I do not have them with me.

Mr Barr: We are launching next year's one on the weekend, so we will provide it to the committee. We can give you that—

MR DOSZPOT: If you are launching next year's, you should have information on past years, shouldn't you?

Mr Barr: Yes, it would be on the website. We can get it. It is about 10 pages. We will get it for the committee; not a problem.

MR DOSZPOT: How are you launching it?

Mr Barr: I will issue a media release and we will circulate it through social media and the like.

Ms Whitten: And we are holding an information session in a couple of weeks.

Mr Barr: There is an information session.

THE CHAIR: Do you follow Mr Barr on Twitter?

MR DOSZPOT: No, but I think I should if I want the information, by the sounds of it. Further to that, are the funding allocations made on a one-off basis or are they multi-triennial?

Ms Whitten: These are grants.

MR DOSZPOT: These are grants for that specific year?

Ms Whitten: For a particular purpose, yes.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, how does the \$210,000 recurrent and capital funding provided to Diversity ACT community services help improve services to the ACT LGBTI community?

Mr Barr: There are two elements in this coming financial year. The first is a capital component of \$90,000 to add additional space at the Diversity hub that we provided funding for the establishment of in the last financial year. Then there is a three-year commitment in relation to recurrent funding for Diversity at around \$120,000 indexed allocation. Mr Matthews is currently in discussions with Diversity in relation to the implementation of this grant allocation, and I will let him discuss those elements.

Mr Matthews: From the directorate's perspective we are really pleased to be engaging with Diversity ACT as a new and emerging organisation serving a really important constituency in our community. It is a terrific reflection on the effort of a whole bunch of people that have got together to organise that organisation and to establish it within our community, including being given some money to support their location at Kambah as the basis for their interactions with the wider community.

Our discussions with them at the moment are going into how we support their growth over time and how we establish them as a funded organisation in the ACT. We are supporting them to do some business planning work, and they are undertaking that at the moment to look at how they can best influence mainstream service delivery and make sure all services are accessible to the community and what additional community development and community education work is required to raise awareness and address issues such as discrimination. We will be working very closely with Diversity ACT over the next couple of months to complete that business planning process and then to turn that into a contract with government where we will, again, work with them as a funded organisation to support their ongoing development in the community.

MR GENTLEMAN: What have they been able to achieve with the original seed money?

Mr Matthews: They have done a whole lot of things. They have been a very public

and visible organisation. Certainly, if you are a social media advocate, you will see that Diversity ACT are very active in that space. They have done a lot of work around establishing their location at Kambah, including significant efforts to get the community involved in working bees and a whole lot of other work to support their organisation. They have been very successful at their awareness-raising activities, both with government and also with the broader community. As I said, they have taken a very serious approach to their business planning and their future development as an organisation, looking at their organisational governance and how they can put in place policies and procedures and memorandums of understanding—not very sexy stuff to talk about but vital organisational infrastructure to ensure that they are around for many years to come. We are really looking forward to working off that base with Diversity ACT and supporting them into the future.

DR BOURKE: The capital grant, I understand, is to put a structure into their hub that currently exists. Are they going to need to raise some money themselves to support that piece of infrastructure or will the grant cover the entire amount needed?

Mr Matthews: There is a one-off allocation of \$70,000 this year to support that additional space, and we believe that is adequate. We are still working through the details with them. The main issue for Diversity ACT is they have some flexibility in the way that they use their space. They are looking for smaller areas where they can have one-to-one discussions or have small groups operating. They are really looking at how they can best utilise their existing accommodation. This additional capital component will give a bit more flexibility to them about how they can use their site.

MR DOSZPOT: Minister, around 15 per cent of funded organisations have indicated they are not satisfied with the way their contracts are administered. Can you tell us a little about what the issues are?

Ms Sheehan: That is a satisfaction survey administered to all organisations that receive any amount of funding for ongoing provision of services to the community, and the range of services are from services for children and young people through to homelessness services through to administering community hubs that we own, such as those at Belconnen, Tuggeranong and so on. So, in any particular year, if there is an issue of concern to a particular sector, when the survey comes, there is a chance that that issue will loom large in the satisfaction survey. That is one thing which can impact on the level of satisfaction.

From last year's satisfaction survey we know there were not any particular issues around the quality of the community facilities. That can impact in some years, but people have been quite satisfied on this occasion. We know that in the initial tendering of the children, young people and family services grants—that program is called CYFSP—there were some concerns from some community organisations. As the committee heard when Minister Burch was before it, any of the concerns that organisations previously had, including during the survey period, are well and truly under control at the moment.

Ms Howson: I will just add to that answer, too. I would like to say in general—this does not go specifically to the results of the survey—that in regular dialogue with the community sector we know an area where they are looking for better performance

from government is in the area of contracting, procurement and reporting. That has been a very strong theme that has come through the consultation in the work that both Ms Overton-Clarke and Robert Gotts have been doing with the community sector on community sector development and reform and as part of our red tape reduction agenda. I would expect that a lot of the dissatisfaction with government contract administration has to do with the things that they are telling us about multiple contracts across multiple programs and the administrative burden that that places on the sector.

MR DOSZPOT: What I am trying to understand is that, if there is 15 per cent of dissatisfaction, do you have clear details about what those specific dissatisfaction points are? If you do, how are you addressing those points?

Ms Howson: Yes, I believe we do, and I think that has been a very important focus in our consultation with the sector about how we can work in a better partnership with them. I might ask Bronwen to talk more specifically about what they have told us and what we are doing about it.

THE CHAIR: If you could keep it quite brief.

Ms Overton-Clarke: As the director-general outlined, it is around the amount of red tape and handling that we do within the directorate. Specifically with Minister Barr's direction, we are looking at minimising both the number of measures that we have and the way we collect information while remaining accountable for that public money.

MR DOSZPOT: I think we have all heard stories about dissatisfaction with red tape. Are you satisfied that you can address that in a way that will satisfy the community?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Yes. We are aware that across CSD we have a number of programs, and we want to bring them together in an accountability sense so that there is one contract manager responsible for a number of programs across the directorate.

THE CHAIR: We will have to halt it there, members.

Mr Barr: My parting to for the committee will be the community support and infrastructure grants program guidelines that Mr Doszpot was seeking information on.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister and officials. If you could make sure your questions on notice are submitted within five days.

Short suspension.

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

Overton-Clarke, Ms Bronwen, Executive Director, Housing and Community Services

Whitten, Ms Meredith, Executive Director, Policy and Organisational Services

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

Hubbard, Mr Ian, Chief Financial Officer

Elvin, Ms Harriet, Chief Executive Officer, Cultural Facilities Corporation

Tidy, Mr Ian, Chief Financial Officer, Cultural Facilities Corporation

Collett, Mr David, Senior Director, Asset Management Branch

Whitney, Mr David, Director, artsACT

THE CHAIR: Welcome, minister; welcome officials. Thank you for appearing before the estimates committee—

Ms Burch: I was going to welcome back Mr Doszpot, but he is leaving.

MR DOSZPOT: Nothing personal, minister.

Ms Burch: I am sure it is not.

THE CHAIR: this afternoon between now and 3 o'clock to look at output 3.2, arts engagement, and also the Cultural Facilities Corporation and their statement of intent. I would remind you all that these proceedings are being recorded by Hansard and are also being live webstreamed. Are you all aware of the privileges statement, the pink card before you?

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: Mr Doszpot is back. Minister, have you had your hair done especially for us this afternoon, or is it—

Ms Burch: No, actually.

THE CHAIR: No?

Ms Burch: It is lack of, it is—

THE CHAIR: Is it? I noticed the change. I thought you had done it especially for this afternoon's final appearance before the estimates committee.

Ms Burch: If it makes you feel better of a Friday afternoon, Mr Hanson, I will fib just for you.

THE CHAIR: Fair enough. It would not be the first time. Minister, would you like to make a statement?

Ms Burch: I will make a brief statement across the three areas that we are covering today, thank you, chair. I will start with the arts. The arts policy framework, which was released in July of last year, reflects the government's continuing commitment to support and strengthen the ACT arts sector and, through it, the wider community.

It is important, therefore, to see in this budget that we are responding to key priorities identified in that framework. The government has allocated \$300,000 to progress the development of the Kingston arts precinct. In addition, there is \$1.5 million for the establishment of the Ainslie Arts Centre as a music hub and \$1 million over two years for the capital upgrades of the Gorman House Arts Centre.

For your information, the Street Theatre extension is due to be completed in August of this month. That work includes a new rehearsal studio, administrative offices and upgrades to the theatre space, box office and cafe. The government continues to provide significant art funding to enable the community to have strong access to and engagement with the arts. The government will provide over \$8 million in arts funding across a number of programs and agencies. The budget also provides support for the Cultural Facilities Corporation with new funding for the upgrades of roads down at the Lanyon precinct.

Moving to multicultural affairs, this year the government is funding a range of employment initiatives that will support our multicultural community members to find and sustain meaningful employment. The government will also expand its successful microcredit program and provide microcredit loans to multicultural, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who wish to start their own business. As part of our commitment to building language resources in Canberra, we will provide scholarships for members of Canberra's new and emerging multicultural community. The National Multicultural Festival will also receive additional funds to support an increased community participation.

Moving to my responsibilities as Minister of Women, recently I announced the successful 2012-13 women's grants recipients, including three recipients in the inaugural Audrey Fagan violence prevention grants. A total of 12 local community groups and organisations will share in \$130,000 of funding.

I am particularly pleased that a project to support and mentor women currently in or looking to enter the building and construction industry is progressing. We will work with the Women's Centre for Health Matters and the YWCA to provide financial and literacy programs. The ACT women's return-to-work programs continue to support women on low income who are entering or re-entering the workforce.

I think I will leave it there, but in concluding I want to thank all those involved across arts—certainly the CFC, Multicultural Affairs and the Office for Women—for the fabulous work that they do for our community.

THE CHAIR: Thank you, minister. I just make the point that we will look at

multicultural affairs and women after the break—at 3.15 pm.

Ms Burch: Yes.

THE CHAIR: We will just limit our questions to the Cultural Facilities Corporation and the arts. I will lead off. There was money put in the budget for the Kingston arts precinct. Can you give me a briefing on where that project is currently at, in particular issues surrounding the Fitters Workshop and Megalo.

Ms Burch: I can say that Megalo has now officially moved into its new digs. I went down there yesterday evening to have a look. I want to commend David Whitney and David Collett in his absence—there he is; never absent—for the fabulous work that they have done in the renovation of that southern office that used to be the LDA. I am waiting to see the before and after photos, because the transformation has been significant.

THE CHAIR: Is that an interim facility pending something that is purpose built?

Ms Burch: We have made a commitment to Megalo. We have stood by our commitment to support them to relocate to the Kingston precinct. In the interim—not a decision of my liking or my backing; I would much rather see them in their original proposal—they are in these digs. We would have to accept that it will be two to two-plus years before we move through and finalise the further development around Kingston and get some design work done and all the other work that we need to have done for a purpose-built building.

When they are open to the public, I would encourage people to go down and have a look because it does look fantastic. They are happy to be at Kingston. Certainly last night in talking to the bus depot market folk and the glassworks, now they can see that really starting to take shape they are happy. As far as where the planning goes, either of the Davids can talk to it. LDA is finalising the master plan. Then we will go in with a cultural plan which will overlay it once we know where the roads, the power and all those bits are. We will then overlay that with a plan over the next five-plus years about building.

THE CHAIR: What about the Fitters Workshop? Is that going to be upgraded so that has got toilets—

Ms Burch: It is part of the Kingston precinct; so it will be considered as we move across that whole precinct area. At the moment it is still effectively offline because there are major concerns around accommodation, insurance risk and things like that.

Mr Collett: The focus to date has been getting Megalo into the southern offices, as the minister stated. There was a fair bit of work to be done. There was progressive revelation of some problems because it is so old. There was moisture and other problems in terms of roof leaks and what have you. The focus has been very much on getting them into their new premises. That need was reasonably critical in terms of congestion and shortcomings in the accommodation that they were in prior to the move. Now that that has been completed, we will look at the Fitters Workshop in the context of the overall master plan for the area.

THE CHAIR: Are there any other supplementary questions on Megalo or Kingston? No, Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, budget paper 3, table 6.422 on page 213 outlines the budget's investments in arts facilities including the Ainslie Arts Centre and what will be the Kingston visual arts hub.

Ms Burch: Yes.

DR BOURKE: How will this investment progress the government's policy of establishing arts hubs at these sites, as recommended by the Loxton report?

Ms Burch: Yes, certainly the work around Gorman—all of these will certainly follow through on the Loxton recommendations which underpin in many ways our arts policy framework. We see great benefits in arts hubs, the coming together of like organisations, the internal benefits for their own administration but also for their own mentoring and how they support each other. It is almost like a career progression from different types of arts into one precinct—from established arts right through to emerging arts. This creates an absolute centre of where to go to for people with an aspiration for being part of particular arts. I will hand over to David Whitney.

Mr Whitney: With respect to the Ainslie music hub, we last year undertook a study with all the groups that use the Ainslie Arts Centre and also the much wider music community. We had a series of music roundtables. We identified the Ainslie centre as an arts hub for music for young people—so career pathways and development of music activity for young people.

We engaged an architect and cultural planner to look at the physical space and also the opportunity for us to rethink some of that physical space. It is a heritage building; so there are constraints there. However, there is a lot of opportunity for teaching music and also for music playing and engagement with music activity. We have since shown all of those groups the plans that have been drawn up. They are delighted with those.

In this budget when the money comes through we can commence work to realise that Ainslie Arts Centre as a hub, principally to look at co-location for many of the organisations that are currently there. We have also had interest from three other organisations involved in music that would like to move on to that site. We are quite confident that the Ainslie Arts Centre will be a very strong arts hub as a music hub. Within the next 12 months we can realise those capital works.

Gorman House Arts Centre was one of Australia's first multi-arts hubs. It has needed to be refreshed a little bit. A lot of the artists that are engaged in the studios that are there have been there for some time. It is an opportunity for us to rethink whether this is the best way we are using Gorman House Arts Centre. It is certainly home to some very important key arts organisations like Quantum Leap dance company, the Canberra Youth Theatre and also the Writers Centre. Contemporary Art Space has also got a very important location there as well.

So all of those organisations within Gorman House have been working with the Gorman House management and with artsACT to think differently about how we might be able to re-energise that space, which could mean creating arts studios for visiting artists. It might also mean having a cycle for emerging artists to be given a shorter lease arrangement rather than the current arrangement which requires people to be there for a longer time and to get the arts organisations and individuals working more closely together.

The tenant that was in one of the larger areas, the old Ralph Wilson theatre, for a long time moved out at the end of last year. That gives an opportunity for us to rethink how we can use that space. We have got an architect and cultural planner working on rethinking some of those opportunities. Then we can use the money that is available in the budget year to begin that process of reworking the Gorman House Arts Centre. It is a very large centre. Again, it is an historic property. We have to be careful obviously about retaining the heritage integrity of the building. With a building of that scale, just to simply keep it maintained and in working order is quite an expensive exercise. This money will go a long way to enabling that to happen.

I think the minister had spoken earlier about the Kingston site. The feasibility study is the development on from the Susan Conroy report of a couple of years ago establishing Kingston to be a visual arts hub—a hub where visual art activity is made and displayed. The engagement now will be to work alongside, as the minister was saying, the work the LDA have been doing to look at how we can turn what currently are the flat car parks of Kingston into a vibrant arts hub.

DR BOURKE: Which key visual arts organisations will be housed in the hub?

Mr Whitney: The ones that were picked up in the Conroy report expressed their interests. Of course, when we get closer to doing the feasibility study we will understand how keen their interest is. But we are certainly looking at co-locating Craft ACT down there, Contemporary Art Space and PhotoAccess. We also will be talking to people involved in the print and design work. Megalo are already on site. But the design students through CIT fashion school may well move on to the site as well. There is also an opportunity of us relocating the ArtSound FM radio station to be on site to embellish that area.

There are other visual arts organisations that have been involved in the conversation that to date have not seen the need to move their location. But the Watson Arts Centre—the Canberra Potters Society—may well be another organisation that could relocate from where they are on to that site.

What we have found through the Conroy report as well is that there are other elements of the creative industry or the creative sector. The film sector is a very important part for Canberra, not necessarily requiring a great film set but just a place where a lot of the technology that is around film production nowadays can be co-located and housed. We will be looking in the feasibility study at how to pick up some of the other creative sectors—architects, design firms, graphic design people and those sorts of companies—to move on to that area.

DR BOURKE: What sort of retail facility would there be within that hub? I know

that Craft ACT, for instance, has its own shop there. I suspect other organisations also have their retail arms. How would that fit in within the overall arts hub?

Mr Whitney: Retail is a critical part of all of our visual arts organisations. Currently, the glassworks relies very heavily on the gallery program and also their retail outlet. Megalo have got built into their function at the moment in their temporary location a retail area and display area as well. It is a bit early, because the feasibility study will unpick this, and we certainly have not got anywhere near talking to the built form, but there will be a need for shared exhibition space and also shared retail space. We are looking at the arts facilities being built there to have that interaction with the community through a retail engagement.

It is also important to pick up through the feasibility study other forms of active commercial retail activity that are complementary to or sympathetic with the arts activity that we have there. I am not talking about coffee shops and book shops; as lovely as they would be, they are probably not the cornerstone. There would be other elements of a retail component that could come in there, which may well involve having a government-supported arts organisation working very closely with a commercial operation. Going back to the film and screen sector, there are two very large production houses in Canberra for the computer gaming side of things. One of those has a very large retail and distribution outlet for the computer games that are manufactured in Canberra. They could sit very neatly alongside exhibition spaces and workshop spaces for both individual artists and the arts organisations moving onto the site.

DR BOURKE: How is that going to articulate with the Old Bus Depot Markets which are within that precinct?

Mr Whitney: The bus depot markets are, as is the glassworks, a real anchor for what happens on that site. That Sunday morning experience, I think, can be extended or expanded. Clearly, there is a very well-recognised and respected market and audience that go on Sundays. The Canberra Glassworks enormously benefits from that audience, as I am sure Megalo will, and part of their plan is to open on the weekends to engage directly with the people who attend the bus depot markets.

With the bus depot markets, the activity I am talking about will be complementary. It certainly is not intended to be in opposition to people coming onto the site. Again, the feasibility study will look at quite a lot of the proposed open spaces—the areas that we see as the public domain as part of that Kingston precinct. There is a lot of that connection from Wentworth Avenue right down to the lake which is yet to be planned and developed. But it is about that activity and that interchange, so that people can arrive not just at the one destination of the bus depot market but they may arrive on a Sunday and be able to spend the whole day engaged in different activity.

Also, with the former transport building, which is really only used one day a week for the bus depot market, it is about working with the operators of that market to talk about other activities that could occur, either during holidays or at festival times or, indeed, to have activity from Monday through to Saturday as well. That is all part of building around the core activity that is currently there to create a larger profile and a large activity.

Mr Collett: The other aspect of that is the connection to commercial activities that are all part of the LDA's development. Mr Whitney referred to the connection down to the lake edge. The arts precinct is adjacent to an area in which the LDA have identified commercial space. Mr Whitney and I have been working very closely with the LDA to make sure that we have an understanding of what their intentions are, what the likely outcomes are of pedestrian movement through the site and related retail activity.

THE CHAIR: Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, could I bring you to budget paper 4, page 333. Under output 3.2 there is a new line there for b., so there is a new indicator there. Can you tell us why you have created that new reporting structure and how you will achieve that number?

Ms Burch: This is focusing on organisations around community participation. With the arts, we have a highly participating community. It is about how we invent that and task all our organisation to do all they can to bring in the community to participate.

Ms Howson: What the minister is saying is the reason we have introduced a new measure. The focus in the arts policy is very much on supporting community participation and we wanted an indicator that would hold us accountable to that outcome.

MR GENTLEMAN: You have not been able to look back and see how that has occurred or been able to report on it before?

Ms Howson: In terms of setting the target, that has been informed by our previous experience.

Ms Overton-Clarke: As Ms Howson is saying, we wanted to formalise it because part of the arts policy was very much around engagement. We have had it as a measure in contracts before, but by putting it into the budget papers and formalising it more clearly through the contracts, we think going forward we can bring together those elements. The arts organisations have always had a participation element, but, particularly with arts within the Community Services Directorate, we want to be able to link up more clearly and visibly, particularly with the disability sector and with the more vulnerable members within the directorate who are clients, and really link those two areas a bit more formally.

Ms Burch: Mr Whitney, do you want to add something?

Mr Whitney: In the arts policy that was announced last year there was quite a fundamental shift, and I think the territory is actually showing some leadership here. Arts policies have historically always talked about the pursuit of excellence. We do not shy away from that but we have actually got as our first tenet participation and engagement. It is quite interesting that some months after our policy was announced the Australian government's creative Australia policy also focused on and picked up participation and engagement. I think it is quite an important distinction between the

policy of the past and the contemporary policy and how we wish to measure that.

MR SMYTH: Mr Whitney, did you enjoy *Cold Blooded* last night?

Mr Whitney: Yes. It was a bit difficult to see the work because, as with most exhibitions, it was jam-packed full of people. But the work is very strong and very impressive. I think that, as with many of our leading artists, the work is invariably seen interstate or overseas. So it is fantastic that there was a show at the Drill Hall. Yes, I did enjoy the work.

MR SMYTH: It was a great opening. Minister, the reason I ask about *Cold Blooded* last night is that the Childers Group, when they were in, talked about the development of local artists, supporting artists and supporting arts organisations. They probably made three key points, and I would like you to address each of them, if you would. The first is that simply adding CPI to the arts budget each year is not enough. Ms Evol McLeod said that they are slipping behind. She said:

We have actually slipped in terms of being able to retain and attract expertise to manage and maintain those facilities.

Given that there is a fantastic locally grown arts community here, what would your government do to support it just beyond CPI? The second issue they raised was the demise of the Cultural Council and the mooted emergence of some sort of arts advisory council. Can you tell us what is happening there? The last comment that was made by Ms McLeod and Ms Stacey was that certainly the arts have done very well in the centenary year but, having got some momentum, what was going to happen to keep it going? They spoke of a 10 to 20-year vision. Do you have a 10 to 20-year vision for the arts and, if not, will you come up with one?

Ms Burch: We have a very clear arts framework that I think covers a lot of that. Going to the question around CPI, there are many organisations across a number of agencies that will say their investment growth is not enough for them. I do not know of any government in any jurisdiction anywhere that would satisfy every element of the community on its investment growth. What I will say is that we have a very strong record, including in this budget, on investment across our arts, whether it is supporting the artist or supporting the infrastructure that in turn supports the artist. So I would say that we have a strong record on grants. Just recently—

MR SMYTH: So you do not believe that we are slipping behind?

Ms Burch: Are you going to let me answer the question, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: You seem to be dismissing the notion that the Childers Group put forward.

Ms Burch: I am answering your question, Mr Smyth. You may choose not to like it but I am giving you an answer.

MR SMYTH: No, you are avoiding it. You are running the standard government line.

Ms Burch: Just this week we announced Poetry in ACTION, awarded to 10, and another 10 were recommended. They got a benefit to themselves. There was a small voluntary payment to those; I think it was \$500 to those poets. What I am saying is that our investment is into the key arts organisations, it is into bricks and mortar and it is into artists themselves. All of those are absolutely important to do. That includes the money we also provide to ANU for our community outreach program, and the \$52,000 that we provide for the artists-in-residence program.

On the Cultural Council, you are right; we have decommissioned, for want of a better word, the Cultural Council. It was in existence under the previous arts minister. With respect to their core function, they had a mixed function. A lot of it was to do with grants peer assessment. I did not think that was a function—that the council could be better used. I met with the council a number of times but I have since made the decision that there are other ways of engaging with the community around arts processes and arts priorities, and that is what we will do.

In response to what happens post centenary, I think is a very good question, whether it is for arts or for any of the programs that have come through. I do not think there was a day when there was not an activity. Just last night I met with the CFC board and raised with them how we embrace the benefit that the centenary has had, particularly for the theatre and the Playhouse, and build on that success. The CFC—we might get to that in a moment—has had a very successful year, in part because of those fabulous productions and partnerships that have come through the centenary. I think it behoves all of the agencies that have benefited from the centenary to ask those questions about what is next, and that is certainly what we are working towards.

MR SMYTH: Do you reject the allegation from the Childers Group that we are slipping behind? They specifically used those words, that we have “slipped in terms of being able to retain and attract expertise to manage and maintain these facilities” because we cannot compete on wages.

Ms Burch: I am not quite sure what facilities they are talking about, but in this budget we have seen \$1 million go towards Gorman House. The manager down there, Joseph, has been very happy with that investment. We have seen phase 2 of Belco funded earlier. So we continue to invest in arts, in the infrastructure of arts and in the artists themselves.

MR SMYTH: You asked what facilities:

The facilities have been built, they represent a significant investment by the government, and in order to attract skilled personnel we have slipped. We have actually slipped in terms of being able to retain and attract expertise to manage and maintain those facilities. My most recent experience of it is that I am aware that the Tuggeranong Arts Centre needed to recruit, as did the Belconnen Arts Centre. We did find that there was pressure to match salaries in other places.

What is your strategy to address the need to match strategies in other places and assist the arts community to grow and prosper in the ACT?

Ms Burch: What is my strategy? It is an arts framework, an arts policy framework. In this budget alone there is \$1.5 million for the Ainslie music hub, \$1 million for

Gorman Arts Centre, \$300,000 for a feasibility and a commitment to develop a Kingston arts hub. It is phase 2 in Belco, it is a reinvestment, a complete redo of Tuggeranong Arts Centre. We have \$5.2 million in key arts organisations and programs across this city.

Mr Smyth: But that is the point they make—

DR BOURKE: Could you tell us about phase 2 of the Belconnen Arts Centre please, minister?

MR SMYTH: They give you credit for the facilities that you have built. And I give you credit. There is money in the budget for these. It is fantastic. But the facilities are useless unless you have got the staff to maintain and run them and deliver the programs. They are saying they cannot compete. What is your strategy to address the inability of our arts organisations to compete in staffing?

Ms Overton-Clarke: Can I just address the two specific ones that you raise, which is attracting the officers at both Belconnen and Tuggeranong arts centres? It is not unusual to identify that the current funding that is required for positions needs to be upgraded, and that is exactly what happened in those two examples. Mr Whitney can outline that.

Mr Whitney: Yes, that is the case, that both positions, for different reasons, became vacant and the national recruitment found two very successful people both for Tuggeranong Arts Centre and also for Belconnen Arts Centre. And clearly to attract people of that calibre—one was local, one was brought from interstate—did require looking above the salary levels that had been paid for the incumbents that had been in the positions for some years.

The investment, I think, in the physical infrastructure allows all of the arts centres to get increased outside funding. And we have talked earlier about, and Minister Burch talked about, the retail side of the Kingston arts precinct. With the Tuggeranong Arts Centre, the capacity that we are building down there is additional dance studio space and also additional gallery space, which would be another supplementary income stream for those organisations. And with a dynamic manager, there will be an opportunity to increase the funding that is available from non-arts funding through different parts of both the ACT government and also at a national level.

MR SMYTH: So the Childers Group is wrong in what they are saying, that they require additional—

Mr Whitney: No, they are—

Ms Burch: There is no right and wrong. If you are wanting me to say, “Absolutely,” and put my hand up, I am not going to do that because everything that I have said and Mr Whitney has said has indicated investment in arts. Going to one of your other points around post centenary, I might ask Ms Elvin to talk about the legacy of the centenary, particularly from a viewpoint of CFC.

Ms Elvin: I am labouring under a rather bad cold; so excuse the voice being an octave

lower than usual. I want to talk about centenary legacies, which is a point that Mr Smyth brought up, because this is something we are very focused on. I think it has been said that the last thing any of us want after this big celebratory year is to have a bit of a hangover. So we are very focused at the moment on how we can preserve and continue some of the many benefits that have arisen from the centenary.

I think there are three key things I would point to in terms of the CFC's involvement in the centenary and some of those lasting legacies. One is in terms of the new relationships that we have been able to develop during the centenary year. For example, it has been great to have the Australian Ballet back at the Canberra Theatre for the first time in a number of years. We had the national ballet company coming back with a specially commissioned work that I know a number of you saw. The Australian Ballet actually opened the Canberra Theatre in 1965 and as we approach the 50th birthday of the Canberra Theatre it is good to be able to re-establish that relationship and perhaps look to that special celebration that we have got coming up and hopefully work with them to ensure they can come back in the 50th anniversary year.

We have also built new relationships with people like Big hART and that, I think, will have an ongoing legacy, to be able to continue working with that very high-profile performing arts organisation. Another area in which we have forged new outcomes has been the volunteer program at Canberra Museum and Gallery. We now have a specially trained centenary volunteer at CMAG every day who can assist members of the public with accessing information about the centenary by accessing the touch screens. I hope that we might be able to continue a similar sort of initiative following the centenary year whereby CMAG can be a real city centre hub for information, for tourism opportunities and so forth.

A third area I would mention is: we have really been able to lift our fundraising efforts in the centenary year. It has been a real focus for fundraising. We have managed to present a number of much more ambitious exhibitions than we normally would, and those have been supported with funds that we have been able to raise. And I think people have been particularly generous in the centenary year both in terms of cash—the Village Building Co, for example, is supporting our next major exhibition that opens in a couple of weeks—and also a number of artists having particularly made major donations to us. They have done that, wanting to make a centenary gift. And obviously a gift of a work of art in the centenary year has a real legacy and an ongoing value.

MR SMYTH: If we could just go back to another question that was raised in the committee:

Have you looked at or thought about trying to link those wage structures with other structures that occur already? For example, in the community sector, you are aware that the SACS award changed a couple of years ago. It has moved into an increased funding arrangement so that those community workers end up on the correct wages for the services they provide.

Of course, that was a question from Mr Gentleman. And Ms McLeod replied:

Thanks for the question. We most certainly have looked at that. In terms of the

staffing structures of the organisation that I am chair of currently, Belconnen Arts Centre, we do not have the funding to move to the community sector rate. So the arts remains significantly below the community sector rate.

Is that acceptable, that the arts community remains below the community sector rate, minister?

Ms Overton-Clarke: What happened with the SACS award was that the union took the case to Fair Work Australia. So it is not actually the government's role to do that. It would be the union in that sector.

MR SMYTH: But you could, of course, adopt the SACS award as funding for the arts sector?

Ms Overton-Clarke: We do not pay the way that—

MR SMYTH: No, I appreciate that, but you could take that as a measure of what the wages and therefore the assistance that—

Ms Overton-Clarke: That would be a very unusual approach.

THE CHAIR: We might have to move on from here because we are starting to run out of time and we also have the Cultural Facilities Corporation to move to. I am happy if members still have more general questions to be asked but if they do have questions for the Cultural Facilities Corporation, this would be the time to ask those questions. Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: I do indeed have a Cultural Facilities Corporation question. On page 487 of budget paper 4, in the 2013-2014 priorities, minister, it is mentioned:

Working with other agencies on ... future directions of the city centre and ... cultural facilities in Civic, such as a major new theatre ... and participation in the City to Lake project;

Can you expand on this please?

Ms Burch: This is quite an exciting piece of work and it has been a long-table discussion about the question: what do you do with this theatre? It is a fabulous theatre. It is close on 50 years old. But the Cultural Facilities Corporation itself recognises that there are limitations to it. We cannot, for example, get a number of productions into it because of its size and a whole range of other front-of-house and back-of-house requirements that we need, for example, to get the full Australian Ballet, is my understanding.

So what the CFC has done is some very preliminary work around what would a cultural precinct look like and where is it best placed. And we will include that thinking and that work in with the city plan because it makes sense to consider this precinct as one but certainly include the notions of enhanced cultural facilities and a new theatre in that. I might ask Harriet to talk a bit more on that.

Ms Elvin: If I could perhaps just summarise why it is we need a major new theatre,

the reasons fall into two main categories: first of all, the auditorium size of the existing Canberra Theatre is simply too small to make a lot of productions economic. And that would particularly relate to major commercial productions. You simply cannot amortise the costs of those productions across 1,244 seats, which is the total capacity of the Canberra Theatre. Already we miss out on major touring productions. We would have loved to have brought *War Horse* here, which has been in Sydney very successfully. Other productions like *South Pacific*, the Australian Opera production of *South Pacific*, the *Rocky Horror Show*, other major commercial productions, big musicals and so forth—they are just not economic to bring to Canberra.

The other main reason is that the actual stage house, the fly tower, the size of the stage, the backstage facilities, are now no longer appropriate for a lot of touring productions. Although it was great to have the Australian Ballet here recently, we simply cannot take their main stage productions anymore because of the technical complexity, the size of sets, the height they need for the fly tower. Because of both of those aspects, the technical aspects, the size aspects, we desperately need a new theatre.

As the minister said, we are working with our colleagues in other ACT agencies to build the work, looking at a site for a new theatre as part of the cultural precinct, into those major Civic planning initiatives—the city plan and also the city to the lake project. And I am actively involved in both of those processes. My chairman, John Hindmarsh and I recently had an opportunity to brief all government ministers about the work that we have been doing and to seek to bring that work into that wider domain of the city planning projects.

DR BOURKE: With regard to the Canberra Theatre, in the same set of priorities, you also mentioned the second year of a multi-program of essential upgrades to the existing theatre. Can you outline those please?

Ms Elvin: This is a three-year program that was funded, in fact, in the last budget. So we are just coming up to the end now of that first year and heading into the second year. If I can give you some idea of the sorts of things that we are doing through that project, they really fall into three categories. The first is upgrades to support the continued use of the venue. This is the region's main performing arts venue, and it is very important that we keep it up to standard to retain that status. A second category is replacement of plant and equipment. This tends to be in the sort of boring but necessary category. It is very important that we are able to keep the fabric and the mechanics, the hydraulics, of the building operating. And the third area is safety and security upgrades.

In this first year we have looked at things like the Courtyard Studio seating. We have upgraded the VIP room in the Playhouse. We have done upgrades to lighting equipment, lighting and audio upgrades in the link and technical equipment upgrades. Next year, which is actually the largest year in terms of dollars of the three-year project, we will be replacing seating in the Playhouse. Canberra Theatre chillers is a big ticket item for next year. There will be electrical wiring, lighting equipment, HVAC upgrades and then some work to improve slip hazard and control water ingress. And then in the final year of the three, there will be more work on slip hazards and water ingress, technical equipment upgrades, digital and video data wiring and carpets.

Hopefully, at the end of the three years, the theatre centre will be looking much smarter.

DR BOURKE: When you were talking about a major new theatre, you mentioned previously that the current theatre was too small to support productions such as, I think you mentioned, *War Horse* and *South Pacific*. What sized theatre do we need to make those productions commercially viable here in Canberra?

Ms Elvin: We think about 2,000 seats. That is probably the best compromise between large size and still retaining some degree of intimacy in the relationship between the audience and the stage—possibly 1,800, possibly 2,200—but about 2,000, we think, is the optimal size.

DR BOURKE: Thank you.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, page 487 of budget paper 4, the second-last dot point refers to a major upgrade of roads for the Lanyon heritage precinct. Can you explain what is happening there?

Ms Burch: Lanyon, as you know, is a wonderful historic homestead. All the internal roads off the Tharwa Drive entry are dirt so they need regular maintenance and upgrading. Again, Ms Elvin can go to the detail on that.

Ms Elvin: This is a two-year project, so it is \$400,000 over two years with the bulk of that funding coming through in the first year—\$300,000—and then the remaining \$100,000 in 2014-15. This will address some road condition problems that result from major storm events at Lanyon. We have been doing incremental improvements over time but, given the extent of storm damage, we now need to do a much more comprehensive improvement to the roads. There was some storm damage in March 2012; I do not know if you recall that. Given that the roads are not sealed and we do not wish to seal them—that would not be in keeping with the heritage status of the precinct—they need ongoing maintenance. Occasionally you have to do a much more major upgrade in order to ensure there can be continuing access to the site.

MR GENTLEMAN: Will you be working with Roads ACT on that process?

Ms Elvin: We will commission this. We can certainly consult with Roads ACT if necessary, but we have a civil engineers report that will guide us in the procurement process for that project.

MR GENTLEMAN: I have visited there and I have noticed that when it is really wet the rain actually comes from the eastern side of the road and then runs across into Lanyon. So it is the rural property on the eastern side that does not contain the run-off. That is something to have a look at.

Ms Elvin: We can certainly look at that, yes.

Ms Burch: But it is a fabulous precinct.

MR GENTLEMAN: It is wonderful.

Ms Burch: If the members from the north side of the lake have not been down there, I encourage you all to go down and visit.

MR SMYTH: If we could go to your budget this year, Ms Elvin, on page 490 of budget paper 4, the budget has hardly grown at all and you would not have covered CPI. What is the impact on your budget, particularly given that on page 6 of your statement of intent it says that the budget strategy for the 2013-14 will address the continuing impact of the CFC's base funding of the whole-of-government efficiency dividend and the whole-of-government savings initiatives that were applied in previous years?

Ms Elvin: Sorry, Mr Smyth, I did not quite follow your question.

MR SMYTH: What savings will you make in this year to cover the fact that your budget has probably not gone up by CPI?

Ms Elvin: We did, in fact, get indexation, and we also did not receive a cut in our funding from government, which was very welcome. Although, obviously, we could always use more money, we are pleased not to have had a cut in funding. As we head into this financial year probably the main challenge is not so much on the government-funding side but on our own-sourced income. As you would appreciate, the theatre business is highly volatile. It tracks very much with the retail sector and with the general health of the economy. We are anticipating that with the uncertainty around a federal election and what impact that might have for Canberra this could be a difficult time for the theatre business. We are looking at various strategies we can put in place. In fact, the board discussed that last night. We are probably going to be programming much more commercial product, family product, product for children, in the year ahead—those tend to be the more certain areas in terms of theatre income—to tide us over what we think is going to be quite a challenging financial year.

MR SMYTH: You said you had received CPI or you had covered growth. The total budget only goes up 1.6 per cent, and government payments for outputs only go up—

Ms Burch: Can you refer us to what pages you are looking at, Mr Smyth?

MR SMYTH: Same page—page 490, budget paper 4. It only goes up 1.5 per cent. CPI is at least two and a quarter, and WPI is three. On that basis, you have not covered natural growth.

Ms Burch: What is the split between government funding and own-source funding, Ms Elvin?

Ms Elvin: Government funding is about 60 per cent and own-sourced about 40 per cent, roughly. It can vary a bit.

MR SMYTH: But the government funding only went up 1.5 per cent; GPO only went up 1.5 per cent.

Ms Elvin: If I could perhaps point you to page 492, which deals with indexation matters. I may have to ask my CFO, Ian Tidy, to help me on this, but indexation, as I understand it, is built into the forward estimates and then an adjustment is made back for any changes in CPI. Perhaps I could ask Mr Tidy to enlarge on that.

Mr Tidy: That is correct. CPI is, in fact, adjusted for our own-sourced revenue, so we are not fully funded for CPI. We are funded for the portion that our own-source revenue does not cover. With the additional CPI that is granted through the appropriation, we are also expected to increase our own-source revenue funds to meet the full effect of CPI.

MR SMYTH: Total costs of the 40 per cent only goes up about 1.5 per cent. All right. According to the 2012-13 budget paper 4 on page 588, the staffing outcome for 2011-12 was meant to be 80. According to this year's budget the outcome is 95. How come you were 15 over?

Ms Elvin: Can I say that predicting this is a very inexact art. Because this is a snapshot at a given point in time and because we have large casual employment, it means that, if we have a large theatre production on 30 June that requires a lot of front-of-house staff and technical staff, this can have a major impact. So that result of 95 would have been a 30 June 2012 result. I understand at that time there was a major theatre show which would have involved a lot of casual staff, therefore bumping up that number.

DR BOURKE: As near neighbours of CMAG, we value it greatly, but, minister, what are you doing to ensure it gets the recognition it deserves in the wider community in terms of promotion or even new signage?

Ms Burch: We have done some work around entry points and signage, and Ms Elvin can go to this, but it is almost a task. I regularly talk with Ms Elvin and the chair around how we promote CMAG. It is a fantastic institution, and the corporation itself through its performing centres and historic houses is a real gem in our city. I would like for people who come here to see our national institutions a better connection with and stronger promotion for CMAG. I know work is afoot in that area.

THE CHAIR: Can you go to what the visitor numbers are as well?

Ms Elvin: Yes, in fact, we have got very good visitor numbers for CMAG this year. Obviously the financial year has not quite ended, but the results up to the end of May were just over 70,000. Considering the results for the whole of last year were just under 47,000, we have seen a major increase. That is due to a number of initiatives that we have taken to try and overcome the problems that Dr Bourke is talking about. In fact, we have put new signage up on the exterior of the building just recently, as you may have seen. But we are limited to a certain extent by the fact that there are certain heritage restrictions on North Building, and, of course, we are only one of a number of tenants within that building; it is not a purpose-built facility that is just occupied by the one function.

We have certainly tried to do a number of things this year, and I think successfully, as the numbers show. Our cafe, for example, has been very popular, and I thank those of

you here who patronise it. We have also really tried to promote CMAG as being a place for ideas and discussions. Yesterday, for example, the ABC was filming an interview with the Chief Minister, and I know a number of politicians have been filmed in the foyer. That is certainly a usage we are trying to promote. We are also trying to get more community groups in, including social enterprise groups. The whole factor of being a centenary hub this year with centenary volunteers and touch screens has brought new audiences into CMAG together with our much more ambitious exhibition program. Through a range of activities as well as the physical fabric of the building, we are really trying to expand its profile and presence in the ACT community.

THE CHAIR: Thank you very much, minister, for attending. Thank you, members.

The committee suspended from 2.56 to 3.14 pm.

THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, minister; good afternoon, officials. I look to my running sheet and I notice that you are appearing as the minister for agricultural affairs—I do not if you have noticed that—which is ironic.

Ms Burch: I have spent lots of time living in country towns so perhaps—

THE CHAIR: Have you? That is useful because I was talking to Ray who runs the Hansard. He was mentioning to me that there had been no questions about fish or fishing in the ACT, which is a very popular sport.

Ms Burch: He's a great Lake Adaminaby fellow, isn't he?

THE CHAIR: Yes. I thought maybe if you were the minister for agricultural affairs, you might go to that, but perhaps only if we have time.

Ms Burch: I would not be swimming in Lake Adaminaby at this time of the year, though.

THE CHAIR: A bit chilly? All right. Welcome back. We have got the same officials so I do not think there is any need to go through the administrative arrangements again. I will move directly to Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell me about the value of the work experience and support program for migrants?

Ms Burch: The WESP, as we refer to it, has been going for some time now. We made a decision in the not so distant future to actually increase access to that program. Mr Manikis can talk to it a bit more, but it is around getting folk with skills and experience that are newly arrived to Australia and giving them workplace-based experience predominantly in one of our directorates. It is also working with Capital Careers about the Australian work context as well. It has been very well run, very well received and very successful to date.

Mr Manikis: The work experience and support program has been around for quite some time. It is usually conducted in two programs a year each financial year,

comprising of around 20 people in each program. It is aimed at those migrants or refugees that have come to our city who are underemployed or overqualified for the work that they might have, the menial tasks that they are doing—packing shelves or driving taxis. I am not deriding that, but usually you would have doctors or accountants. It is also aimed at those people who cannot get an interview for a job, not so much a commensurate job but even a reasonable job. They cannot break through having an application that gets them an interview.

This program is designed to give those people a month of Australian workplace experience, so what it is to work in an Australian workplace. Capital Careers, as the minister has mentioned, delivers that for us. It delivers it over a month of two programs each year. Then participants get eight weeks of volunteer work or placements across the ACT government directorates.

In doing that not only do they pick up what it is like to work in an Australian workplace culture but also they bolster up their networks by interacting with people over the two months. They also get referee reports that they can attach to their written application forms. They get a nice certificate that is presented by the minister that they can also attach to show they have undertaken this training.

We have a very good rate of people getting into full-time work and picking up contracts after they have completed their program. I think for the last program we had 20 people start and 18 completed the course on 12 April. I think eight of those already have employment in the public service. These people are permanent residents so they can qualify for ACT public service work.

You have got to understand that there is fire in the belly for these people in terms of working very hard in the workplace. Not only have they come out of pretty adverse conditions in their country of origin but also, culturally, many of these people in their country of origin find it very difficult to even access public service departments and have access to ministers. All that sort of stuff is very difficult.

The feedback we have received over the years is that this is quite an experience for these people. They really value it. They also value a contract, even if it is just for three months or six months. They hang on to these jobs and are very good workers. If you look at the ACT public service today you will see that the WESP alumni is very wide across the ACT public service, in a lot of levels too, I might add. It has been quite a successful program.

DR BOURKE: You mentioned that in the most recent program you had 20 people start. Could you give us some idea of the previous backgrounds from their country of origin?

Mr Manikis: I do not have that level of detail with me in terms of—

Ms Burch: From memory, groups that I have met have included accountants, doctors, nurses and those with legal backgrounds and banking experience. These are very skilled folk that have come here. The disconnect is really understanding and embedding themselves in the Australian workforce. We have all filled out selection criteria for various jobs. I know in the past I have scratched my head about how to

better respond to some of the criteria. For some, it is completely out of context from their normal natural work environment. That is the work that Capital Careers does with them. Just being in the workplace and talking to colleagues, they get that nuance a little bit better.

DR BOURKE: So why is the ACT—

THE CHAIR: We might move because we have very limited time here, Dr Bourke, for both women and multicultural. We will move to Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, if I could bring you to page 232. I notice that the grants programs—and this is indicator b. in output 3.2—are changing. Can you tell us what is happening with those multicultural grant programs?

Mr Manikis: What is happening there is that in 2012-13 we had two separate programs—the multicultural radio program, \$120,000, and the multicultural grants program, \$160,000. For 2013-14 we have amalgamated both of those programs into one program called the participation multicultural grants program, to the same value, \$280,000. The reason we have done that is we are always looking at ways we can deliver services and programs in a more efficient way.

Over the years we have had a lot of the same groups coming in and getting the \$500 and \$1,000 grants, and it is really about having one panel. It is the efficiency of not running two processes but running one process which still delivers those small amounts of seed money to those groups, whether it is broadcasters or multicultural community groups. That will still happen, but the way we do it will be much more efficient—one grants program assessment process with one community panel.

MR GENTLEMAN: So their grant applications will be the same? It is just the way that you have—

Mr Manikis: Even that, with this process, has changed as well for the sake of efficiency. It will be online. For the first time we are doing online to accompany these changes so we can squeeze out more efficiencies. But there will be room for those groups that are not familiar with online. We have a facility where they can still come into the office and we can assist them with filling out their application forms manually.

MR GENTLEMAN: Thanks.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I will defer to the shadow minister with responsibility for both portfolios.

MS JONES: Thank you. Just regarding a couple of matters of funding within the department, I am interested in both the microcredit program that has been announced and the situation regarding funding in the general output class 3.2. Output 3.2 has been included in 3.1 from this budget onwards—I presume I understand it correctly—with a total budget of \$23,370,000. With the change to the output classes it is unclear what the total budgeted figure for each of the services will be. Can you explain what

that figure will be? Is it less than the original budgeted figure for the two combined output classes? Also, the microcredit program that has been announced is for women, Indigenous, youth and migrants, which is a fantastic thing. But is that the money that was previously allocated just to women's microcredit programs?

Ms Burch: No, that is in addition to. The short answer to the second part is—

MRS JONES: That is fine.

Ms Burch: that it is in addition to. But Ms Whitten can talk to, I think, your earlier point around resource—

Ms Whitten: We have combined three outputs into two outputs now. In relation to the budget question, I think you are asking about the total budget for that particular output class. Is that what you are asking?

MRS JONES: Yes, because we have combined two. I am just looking at the differences between funding for the different output classes now that they are combined.

Ms Whitten: The output class comprises, I think, at least three offices and ArtsACT. The three offices are the Office for Ageing, the Office for Women and the Office for Multicultural Affairs. In relation to the budget for the Office of Multicultural Affairs, Mr Hubbard may be able to answer that question. For the Office for Women, the budget is \$1.5 million.

Ms Burch: I do not think there has been any loss across the output classes.

Mr Hubbard: No, there has not.

MRS JONES: Might it also be possible to get some detailed breakdown?

Mr Hubbard: We can do that.

Ms Burch: Can you do it per output?

Ms Howson: Looking at those elements within that output class, what is the budget allocation?

MRS JONES: Yes, and also looking at the combined amount that the two output classes had previously versus what the single output class has now.

Ms Howson: Yes.

Mr Hubbard: Yes, we can do that.

Ms Burch: Do you want to take that on notice?

Mr Hubbard: Yes, I will take that on notice. I have got it here, but there are a lot of numbers here.

Ms Burch: It is probably easier.

MRS JONES: Take it on notice. I think that is better. I am particularly interested in whether there is any increase or decrease in funding for that entire output class now that the two classes have been combined.

Ms Burch: We will take it on notice and get back to you—without encouraging Mr Hubbard and Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: But you are a CFO. You are meant to have lots of numbers.

Mr Hubbard: I could read them out for you, if you like. I do have them.

Ms Burch: No, we will take it on notice.

Mr Hubbard: I know you enjoy them. I do as well, Mr Smyth, but perhaps—

THE CHAIR: You two can have a private meeting another time, but for the purposes of the committee, we will take that on notice, thank you very much.

MR SMYTH: There are some that I just do not understand.

THE CHAIR: Mrs Jones, I will defer my question to you as well.

MRS JONES: Regarding women's grants, on page 324 of the CSD annual report for 2011-12, the Audrey Fagan Churchill fellowship appears not to have been awarded and to have been rolled over into 2012-13. Can I have some background on why it was not awarded and what the plan is for the next financial year? Is it a savings measure or is it just that we did not get around to it?

Ms Burch: No, never again, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: I am sure you are very thoughtful about that now.

Ms Whitten: I can take you through the various changes to the grants and scholarships in relation to what is offered under the Office for Women. It might be easier if I table a document which explains what the changes are.

MRS JONES: Also I would like detail about the reasons for the Audrey Fagan fellowship being left for now and what will be happening with that.

Ms Burch: Again—and I do apologise—we went through a process with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women and did a complete revamp of the grants. There were some where it was considered it was best to award them every second year, and some would be annual. For the first time we will have prevention of violence against women grants. We can provide to the committee where our grants are, what the new grants structures are and if there is any reason for any sort of stalled process.

MRS JONES: Yes. Within the vein of grants, with the International Women's Day awards, how are we tracking on the reorganisation of those?

Ms Burch: We are tracking very well. I recently met with the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women, and we are on track to announce it in the not-too-distant future.

MRS JONES: The application process?

Ms Burch: Yes. We are looking to have three categories. Please remind me of what they are.

Ms Whitten: I think the Ministerial Advisory Council on Women recommended to you, minister, that we have a new program called the ACT women's grants. They would follow a similar model to the Australian of the Year awards in terms of having a young women's category, an older women's category and an ACT Woman of the Year category.

Ms Burch: So they will open, probably towards the latter part of the year, to give us some time for assessment for March of next year.

MRS JONES: I might get a briefing at some stage on that.

Ms Burch: Yes, happy to.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you give us some more detail about the women's return to work grants program?

Ms Burch: Yes. The women's return to work grants program continues to be successful. We rejigged the criteria for that probably two years ago. I also have some advice that 65 per cent of the women who received grants have indeed returned to work. Some of the use of the grants is for childcare access and continued study. Of the age group that have used these grants, 35 per cent are women aged between 36 and 45, 23 per cent are women aged 26 to 35, and 22 per cent are women aged 46 to 55. The bulk of the women who are picking it up are from the age of 26 through to mid-50s, and it has been very successful indeed. So far this year we have issued about 144 grants, until about May.

Ms Whitten: And we are up to 158 as of yesterday for this year, on a target of 160 for the financial year.

DR BOURKE: Do you think there is anything particularly significant about those age groups that these grants have focused on?

Ms Burch: I think there are different elements within each of those groups. We broadened the focus to make sure that it included women who were entering the workforce, older women, certainly once the kids had more or less grown and left the nest, as happens, to use a very clumsy terminology. I think the increase in that number is because that was a new change about two years ago. When we rejigged the criteria,

that allowed better access for older women. Traditionally, for those aged between 25 and 35, it is predominantly women whose young kids have gone to school and they now have the time and space to re-enter the workforce.

MRS JONES: Could I ask a supplementary on that?

THE CHAIR: Sure.

MRS JONES: Regarding return to work, minister, there has been quite a focus—and I know it is rightly so in the women’s portfolio—on women, but I am receiving more and more requests from at-home dads for similar access. There is an increasing number in the ACT of at-home dads who are quite socially disconnected. You might be able to put it on your list of things. For example, the new micro-credit program has included various different groups who are in need. That might be something to consider for the next round. It is coming up over and over again. I know it cannot necessarily be through the Office for Women, but in some of what is happening under CSD—

Ms Burch: Certainly, access and community participation should also focus on fellows as well as women. I have noticed myself as I get around different Paint and Plays, 10 years ago it would be rare to see a young dad. Now they are very common.

MRS JONES: It depends who earns more, doesn’t it, as to who goes back to work?

Ms Burch: And it is about choices within family structures and who takes what break when.

MRS JONES: They can end up quite socially disconnected as well—in fact, possibly more so.

Ms Burch: Yes, they can.

THE CHAIR: Perhaps you could become the minister for women and men.

DR BOURKE: Returning to the particular grants program, minister, are you able to give us any specific examples of women whose lives this grant has helped?

Ms Whitten: For the return-to-work grants?

DR BOURKE: Yes.

Ms Burch: I do not know whether we have case studies here. I know the Office for Women would certainly have some case studies. But our micro-credit program has always been very successful. That program is now, in many ways, self-funded, because the women who have got grants have returned those grants and that has gone into the broader pool. We support Lighthouse with some administrative costs, but the bulk of the grant moneys that have been loaned out are getting to the point where they are self-sustaining.

Ms Whitten: In terms of micro-credit, the original investment by the ACT

government is now self-funding through the reinvestment of the grants by those women who have paid back their \$3,000 grants. As we talked about previously in the committee today, there are quite a diverse range of new businesses that are being grown from the micro-credit initiative, as well as building on existing businesses, because of the ideas that the women are wanting to be funded and are making—

Ms Burch: I think I heard, when Andrew Barr was here in his capacity as community services minister, reference to No Sweat Fashions, White Nile and the Sudanese women. How we have helped them goes to our responsibilities as a procurer of services as well, by providing them with access to the commercial kitchen over in the Theo centre. We have to contract somebody to provide afternoon tea, for example, at our citizenship ceremonies, so it is about committing to support them through that procurement as well.

DR BOURKE: Maybe you could tell me a little bit more about the range of programs you support through the Women's Information and Referral Centre.

THE CHAIR: And then we will move to Mr Gentleman.

Ms Burch: There is quite a broad suite of offerings delivered from the centre. They build up quite an extensive calendar of activities through partnerships with other organisations, be it the YWCA or the Women's Centre for Health Matters. We produce a six-monthly calendar of activities. We have also found—and I also heard it this morning, I think—there is access to computers and IT. That has been a popular use of that site. There is very much a strong street presence. As we move into the second century we need to look at how we spread that out and better embed that access that Mrs Jones often speaks about, at a community level within the suburban environment.

MS JONES: Yes. If you have got a calendar or a list, would I be able to also get access to it or have a copy of that?

Ms Burch: It should be online but we will get a copy through to you.

MS JONES: That would be great.

Ms Whitten: Yes, I think it will be online today or on Monday.

THE CHAIR: Mr Gentleman.

MR GENTLEMAN: Minister, could I bring you to page 321 of budget paper 4. The third dot point down refers to “supporting multicultural specific sporting programs”. Can you go through what some of those programs are and what you hope to achieve?

Ms Burch: Sports is the great leveller, I think. It does not matter where you come from; everyone is an expert at everything on the sporting field. On World Refugee Day, on the weekend or so before last, Companion House had its traditional soccer match where a number of the newer or emerging countries field various soccer teams and thrash it out over the day.

We also instigated a couple of years ago global cricket, which encourages folk to come together over cricket. Whilst we expect to see lots of the Indian and Asian countries, we have certainly seen that spread, and they take great pride in being able to show others how to play cricket well. Perhaps Mr Manikis can talk about that.

Mr Manikis: Certainly, as the minister said, sport is a universal concept that transcends language and all the cultural barriers. Particularly with our refugees and asylum seekers coming to Canberra, they tend to feel part of something, so it combats a bit of the social isolation as well. It is also easy for service providers. It is a break from those serious issues of finding someone a house and those essential tasks that they are involved in. So it works the other way as well for the service provider.

With respect to what has developed over the last few years, the soccer match that the minister referred to is in its ninth year. It is driven by Companion House. They have also managed over those nine years to engage the services of football united or Capital united. They have scouts coming from A-league, I understand. They have a carnival atmosphere. Three thousand or four thousand people turned up. The teams were the South Sudanese against the Sierra Leones in the grand final—

Ms Burch: It is a serious game.

Mr Manikis: It is, and there is the talent that is displayed. Of course, you play soccer in a refugee camp. There is not much else that you can do, really. So you hone your skills, and that is very evident in these competitions.

The point of it all, of course, is that it is engaging, and it is something that is looked forward to by people throughout the year. The South Sudanese refugees here in Canberra are also right into basketball, unsurprisingly. They have a very strong team, and they compete against other South Sudanese teams from around Australia. They have a grand tournament once a year in a location where they get to meet on a social occasion, and they get together again with some of their compatriots.

With the Global Cricket Challenge, we had about 400 at Manuka Oval. Cricket Australia supported that, as well as Cricket ACT. It is a great initiative. There were 400, from young children right through to the more serious cricket players from India and Pakistan—all of the subcontinent nations—and also the Muslim community, particularly the Islamic centre. They all came together on the day. I must add that the vice-captain and the captain of the Australian women's cricket team were present this time to give coaching. It was all fun and it was in groups of 20 or 30 all over the oval all morning, and then they had the social gathering for a barbecue at lunch time. They also get certificates and what have you.

I am going into that detail just to give you a sense that sport is a vehicle or a tool to bring the community together, and the \$25,000 that has been appropriated in the last budget each year for four years will be part of the grants program. Most of the events that I have just spoken about are done on the smell of an oily rag. There are not huge dollars that flow. So this program has been very much welcomed. It will be administered by the Economic Development Directorate under their sport and recreation grants program. We will also be part of that in assisting them to make sure that those dollars go to the communities.

MR GENTLEMAN: How many did you get to the soccer?

Mr Manikis: It was a full day, it was a beautiful day. I think there were between 2,000 and 3,000, maybe a bit more.

Ms Burch: And they run teams all day. The year before was a miserable June day, but they just did not stop. They ran the teams right through to the end.

Mr Manikis: Remember that crispy, sunny Sunday a few weeks ago, you can picture those people with tents up, the Red Cross being there, Amnesty International, with reggae music playing in the background. I am just trying to build the atmosphere for you.

Ms Burch: The Sudanese have their name on that.

Mr Manikis: Well and truly.

Ms Burch: They are well and truly embedded in that championship cup.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: I will defer to the shadow.

MRS JONES: Regarding the multicultural festival and the plans for next year, how many health inspectors were employed and on duty during the festival? What was the overall cost and what was the additional cost of having those health inspectors as compared to the year before? Obviously it was a positive thing, but I am just looking at the cost. Also will you be continuing with that level of inspectors at the next multicultural festival?

Ms Burch: Certainly food health and safety is paramount when you have a festival. We have seen what happens with a food poisoning outbreak, and we would not wish that on any facility let alone our festival. They come through under Health through public health, so we would probably need to take information about the decisions they made around allocations. I was aware some felt they were inspected a bit more regularly, but, to be fair, the public health inspectors have a job to do, and the fact that we had a successful event without any major drama—

MRS JONES: Yes, I am interested in the wash-up and how you are planning to tackle it next year. Is it going to be the same?

Ms Burch: It will always be part and parcel of it. As Mr Manikis goes through each year and learns, more information about the requirements attached to being part and parcel of the festival will be covered in the information sessions.

MRS JONES: Could I get something back, perhaps in writing, to explain what Health decided to do and how that has played out?

Ms Whitten: We would be happy to take that on notice.

Mr Manikis: I can get Health to give you the details, if you like, but I can say there were 15 health inspectors. This year they reported numerous encouraging remarks from the public thanking them. There was one seizure and 12 voluntary disposals across 420 tents or stalls, so that was an excellent result. Having said that, health inspectors on the footprint are the end of a process. Leading into that, in November-December each year all stallholders intending to sell food need to come together and sign off a document that says they understand the food regulations. Food inspectors begin their process at that point. And that is why, I think, we have a very, very, low—in fact, non-existent until last year—

Ms Burch: For the number of food outlets—

MRS JONES: Absolutely.

Mr Manikis: Is that enough information?

MRS JONES: I am happy with that, and can you just include, then, some information when you come back to me about the process leading up to the day?

Mr Manikis: Okay.

THE CHAIR: I will defer my question to you, as well, Mrs Jones.

MRS JONES: Thank you. I am wondering whether there are there any formal networking opportunities for the emerging multicultural communities and the more established multicultural communities. Do we direct specific events to try and put them together?

Ms Burch: We have the National Multicultural Festival and we have access to the Theo Notaras centre. There are formal structures under a committee such as RASH that represents various support bodies as well, but you have probably got a list of other things—

MRS JONES: To explain myself more clearly, I have been talking to a lot of emerging communities, and it has dawned on me that they could do with information from some of the more established communities about how to get cultural centres going and that sort of stuff, how to help each other or whether they can perhaps rent space in some of the established clubs, that kind of thing. Is a formal process for that to be facilitated?

Mr Manikis: So far as a formal process and a discrete and explicit program are concerned there is not, other than to say that the reason we established in 2004-05 the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre is precisely for that reason. You will find that if organisations, emerging community groups, the newer groups, want to lease accommodation in commercial premises or even some of our clubs around town, it is a financial burden for them and they mostly do not have the resources to do that. That is why we have configured the Theo Notaras centre the way it is—that is, you can have a desk and a filing cabinet and a computer and it will cost you not much. You will have a presence in the city that is well located. You have access to the meeting

rooms and to the kitchen. We have about 26, 27, 28 community groups that take advantage of that.

MRS JONES: Fantastic.

Mr Manikis: They can have a quarterly lease document or they can have a 12-month one or they can have a three or five-year one.

MRS JONES: Are you able to supply me with the cost for renting in that space?

Mr Manikis: Yes.

MRS JONES: And the cost for using meeting rooms so I can get a fuller picture of how that exactly works.

Mr Manikis: Yes.

MRS JONES: Is there a long waiting list for people to get into that centre?

Mr Manikis: It varies from time to time.

Ms Burch: And it depends on what sorts of facilities they are after as well.

MRS JONES: Could you let me know what numbers of people are waiting to get in?

Ms Burch: Groups such as FINACT—the Federation of Indian Associations of ACT—have overarching contacts for their groups. Sam Wong with the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum is certainly an informal contact.

MRS JONES: Of course he is, yes.

Mr Manikis: The multicultural centre also houses around about five or six peak groups. So whether it is the Multicultural Youth Services, the Canberra Multicultural Community Forum, the Multicultural Women's Advocacy, they have a big chunk of floor space there and they conduct a whole host of activities. These are serious service delivery agencies and peak advocacy groups and a youth centre—the pool tables, all the rest of it—that the Multicultural Youth Services conduct. There are counselling rooms.

MRS JONES: Are the peak bodies given preference over the individual groups or do the individual cultural groups get the space first?

Mr Manikis: We fortunately have not had to make that sort of decision, because the peak groups have been in there for quite some time. We have a hot desk situation as well, so groups can even share a desk. At one point we had eight groups sharing a desk. All they wanted to do was to pop in once a week and do some paperwork ready for their weekend activities or something.

MRS JONES: Good work.

Ms Burch: And then you have groups such as the Islamic group that has accommodation in the Spence community hub.

MRS JONES: Which is an old school, yes?

Ms Burch: Yes.

MRS JONES: Late last year I asked for a briefing on my portfolio areas, and now I have had a chance, as you suggested, to look at some of the details, would I be able to get that briefing?

Ms Burch: Yes.

MRS JONES: That would be really great, thank you.

THE CHAIR: Dr Bourke.

DR BOURKE: Minister, could you tell me about the additional support that has been provided for the Community Language Schools Association?

Ms Burch: The Community Language Schools Association was the Ethnic Schools Association. It is now the Community Language Schools Association. We have provided them with an additional resource of \$104,000 over the next four years, and that will go into the organisation to be passed on through the different language groups. And this is very much another plank in our commitment to support mother tongue, because language in mother tongue is so critical to culture and history of anyone who is not English speaking. You have to maintain your language. It is critical. Did you want to add to that, Mr Manikis?

Mr Manikis: I know that it is certainly welcome, the \$25,000 in addition to the \$40,000 that we are giving the Community Language Schools Association. The increase will allow them to increase the hours of their administration, their admin person there, who, in turn, will assist us in auditing numbers of the 42 language schools that we provide funding and support to each year. And those 42 member schools have approximately 1,700 students across the ACT. It is critical that we have a very strong peak group, and that is another peak group that is in the Multicultural Centre, the ACT Community Language Schools Association.

Effectively, what they have got is a jump from \$40,000 to \$65,000 each year now for the next four years to assist in their overheads and to provide a higher level of support for the 42 schools through arranging professional development for their teachers and auditing numbers for us as well.

DR BOURKE: Why is it important to audit numbers for you?

Mr Manikis: Because we provide funding to those schools on a per student basis. And we want to make sure that the number of students that we are being told is actually the number.

DR BOURKE: Coming back to the 42 languages, that is 42 different languages, or

are some of them sort of iterations of the same—

Ms Burch: No, number of schools.

DR BOURKE: Is this a process where some schools are coming online as different groups come to Canberra and others are sort of dropping off as there are fewer and fewer speakers, or is there something different happening? Are you seeing any trends over time with the diversity of languages that we have?

Mr Manikis: Some of these schools started off in lounge rooms, with two or three children. Other schools have been going for a long time and, in fact, took on people, in the early days anyway, from foreign affairs who were just about to be posted somewhere else and wanted to get a bit of a refresher on a weekend. But by and large, it is really about people who have settled here and want their children to learn. It is a transfer of the language.

We have got a core of well-established schools that have been here for a long time. We have got a handful of schools that are still not registered with the schools association but are out there and just beginning. It represents some of those new emerging groups that are coming through. They as yet do not have the organisation, they do not have the resources just yet, to hire proper teachers or they do not have the teachers available, volunteers available.

It is a moving feast. And it all depends on how the resources flow to those community groups and how soon they can become members of the association so that they can get their financial support from the ACT government. But that is up to them. We do not force that.

Ms Burch: I would expect to see a Dinka school established over time, as we have seen the need for interpreter scholarships within the Dinka language. It is a fairly new and emerging community.

Mr Manikis: Yes, it is.

THE CHAIR: Well done, minister, you have earned yourself a two-minute early mark. Thank you very much for your participation today and in previous iterations. And thank you very much, officials. You should make sure that you adhere to the requirement for questions to be responded to within five days, and I think there is also a separate information brief that you will be giving to Mrs Jones. Thank you very much.

Ms Burch: Thank you.

Appearances:

Dunne, Mrs Vicki, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Office of the Legislative Assembly

Duncan, Mr Tom, Clerk

Barrett, Ms Val, Director, Hansard, Technology and Library

Carr, Ms Melody, Chief Finance Officer, Governance and Communication

THE CHAIR: It is a particular delight to have you here, Mrs Dunne. I will be paying particular attention to your adherence to various standing orders, as you can imagine. Members, Madam Speaker and officials, I remind you that these proceedings are being web-streamed, as you would no doubt be aware. Are you all aware of the privileges statement and understand what it means?

Mrs Dunne: Yes.

THE CHAIR: I imagined that you would. However, there is a requirement for me to go through that process. Mrs Dunne, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mrs Dunne: Very briefly, I welcome the opportunity to appear before the estimates committee for 2013-14. I would like to put on the record that this is my first appearance on this side of the table at an estimates committee, and I am looking forward to the novelty of that.

The appropriation for the Office of the Legislative Assembly is important. It is modest in the great scheme of the ACT budget, but it is important because it is a separate appropriation. This is the second time that we have dealt with the appropriation for the Office of the Legislative Assembly through a separate appropriation, and I am very pleased that we are now in a situation where we have that separation and the statutory recognition of the independence of the Legislative Assembly.

I think that I will keep it brief, because I suspect that members who have been here for a fortnight probably want to keep it brief as well.

THE CHAIR: If I can turn, then, to the issue of committees, there was some discussion earlier this week or maybe last week with the Chief Minister with regard to committees and their effectiveness.

Mrs Dunne: I heard it, yes.

THE CHAIR: There is a particular issue, as you would be aware, with members on committees. And I have actually received some advice, which I am happy to table for other members' interest, from the Clerk. And I just quote briefly from it:

The practice of the Assembly in relation to the size of the Assembly Committees is set out on page 293 of the *Companion*, where it is stated—

And it goes to the established practice, which is currently to have three members on

each standing committee. Further, the advice says:

If you wished to bring the Committee system into line with what has been the most prevalent previous practice of the Assembly, I would suggest you move to establish 3 Member committees with opposition majority on each, but retaining some Government Chairs.

Further:

I should add that the proposed change to the committee structure would bring it more into line with the commitment to the Latimer House Principles, which the Assembly adopted as a Continuing Resolution. ...

And it concludes:

The adoption of a committee system without non-government majorities is, in my opinion, a step away from the spirit of those Principles.

I would be interested in your view, and perhaps Mr Duncan would like to extrapolate. Is the advice that the adoption of a majority of government members on a majority of committees being a step away from the Latimer House principles, which is a continuing resolution of this Assembly, a cause for concern for you or for perhaps Mr Duncan?

Mrs Dunne: I will start, but I will not comment on the advice, because that is advice provided to you from the Clerk, and I am not privy to that advice. I think that if Mr Duncan wants to comment on it, that is fine. On the general issue, though, I think that it is a matter of some interest. And the opinion I am putting forward is my own and does not represent the views of any grouping. It is mine as someone who has been a member here for a long time and who is now the Speaker.

I have been on the record for a long period as saying that I believe that key committees should be chaired by non-government members. I recall moving motions to that effect and drawing people's attention to, for instance, the standing orders of the House of Commons in Canada where it is written into the standing orders that a non-government member provides the chair for the public accounts and scrutiny committee and one other important committee.

We have started to go down that path in a sort of informal way but if I had my druthers, I would like to see those things written into the standing orders so that there is not argy-bargy at the beginning of every Assembly about how this happens. And when we are in a minority government with a reasonable sized crossbench, it tends to work quite well. But we saw, for instance, in 2004, when we went to a majority government, all of those things went out the window. And the practices that we had built up changed. So that is why I would like to see those things written into the standing orders.

As to the size, I think that, because we are a small Assembly and there are issues about making decisions if you put something to a vote—the chairs do not have casting votes—if there is a deadlock, the motion fails, as happens in the chamber and happens in committees. And that is a result of us being a small Assembly. So I think that,

generally speaking, it would be desirable to have a situation where you do not always have a deadlock.

THE CHAIR: For the same reason the Assembly has got 17 rather than 18 members?

Mrs Dunne: Yes, that is right. And the same reason that the Speaker has a deliberative vote, because we are a small Assembly. I think that those things would be the ideal. I do not have a view about necessarily the size of committees, but I think that an odd number is preferable. From my experience, there was what might be called an aberration after I was first elected in 2001. In about 2002 the planning committee ended up with four people on it, and it was a little cumbersome because there were times when you could not make a decision on things.

MR GENTLEMAN: Mr Hanson asked your view on what you thought about these committees with a majority of government members. Do you know of any committees in the Assembly at the moment that have a majority of government members?

Mrs Dunne: I do not know that any committee has a—

MR GENTLEMAN: He certainly did.

Mrs Dunne: Sorry, did I mishear?

THE CHAIR: No. My apologies if I phrased the question incorrectly, but the advice that I got was that a committee system without non-government majorities is a step away from the principles. Essentially it is where you have a situation where there is a deadlock or there is a majority of government members. Basically we have got a deadlock now but the advice is saying that where you do not have a system where the non-government has got a majority, it is a step away from the Latimer House principles.

Mrs Dunne: It has always—

THE CHAIR: And two-two obviously is not a non-government majority.

Mrs Dunne: It has always been the practice that there has been a predominance of non-government members on committees in the ACT, and that is partly because if a substantial proportion of members on the government's side is taken up in the executive you usually end up with two or three people who are able to occupy committees. And I think the one example was when Mr Hird was the sole government backbencher in the late 1990s and was on every committee. That is undesirable but that was the way it was. Especially where we have had a substantial crossbench, which we do not have at the moment, there has always been some scope for having one person from the opposition bench and one person from the crossbench. At the moment we do not have that. But the general practice has been that there is a minority of government members on committees here in the ACT.

DR BOURKE: Do you have any evidence that committees are not working properly at the moment?

Mrs Dunne: I did not say that. I said that my experience of working in a committee where there were four members created problems. I have had some people say to me that it is difficult to get decisions made but it is only anecdotally. My own experience on one occasion back in 2002, 2003, 2004, was that it was difficult sometimes to get things going and underway because there was the potential to have a two-all vote on something.

DR BOURKE: So you have seen no evidence in the last six months that committees—

Mrs Dunne: I have seen no evidence but I am not on any of those committees.

THE CHAIR: Mr Duncan, do you want to add to that?

Mr Duncan: Just to add further and just to clarify, I give advice to a lot of members. So I do not want to be in a position where I am sort of—once I give that advice, that is the members' advice and they can do what they like—

THE CHAIR: Yes, I am seeking your view on this and I am not—

Mr Duncan: with it. But I just want to clarify that I am not talking about any particular advice I have given.

THE CHAIR: No, it is the issue, though. I have drawn from your advice. That is out there. This is your view—not necessarily on my advice but on the issue.

Mr Duncan: Sure. Standing order 221 sets up a situation where committees should comprise, as near as practicable, representatives of the parties in the Assembly. That is the standing order which we have adopted. That has worked pretty well because in the past, as you would be well aware, with the electoral system we have got, we have always had government members, opposition members and crossbench members.

In 2008 we sort of ameliorated those standing orders by adding another requirement and that is the Latimer House principles. The Latimer House principles set out a whole set of principles, I guess, about good governance. I draw your attention to the accountability mechanisms relating to executive accountability to parliament:

Parliaments and governments should maintain high standards of accountability, transparency and responsibility in the conduct of all public business. Parliamentary procedures should provide adequate mechanisms to enforce the accountability of the executive to Parliament ... The establishment of scrutiny bodies and mechanisms to oversee Government enhances public confidence in the integrity and acceptability of government's activities.

And then it says:

Independent bodies—

I emphasise the words “independent bodies”—

such as Public Accounts Committees, Ombudsmen, Human Rights Commissions

... can play a key role in enhancing public awareness of good governance and rule of law issues. Governments are encouraged to establish or enhance appropriate oversight bodies in accordance with national circumstances ...

Ultimately, it is up to the Assembly to sort of balance the requirements of standing order 221, where you have got to have committees that comprise representatives of all the Assembly, with the Latimer House principles. That is the dilemma that the Assembly has got to have.

In terms of any evidence of where it is not working, I would point to one example. That is the budget for the Auditor-General, which the public accounts committee must report on. I did observe that the committee was unable—it was my understanding of the public statement made by the chair of that committee to the Assembly when they reported on that matter that they were unable to resolve that issue.

That is my understanding of the statement by the chair that would make me believe that there might have been some problem dealing with that issue. That is the only evidence that I have on the public record that there might be any difficulties. I am not aware in any previous instance where the public accounts committees had any issue with the Auditor-General's budget.

MR GENTLEMAN: However, the committees have now been operating since the beginning of this Assembly. They have gone through inquiries on annual reports. We are now going through inquiries on estimates without, as far as I have understood, any particular issue. All the reports have been issued. Recommendations have been made. They seem to be functioning in the same way that they have previously.

Mrs Dunne: I suppose though, Mr Gentleman, with your permission, Mr Chairman, the issue may not be so much: is there a difficulty but is the perception the right perception? We have signed up in the beginning of the Seventh Assembly to the Latimer House principles, which augment our standing orders. If we signed up to the Latimer House principles, how do our actions, in setting up committees where there is not a non-government majority, marry?

The question is not necessarily: are the committees functioning? That is a question that I really cannot answer because I am not a member of those committees. I am not privy to what goes on behind closed doors in committees. I do not know. You, as members of those committees, would be more aware of that than I. But as Mr Duncan has pointed out, there has been one published case where, really, in the great scheme of things, if the public accounts committee cannot come to a conclusion about something as important as the budget for the Auditor-General, I think that as a taxpayer I would be concerned about that. But the issue is not necessarily: are they working at the moment? It is: what is the perception and are we living up to the ideals and the expectations that we set ourselves?

THE CHAIR: Thank you.

DR BOURKE: So what you are, in fact, advocating there, Speaker, is an opposition majority on committees?

Mrs Dunne: The exigencies of the Assembly as they currently are would be that, yes, that may be the case in this Assembly. But we do not make rules and laws for a particular—we should not be making rules and laws in our standing orders that apply to a particular Assembly. They should be robust enough to withstand the exigencies of the make-up of Assemblies—this Assembly, the previous Assembly and the next Assembly.

DR BOURKE: There is a standing order, standing order 221. It states:

Overall membership of committees shall comprise representatives of all groups and parties in the Assembly as nearly as practicable proportional to their representation in the Assembly.

That is what the committees do.

Mrs Dunne: One of the interpretations of that has been in the past that it is the non-executive members.

DR BOURKE: It does not say that in the standing order.

Mrs Dunne: It does not say that, but it has been interpreted on a number of occasions as non-executive members in the same way that we put together business on private members' day on the basis of the proportions of non-executive members so that the opposition tends to get more business because they have more non-executive members than the government. They are things that we take into account.

DR BOURKE: I would say that is an entirely different kettle of fish. If the Assembly wanted to have that view about the membership of committees, then the Assembly should change the standing rules.

THE CHAIR: Is that a statement or a recommendation?

DR BOURKE: It is an argument.

Mrs Dunne: I am sure that if members wanted to make that recommendation—I would give you the example of the Third Assembly when Mr Hird was the only crossbench member—the only government member—and he sat on every committee and the administration and procedure committee. The Labor Party and the crossbenches at the time were represented basically on the basis of the size of their representation amongst non-executive members. If that was the case, we would have larger committees, generally speaking, than we have had and probably find that government members would be sitting on even more committees than they currently do.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. Does anyone else have any questions?

DR BOURKE: Yes, I do, indeed. Madam Speaker, how do you go about separating your Liberal Party responsibilities from that of the Speaker?

Mrs Dunne: I attend at the Liberal Party party room, as I think most Speakers have

done. They have attended their party party room. But there are aspects of the party room that I do not have any involvement in. I do not have any involvement in discussions about tactics and I do not have any involvement in discussions about questions.

There has been a practice in the Liberal Party party room, which I suppose is no great secret, that we have a separate meeting to talk about questions. Since I have become Speaker I have not attended those meetings. We in the Liberal Party, and this is no secret, tend to share our staff around. I have some very senior and experienced staff who work in my office and who work for me. But from time to time they are called upon to do other work.

For instance, my senior adviser, who was my senior adviser all the time that I was the shadow attorney-general, has a great wealth of knowledge. He assists members in that area. But I have no involvement in that. There is an agreement that from time to time he will be called upon to give advice and assistance in that area, which he does, but I have no involvement in that.

I take my role as being a Speaker and as being impartial and withdrawn from politics somewhat seriously—very seriously. It was a decision that was made in discussion with myself and Mr Seselja. It has been reinforced in my discussions with Mr Hanson when he became the leader that I would not take portfolios.

I do constituency work and I do advocacy on behalf of my constituents, but I do not do—I do not have portfolios. I do have an interest in policy and when policy issues are discussed I give my views privately to my members about it. You will have noticed that I have spoken on issues in the parliament, in the Assembly, probably twice or three times since becoming Speaker. I think I spoke on an MPI and I spoke on a motion in relation to derelict service stations. I think that is all I have spoken on.

MR GENTLEMAN: So you do not attend—

Mrs Dunne: I do not see myself as being an activist Speaker who would introduce much legislation.

MR GENTLEMAN: You do not attend the pre-sitting meetings with your party?

Mrs Dunne: I attend my party room meetings, but I do not attend meetings where we discuss tactics or questions.

MR GENTLEMAN: You do go to the pre-sitting ones?

Mrs Dunne: But I go to meetings—I go to party room meetings where we might discuss policy and I give my opinions there. And I participate as a fully paid-up member of the Liberal Party in Liberal Party events and the like in the community.

DR BOURKE: With regard to staff, I note that on the Assembly phone list there are only two people listed as working for the Speaker. Could you provide the committee with a full list of staff, including staff that may work across other offices?

Mrs Dunne: Sorry, I am not quite sure what you are asking.

DR BOURKE: On the Assembly phone list I understand that there are only two people listed as working for the Speaker. Could you provide this committee with a full list of staff, including staff that may work across other Liberal Party offices?

Mrs Dunne: Do you want that now?

DR BOURKE: No.

Mrs Dunne: Okay, right.

THE CHAIR: Are you are happy to take that on notice?

Mrs Dunne: I will take that on notice.

MR GENTLEMAN: And could we have a list of the duties that those staff perform as well?

Mrs Dunne: I do not think so. I think that an employment contract is a confidential thing. I will look—I can give a sort of general outline of what people do, but I am not going to give a blow-by-blow list of duties as might be described in a contract.

DR BOURKE: Coming back to that separation between party and Speaker, could you give us a little bit more detail about how you ensure that your work as Speaker is always independent of Liberal Party work.

Mrs Dunne: Sorry, how my work as—

DR BOURKE: As Speaker is always independent of your Liberal Party work.

Mrs Dunne: I do not know that it would be independent. I think “separate” might be the word. I keep it separate. I mean, I am a Liberal Party member for the seat of Ginninderra and I am a paid-up member of the Liberal Party. I have not resigned from the Liberal Party, in the same way that Mr Rattenbury, Mr Berry and Mr Cornwall did not resign from the parties that they were members of. They did constituency work and some of them did a great deal of policy work as well.

I do constituency work. I go to Liberal Party functions. I receive invitations to attend functions including, I noticed the other day, an invitation to a Labor Party fundraiser. Was it a success the other night? That must be an indication that somebody thinks I am being an impartial Speaker.

THE CHAIR: No Greens invitations yet, Madam Speaker?

Mrs Dunne: Not that I have seen.

THE CHAIR: You must ring them up.

Mrs Dunne: I am not quite sure. I do my Speaker work and I do my constituency

work. I attend the party room meetings of the parliamentary Liberal Party less than I used to.

MR COE: Madam Speaker, how does that differ, to your understanding, to what the Deputy Speaker does?

Mrs Dunne: I presume that the Deputy Speaker attends her caucus meetings, as I would expect. I think that she is in a slightly different position. I do not know what Mr Rattenbury did, but I know that Mr Berry made very public the fact that he did not attend caucus meetings when there were discussions of tactics and questions. I have followed that practice. I think it is a good practice, and I have followed it.

MR SMYTH: Mr Berry, as Speaker, presented legislation in the Assembly. Do you intend to present legislation in the Assembly?

Mrs Dunne: I cannot envisage the circumstances that I would do that. I certainly do not intend to be an activist legislator—mind you, if something really bugged me—except that there are things that I would do as the Speaker. There might be amendments to the OLA Act or something like that, the precincts legislation or broadcasting. There are things for which I have responsibility as Speaker that I would be doing. But I do not think I would be going into public policy areas.

MR SMYTH: Do you hold portfolios as Mr Rattenbury did? Will you move motions in the Assembly as Speaker Rattenbury did, and will you present legislation in the Assembly as Speaker Rattenbury did?

Mrs Dunne: As I said before, Mr Smyth, I had discussions with Mr Seselja when he proposed that I be nominated. We discussed these issues and decided that I would not hold portfolios because we wanted to create that notion of independence of the Speaker. I have had the same discussions with Mr Hanson and that practice has continued. I cannot imagine that I would be—

THE CHAIR: I can confirm it is to my great regret that the best shadow attorney-general that this territory has ever seen is not currently sitting on my frontbench, but I do applaud the fact that you do a great job as Speaker.

Mrs Dunne: Mr Smyth, there may be some constituency issue that I think is burning, that is pressing, that I might move a motion on, but generally speaking I would not be moving it in general policy areas—you know, a Wednesday morning slap motion against the government. I do not think that would be appropriate. But if I thought there was a constituency issue that was most appropriate—something that I had some history with or something like that—I could see that there might be an argument for that.

MR GENTLEMAN: Madam Speaker, how many Speaker-initiated functions have you held since becoming Speaker?

Mrs Dunne: I have got a hospitality budget which is about \$20,000 a year, is it, or 30? It is something like that. There is the standard Speaker's end of year function. There have been a couple of events. There was one parliamentary event, the forum of

Italian and Australian parliamentarians, which was meeting in Canberra. I am a member of that forum. I had recently become the Speaker and I discussed with the Clerk whether it was appropriate to host a function for them. They asked if they could use the Assembly facilities for a meeting. I had a discussion with the Clerk. All members were invited to that.

There are the new citizens' events which are held about once a quarter. I think that since I have been Speaker we have had two or maybe three of those. We have had a couple of events which have been outreach to community organisations. I have made a point on a number of occasions of saying that I want to use my speakership to make the Assembly better known in the community and we have had a couple of functions. Mr Gentleman, you hosted one—you stood in for me when I had to go interstate unexpectedly—for the VIEW Club. We have had one for the Lions Club. I think that is about it, but I will check if there are any others.

These have been aimed at giving key members in key community organisations some entrée into the Assembly. They have been extraordinarily successful. I think without exception everyone I have spoken to at those events has said, "I've lived in Canberra for 20, 30, 40 years and I didn't know where the Assembly was" or "I've never been here before." I think it is a very sorry indictment of us that people who have lived here for so long do not feel that this is a place that they can visit. I would like to do what I can to change that.

MR GENTLEMAN: That all just comes out of that?

Mrs Dunne: That comes out of that. We live within our budget. Those events are Assembly events. They have an element of parliamentary education to them. We are tweaking how much parliamentary education is the right amount. They are open events. Like the citizenship ones, every member is invited to those. So it is an opportunity for members to meet members of their community.

DR BOURKE: Madam Speaker, how often do you take the advice of the Clerk?

MR SMYTH: I have a new question.

THE CHAIR: Yes, we might just move to Mr Smyth. We will have new questions.

Mrs Dunne: I could not qualify it.

THE CHAIR: It is not really a supplementary.

Mrs Dunne: I could not quantify it: regularly, frequently. I meet with the Clerk at least once a week and we meet informally on a number of occasions. At the moment we are meeting informally probably twice or three times a day because, as members may be aware, we are hosting the presiding officers and clerks conference beginning on Sunday evening. Some of that is very informal: "How do you think I should go about this?" or having a discussion about it. Sometimes it is quite formal: this has happened, can you give me advice on it? It is the full range of things.

DR BOURKE: How often, as Speaker, have you disagreed with the advice of the

Clerk?

Mrs Dunne: I can't think that I have, actually.

DR BOURKE: So you have never disagreed with the advice you have received?

Mrs Dunne: Not yet. I think that Mr Duncan is an exemplary Clerk. One of the other things that I am very mindful of since I have become Speaker is the important role that clerks have. It is a very specialist job. We were discussing the other day that there are 18 clerks in the entire country. It is a very, very specialist occupation. One of the things that I am very concerned about is succession planning—Mr Duncan is amongst some of the younger clerks—and where we get our next generation of clerks is a very important issue.

DR BOURKE: Just to clarify there, Madam Speaker: you have never disagreed with any advice that the Clerk has given you as Speaker?

Mrs Dunne: I could probably count on the fingers of one hand the formal written advice that I have received. Sometimes I have gone back and asked for more information. I can remember one occasion where I said to him, "I think that you've actually misinterpreted what I have asked here." We had a discussion about it and he refined his advice in that area. Actually, I can think of an occasion when I disagreed with something that he said.

DR BOURKE: So you have disagreed?

Mrs Dunne: Yes, but in the great scheme of things it was not a biggie.

DR BOURKE: What was the issue?

THE CHAIR: I just think, as the chair—

Mrs Dunne: That is inappropriate. Advice is private.

THE CHAIR: Yes. I do not think it is appropriate to go into the nature of specific pieces of advice—

DR BOURKE: I think it is.

THE CHAIR: and what that advice was.

DR BOURKE: I am intrigued.

THE CHAIR: I am sure you are intrigued.

Mrs Dunne: Be intrigued, Dr Bourke.

THE CHAIR: I have been provided—

DR BOURKE: I think the community needs to know.

THE CHAIR: with advice, and I think that it would be similar to saying: what is the advice between ministerial advisers and ministers? I do not think that—

DR BOURKE: No, it is not the same at all.

THE CHAIR: Or cabinet discussions, perhaps.

DR BOURKE: It is not the same at all.

Mrs Dunne: It is exactly the same as the advice that a chief executive would give a minister, and that is confidential.

THE CHAIR: That is a better example; thank you.

DR BOURKE: Perhaps we should ask the Clerk for his advice about that.

THE CHAIR: Mr Smyth.

MR SMYTH: Page 1 of budget paper 4: let us start at the very beginning, Madam Speaker. In the 2013-14 priorities, the last dot point, you talk about planning the production of the second edition of the companion. When will we start planning and when will we start production of the updated companion?

Mrs Dunne: I do not know whether that is very felicitously worded. Do you want to tell the committee where we are up to with the companion?

Mr Duncan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Members will be aware that we compiled a companion to the standing orders, which we issued on the 20th anniversary of self-government in 2009.

Mrs Dunne: Have you read it?

MR SMYTH: Yes, most of it.

Mr Duncan: I encourage members to read it. It is a wealth of information. As with all of these sorts of documents, they do rely on precedents and practices. Since 2009 we have had a very different Assembly, with the Seventh Assembly, as you know, and then again in the Eighth Assembly we have also got a very different Assembly with different arrangements. There is a need to make sure that these documents are current and we have identified that we need to update that document.

We have enlisted the support of the editor of the first edition, Mark McCrae. He is assisting us on a part-time basis. I have tasked Max Kiermaier, the Deputy Clerk, to coordinate that update. It is a big task. And Max will have to do all his other duties as Deputy Clerk and Secretary of Committees and other matters. We envisage it will take at least one or two years before we are in a position to issue another edition for the companion.

I have just given a copy to the new member that arrived, Ms Lawder. I gave her a

copy of the companion, but I had to tell her that there have been a lot of changes since 2009. The document is already in some ways out of date in terms of reflecting practices. I think it is important as an organisation to make sure we have got that document up to date so that members, members' staff and people interested in the running of the Assembly have an accurate description of how this place works.

MR SMYTH: All right. The top dot point in the same section talks of developing a strategic plan for 2014 and beyond. There is the prospect that in 2016, after the election, you might have a much larger Assembly. If the Assembly went from 17 to 25 members, could you currently accommodate that?

Mr Duncan: In terms of physical accommodation?

MR SMYTH: Yes.

Mr Duncan: We have had a look at this. The only way that I think we could accommodate it within this building without moving any of the functions out would be to do what other parliaments do—that is, provide ministers with a member's office within this building. If you go to any other parliament, apart from the federal parliament, you will find that Mr O'Farrell, for instance, will have a small office within the New South Wales Parliament House in Macquarie Street but his main office is located in the CBD of Sydney. It is the same in Queensland, Victoria and the other states.

I would envisage that we would convert those offices on the second floor from a minister's suite to two members' offices. We would probably need to lose the party rooms. We might lose the media conference room. We might lose the members lounge. If we lost all that accommodation, parties might have to meet in the committee rooms. There is never a committee meeting at the same time as a party room meeting, so it is an efficient—

Mrs Dunne: Some of that is undesirable. I think that not having a dedicated party room does create some sort of separation issues. Other parliaments have found it problematic, including our twin parliament, which has found it very problematic.

Mr Duncan: The other option, of course, is to get a new building.

MR SMYTH: We will see if the chair puts that one in as a recommendation! The second dot point talks about continuing with the implementation of revised governance and administrative arrangements. What is involved in that?

Mr Duncan: As members might be aware, we had a reorganisation once we passed the Legislative Assembly (Office of the Legislative Assembly) Act and we realigned some areas to try and separate the organisation in terms of the procedural activities on one side and the administrative activities on the other side. We are currently trying to make sure that we have all the appropriate governance arrangements in place to ensure that we meet all of our legislative responsibilities in terms of the Audit Act, the Financial Management Act and the Public Sector Management Act. It is important that, for all the good work we do on the procedural side of things, we are a separate organisation in the governance of the ACT. We need to make sure we comply with all

of those acts and we need to have all the procedures in place to make sure we do comply with those. We are subject to Auditor-General's reports and other oversight mechanisms that other agencies are. So that is about making sure we have got those governance and administrative arrangements correct, moving into the future.

MR SMYTH: In the business and corporate strategies, it talks about improving services to the Assembly and its committees. What do you have in mind there for improving services to the Assembly?

Mr Duncan: As part of that older review, we actually increased the level of resources to the committees. You might note that we upgraded two positions from a senior officer grade C position to a SOGB level, and we have also created an additional ASO6 research officer position. What we were facing—and, Mr Smyth, you would be aware of this, as a long-term member—was that we got a lot of very talented and capable committee office staff, but we have had a lot of churn through that level. Once they get here as a senior officer grade C, there is nowhere then for them to go, except for the one position at the top of the committee office. So this puts in place a structure where we have two ASO6 officers, two SOGC officers, two SOGB officers and one SOGA officer.

We are hoping, with that revised structure, which we are trialling with a view to, if it works, adopting it permanently, to have a system that will have a longevity of staff and, in the event that a committee officer does move on to bigger and better things—and we do not begrudge that—we have a system in place that can easily backfill that position so that the committee is not left dealing with a totally brand new secretary who has started on one day and been told, “You’re halfway through an inquiry. Read these transcripts. Read these submissions and finish the inquiry.” That is not a desirable situation for either the committee secretary or the committee itself. So I am hoping that this new structure will enhance the services of the committees. Just going back to the services to the Assembly, I think the update to the *Companion to the standing orders* will assist us in terms of improving services to the Assembly.

Mrs Dunne: There are certainly things, Mr Smyth, where, in any organisation we can do better. Mr Duncan referred to the turnover of staff in the committee office. That has been of considerable concern to members for a long time. I can recall in the last Assembly at one stage I had, on one inquiry, three different committee secretaries, and that is not fair to anybody. It makes it very hard for people to come in and pick up the stream. If we can avoid that, that will be a great improvement.

MR COE: How hard is it to recruit people with good writing skills who are willing and able to do the varied work that the committee office requires?

Mr Duncan: It varies. On some occasions we are blessed with a really strong field for certain positions. But at other times I know we have had quite a small field of applicants. So it is really hard to give an accurate picture on that. I think there is a high degree of interest amongst people who want to work at the Assembly because it is an interesting workplace in which to work, but, against that, we are a very small organisation and, as I said, the promotion prospects within the organisation, before this new structure was put in, meant that there was very limited career progression. So that was against us. I am hoping that with a new structure we will be able to continue

to attract suitably qualified staff. As Madam Speaker was alluding to, parliamentary officers are very specialised. We do attract some people from the federal parliament. We have had some interchanges between there, but also we have lost some people to the federal parliament. They get a job here and they see some similar positions in the federal parliament and they move up there. With salaries, it is a bit like the comparison between the ACT public service and the federal public service. The salaries in the federal parliament are just that little bit higher than they are here. So it is a constant battle. But, generally, I think in the committee office we have been well served.

We have also established a work in the Assembly program. I notice that one of the officers is sitting at the table. For six months a year we have an officer from the public service come and work in the Assembly. That is another enhancement to raise the awareness of the work of the Assembly and enhance the skills so that those officers can go back with a greater understanding of how the Assembly operates and help officers within the directorates that they are part of by explaining how the Assembly works because they have actually worked here for six months. So I think that is a good thing, and we hope that continues.

MR SMYTH: Finally, with building more effective mechanisms for public engagement, what is the intention there?

Mrs Dunne: It is a range of things that I spoke of before, Mr Smyth. I see this as a particular part of my mission. Apart from being a good and impartial Speaker on the days in there and making sure that the Assembly runs as efficiently and effectively as it can, I actually see that one of the things that I want to do as the Speaker is that outreaching in the community, so that the community comes to appreciate and understand what we do. They pay our wages, they pay for this building, and it is not very accessible to them. I would like to change that.

Mr Duncan: One of the things we have done is that we have recently updated our website. The ACT is one of the most IT-literate populations in Australia and we want to make sure that our website is a very relevant and up-to-date document or mechanism to deal with that. We also have a parliamentary educators conference once a year which our officers go to. There were a whole heap of recommendations from the last conference—things like whether we should put a TV on London Circuit which broadcasts our proceedings, both committee proceedings and Assembly proceedings, so that people standing there—

THE CHAIR: It might moderate behaviour?

Mr Duncan: People standing there and waiting for buses to go home—

Mrs Dunne: I think I would rather see the art, myself.

THE CHAIR: We heard the other day, Mr Duncan—

MR COE: Why go to Federation Square when you can come here and watch us?

THE CHAIR: We heard the other day that there is a psychological effect that if you

are waiting for a bus, apparently it makes it feel like time is going four times longer. I do not know whether that would have a negative or a positive effect on that phenomenon.

MR GENTLEMAN: Would you have that on a continuous loop so that it runs for 24 hours?

Mr Duncan: No, at times when the Assembly was not sitting or committees were not working, you would put up a whole range of other parliamentary—

MR SMYTH: Best of the ACT Assembly, 1989 to 2001!

THE CHAIR: Estimates committee greatest hits!

Mrs Dunne: Greatest hits blooper tapes!

Mr Duncan: Sitting day information, when the building was open and things like that.

THE CHAIR: Compelling viewing!

Mr Duncan: There is a whole range of things that we occasionally consider and we put up to the Speaker for consideration. The aim is to try and make sure that, as Madam Speaker alluded to before, people know where this building is and that they see it as accessible and are able to visit their members of parliament.

MR SMYTH: So you are angling for an 85-inch UHD TV screen, to have the biggest screen in the city?

Mr Duncan: Like the one that the Canberra Theatre has got.

Mrs Dunne: Probably on a slightly lower tech side, though, is that, for instance, we are in the process at the moment of sending out expressions of interest to community radio stations as to whether they want to broadcast question time and the adjournment debate. To my great surprise three community radio stations have come back and said, “Yes, thank you very much, we’d like to talk to you about that.” We can give them a few hours of content every week for a few weeks of the year.

MR SMYTH: I notice the government payment for outputs has gone up 0.9 of one per cent yet CPI this year is 2¼ and WPI is three. How do you constrain your budget there when you are not getting at least CPI to—

Mrs Dunne: Sorry, where are we?

MR SMYTH: Budget paper 4, page 5, top line.

Mrs Dunne: That is the Office of the Legislative Assembly—that is not the territorial account.

Mr Duncan: Sorry, you are talking about the difference between—

MR SMYTH: The difference between the budget for the coming year and the one for the existing year is one per cent—it is actually less than one per cent. CPI, according to the document here, this year is 2¼ and WPI will be three per cent. Given your budget has not even grown with CPI, how are you coping with that?

Mrs Dunne: There are a few things that we could talk about, but we do have some investments that we call on from time to time. I should ask Ms Carr if she could answer that.

Ms Carr: With respect to the reason that it appears there is only a one per cent variance with the government payment for outputs, on page 3 you will see revised indexation parameters. There is a reduction for 2013-14; \$8,000 is the CPI reduction from 2½ per cent down to 2¼ per cent. Also there are revised superannuation parameters. Our superannuation obligations are reducing because of a change in CSS and PSS superannuation, which is a higher superannuation rate compared to fund of choice. Also there was a \$5,000 reduction for the carbon neutral fund. So those things have reduced our GPO. So if we added them back, obviously it would be a much lower variance.

Mrs Dunne: The \$5,000, for instance, Mr Smyth, is money that we are giving up because we do not have to buy green power in the same way.

MR SMYTH: But if we go back to page 5, your employee expenses have gone up six per cent, yet your super has dropped four per cent.

Mrs Dunne: That would be because there are fewer and fewer people in the old schemes, the CSS and PSS. Fund of choice superannuation is a lot less generous.

MR COE: Madam Speaker, I am wondering whether you or one of your officers would be able to give an update on a couple of technical things: one, high quality cameras in the chamber and potential broadcasting; two, wi-fi in the building.

Mrs Dunne: I will give a brief outline on the first while Val Barrett comes up, because she is much better at this. There was a budget bid in a previous financial year for updated broadcasting that was unsuccessful. There is some discussion that perhaps next year we might be making another budget bid in that space. In the meantime, with regard to improving the technological performance of the Assembly overall and what we bid for but did not get, we may be able to do more with that amount of money next year by the time we look at the new and improved technologies that are about. I will ask Ms Barrett to say some more on that.

Ms Barrett: On the unsuccessful bid to Treasury for more funds, we based the bid on what other parliaments are doing with their broadcasting. They virtually run broadcasting studios that are very high tech. We got what was called a rough order of magnitude from a broadcasting company that has done work for the Victorian parliament. We looked at a cut-down version with not nearly such expensive cameras—more automation of the control—and it was not successful. That was for about \$460,000, I think.

Now we are working with Shared Services to try to get them involved in a business

study to look at whether we can upgrade or enhance our current committees on demand, daily on demand and webstreaming systems because we are a little bit concerned about the longevity of those. They are on platforms that may well become obsolete and we have a single source of support for them. We are a little bit hopeful that, instead of going the high tech broadcasting road, we will be going the PC web-based road. SSICT is now looking towards digital media, so we are just waiting. We are hoping in the next few weeks we will have some indication of a possible solution with some costings, and we will be looking for a Treasury bid this year for next year. We are basing it on the sustainability of our existing systems, and we are trying to provide better evidence of the fact that these are critical systems. It is what takes the visual record of the parliament to the people, and we need to be able to keep improving.

MR COE: Would that footage and/or audio be available for download by both members and external parties?

Mrs Dunne: Part of the idea would be to be in the situation that New South Wales is in, Mr Coe, where, say, media outlets do not have their cameras on the floor and they get a feed off the system in the New South Wales parliament and the bits are cut out and sent to them. That would be the sort of service we would aim for eventually.

Ms Barrett: As to wi-fi, we are currently looking with SSICT at quite a simple proposal to provide wi-fi to the committee rooms and the chamber. The indicative cost, I think, is about \$5,000 to set it up and possibly \$800 a year recurrent. We have just put a proposal through our governance arrangements for funds to pursue that.

MR COE: Would that be for all devices, or would it still be limited to InTACT-supported devices.

Ms Barrett: At this stage it would be limited.

Mrs Dunne: This is a big problem for us, Mr Coe. Members have an allowance to acquire their own implements, and getting them from Optus or Vodafone or whomever is much cheaper than getting them from InTACT. But then there is a real problem about the support we can give to people, and it is something we are looking at. It is a matter for administration and procedure to take a close interest in, I think.

DR BOURKE: Madam Speaker, with regard to the opinion you had before about the agreement with the advice of the Clerk to you, can I ask the Clerk, through you, what his opinion is on the matter of the privacy of the advice?

Mrs Dunne: Sorry, first of all, Mr Chairman, I recollect an occasion. Mr Duncan may not recollect that occasion. I think it is inappropriate, and it would be inappropriate for—

DR BOURKE: No, Madam Speaker—

Mrs Dunne: Sorry, Mr Chairman, it would be inappropriate for any member of the estimates committee to ask the Chief Minister whether she always agreed with—

THE CHAIR: Indeed. Madam Speaker—

DR BOURKE: No, I am asking the Clerk—

THE CHAIR: I concur with your assessment.

DR BOURKE: I am asking the Clerk about your opinion about the privacy of the advice that you have received from the Clerk to you as the Speaker.

THE CHAIR: The question is not yours. You are out of order, Dr Bourke. Please cease and desist and we will move to the next question, which will be mine, but thanks for that interjection.

My question is about the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the CPA. I want to get a sense of a number of things: how much are we spending to send people overseas, what engagement are we having, and can you give me a broader sense of where that organisation is? I know there have been some problems.

Mrs Dunne: Yes. I believe the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is a very important organisation because it is a collaborative organisation where you have developed parliaments with a long history and good institutions working hand in hand with emerging parliaments to help make all of those parliaments better. We cannot take the white man's burden approach that we have a whole lot to teach people in developing countries; we have a lot to learn from developing countries as well. Generally speaking, with a few exceptions, CPA activities are cost neutral. For instance, when a member goes to an annual meeting, as Mr Smyth is going to an annual meeting in South Africa, his fares are paid by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Sorry, that is not strictly true. The CPA pays for an economy class airfare, and members are entitled to travel business class, so there is sometimes an adjustment. That is really the only cost. The only other cost would be, for instance, people who go to a Westminster conference or another conference would pay for that from their \$24,000 a term study travel money. We pay a subscription to the CPA, which is \$15,000.

Mr Duncan: It depends on what the pound is.

Mrs Dunne: It is about \$15,000, but it will rise because the commonwealth branch withdrew from the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the rest of the Australian branch undertook to fill in the gap. We have not quite worked out what that will be. They were making a contribution of about \$26,000 a year, from memory—I will check that figure—and the remaining eight branches have said that, between us, we will make up that money.

THE CHAIR: Where is that in terms of the commonwealth and the CPA? Who is making that decision? There has been a bit of turmoil up on the hill. Is that still the same—

Mrs Dunne: No, the branch left.

THE CHAIR: The commonwealth branch?

Mrs Dunne: The branch does not exist anymore. The remaining members of the Australian CPA branch are, it would be fair to say, very unhappy with the performance of the commonwealth branch.

THE CHAIR: Who is the point of contact for it? The Speaker or the President of the Senate?

Mrs Dunne: It is the President of the Senate. In parliaments with two chambers, one presiding officer looks after CPA matters and the other tends to look after IPU activities. In the case of the commonwealth parliament, the President of the Senate was the CPA person.

DR BOURKE: So, once again, Speaker, through you to the Clerk, can Mr Duncan tell us—

THE CHAIR: Just ignore him.

DR BOURKE: whether his opinion is that the advice he provides to you is confidential?

THE CHAIR: I am ruling the question out of order, and I will continue to do so.

DR BOURKE: Given that you have already misled us about the matter of a disagreement—

THE CHAIR: Are you wanting to say that the Speaker has misled this committee?

DR BOURKE: She has already gone on, in answer to my question, that there was no disagreement, and then she comes back later saying there is a disagreement. So now I want to pursue this.

THE CHAIR: Thank you. This is the last—

Mrs Dunne: Could I clarify something I said before about parliaments with two presiding officers. In fact, the presiding officers are joint chairs, but one tends to take responsibility for CPA and the other tends to take IPU responsibilities.

THE CHAIR: In terms of our engagement with Kiribati, are we continuing to support them, and what are the details of that? Briefly, because we have only about 30 seconds.

Mrs Dunne: The details are that we have a twinning arrangement. That was really kicked off by Speaker Berry when he and Deputy Speaker Pratt visited Kiribati. It has been agreed that in every term two members would form a delegation and visit Kiribati. I had that privilege along with Ms Le Couteur in the last Assembly. Mr Duncan and I are meeting next week—in the Kiribati Room—with the Speaker and the Clerk of the Kiribati parliament as part of the presiding officers and clerks conference. Part of that is to have a serious conversation about how effective the current twinning arrangement is and how we improve it.

Although I have had the privilege of visiting the Kiribati parliament, I do not know that it is necessarily the best bang for our buck. I think there are benefits in members having some idea of the way the parliament and the constraints it works under, but I am just wondering—it is no more than a conversation—if this is the best way we can support the parliament. It is certainly something that, as an Assembly, we should have a view on.

THE CHAIR: We have to leave it there, given the time. I thank you for attending, Madam Speaker, and I particularly thank the officials. I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all committee members to thank all the staff of the Legislative Assembly for the tremendous work they do in supporting us in the chamber but also in committees like this. As you can see, we have this in action right now—numerous secretaries, it seems they change every five seconds. Those guys do a tremendous job and we really appreciate it. I would like to record that in *Hansard*, and I note that I will move a recommendation to make it known that all the committee members really appreciate the support we have been provided in this place and more generally.

Mrs Dunne: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

The committee adjourned at 5.00 pm.